

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 16, Call for Unity, Philippians 4

© 2024 Dan Darko and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 16, Call for Unity, Philippians 4.

Welcome back to our biblical studies lecture series on prison epistles.

We have been going through Philippians in the most recent lessons that you have been following. I must say today, as we finish Philippians, we are reminded of the richness of this letter of Paul to a church which is based in a former Roman colony. I mentioned a great deal of the background to you so far, but if Paul were alive today perhaps he may be happy for me to be able to help you recall some of the things he is saying in this letter before I submit his conclusions.

Why? Because the letter was written to be read at a go from beginning to end, and so far, I have spent several hours trying to unpack what he wanted to be read, perhaps between 15 and 20 minutes or so. So, let's look at some key elements at the beginning of this letter. In the early lectures, I reminded you that Paul was writing from prison, perhaps from Roman imprisonment.

He was in prison because he was trying to advance the gospel and had run into a serious problem as a result of his missionary work. In other words, those who imprisoned him were aiming to curtail or stop the mission that he so believed God had called him to accomplish, namely preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul mentions in chapter one with a great deal of joy and excitement, even though from jail, that imprisonment has not ceased the advancement of the gospel.

And as if the church in Philippi may be discouraged about his experience, he goes on to draw attention to the fact that his imprisonment is actually advancing the course of the gospel, and in fact, the imperial guards who were actually guarding him are being reached by the gospel, and many people around him now know why he's in jail. In other words, if they thought they were going to hold him behind bars or closed doors so that the gospel would not go forward, imprisonment would not stop it. And beyond that, imprisonment had created an opportunity for the advancement of the gospel.

It is on that note he encouraged the Philippian church to keep steadfast in their focus on what Christ had called them to do. He challenged them to develop a mindset that is worthy of those who know Jesus Christ. It is in the context of attitude and mindset that he calls for unity in the church and asks the church to develop the mindset that is reflected or exemplified in Christ Jesus.

Paul goes on to give us that beautiful piece that we call Christ's hymn and show how, in obedience and humility, Christ accomplishes his work. In so doing, Paul goes on to call the church to task. He asks them to do all they can to stay united and give examples of people who have kept this obedience and humility and have developed that mindset and perhaps steadfastness, and I should say, to be able to pursue the call of God.

He mentioned his close colleague, whom he called his son Timothy. He mentioned Epaphroditus. He goes on to actually issue a stern warning about potential Judaizers who will come and cause commotion.

And then on the basis of that saying, you know, these Judaizers, if they come, usually they come to boast about things of the flesh. And if anyone could do that, who else could do more than him? He had all the rights and privileges to boast. He chooses not.

Paul encourages the church to go on with this spirit of unity and focus. In the last lecture, I mentioned that you could read chapter 4, verse 1, in which Paul asked the church to stand firm as part of chapter 3 or go along with the end of chapter 3. If you read it that way, then it will end the way we ended our last lecture. But if you look at it as the beginning of a new chapter, it will read like this.

You will see the first chapter, chapter 4, and the first verse actually saying that because of what has gone on in the past, I am urging you to follow suit with this. And I'm going to end that statement with the emphatic statement or admonition to stand firm. And if only you do that, then my joy will be fully complete.

Consequently, he could now conclude knowing that if only they would stand firm, all things would be well. Reading further from verse 1 to the end of chapter 4, we can go on to say, yes, if they hold on firmly as Paul admonishes them, then they would get rid of any sense of this unity confusion and pursue the course of Christ as he had brought forward in previous chapters. Therefore, then when he says, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved, Paul is probably issuing a statement that is building, connecting the past, and ushering us into what is forthcoming.

With the central admonition, stand firm. Stand firm. In the face of or with the potential threat of false teachers, stand firm.

With the precious of the Roman colony of Philippi, stand firm. As far as unity in the church and developing the mindset, obedience, and humility that is required to make this workout, stand firm. It is then that if you read that verse that way, then you will see what Paul is going to give here as a general admonition from here on to

challenge the church to get rid of some specific issues and address or pursue their personal challenges on a positive note.

Paul, if you remember, I showed you in the last lecture how, in this general admonition, he highlights the relationship, the sense of gratitude, and the fact that the church could be referred to as his joy and crown, and all this in the Lord. So far, you may be tired of hearing again and again how much I refer to Paul talking about in Christ, Christ Jesus, for Christ, true Christ. One of his favorite expressions also is in the Lord, in the locus or realm where Christ is Lord, in the mastery domain of Christ, where he reigns with all his power, and where in his reign he provides the resources that is needed for the church to stand firm.

Well, it is on this note that he will make a specific appeal for unity because he had already mentioned earlier the need for the church to be united. And I read from verses two and three; I entreat you there, I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help this woman who has labored side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Apparently, there are two women in the church who are not on good terms. Surprise, surprise, surprise. If you have been involved in church leadership of some sort, you say, this is what makes Philippians so real.

Well, men leaders like to fight and backbite. You go to church council meetings and you feel as though one decision could not be made. The women leaders can actually look cool and calm in the meeting.

They lead the meeting, and sometimes, they say all kinds of nasty things behind each other's backs. That is called church and church leadership. Apparently, that was true in Philippi.

And two particular women who were worth mentioning, Judea and Syntyche, were not in good terms. Suffice it to say, they were at loggerheads. They were not happy about each other and it was affecting the church.

So, Paul appeals for unity in the church. He appeals for Judea and Syntyche to act responsibly. Why are these women singled out? We'll have a look at that in a few moments.

But it is quite likely that if they don't act responsibly, the ramifications are huge and can actually affect the entire church. Paul will literally entreat them to develop a befitting mental attitude, a mindset that is appropriate for those who are in Christ. I mentioned to you earlier how phronesis, or mental attitude for Paul, is important to conduct and how people conduct themselves.

The way they think shapes the way they conduct themselves with people. Paul is at the forefront in appealing to them not only to act responsibly but specifically to develop an appropriate mindset. Why? Normally, when people are fighting in the church, it is something linked to a personal agenda.

It is something linked to the self or the flesh or personal interest. You might recall earlier on in this lecture series on Philippians, and I mentioned to you how Paul challenges the church to develop a heavenly mindset so as to make that shape their way of life here and now. If these women have actually got trapped or caught up in some self-ambition or self-agenda that is likely causing some problems for the local congregations, Paul said, I entreat you with clarity and firmness to develop the right mindset.

And they should do so, not just for doing so. They should do so in the Lord. They should do so in the domain where Jesus is Lord, in the domain where both of them acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and submit themselves to the Lordship of Christ.

In other words, in obedience to Christ, they should submit all their will, their desires, their ambitions and develop the mental attitude worthy of those who call upon the name of the Lord. Develop the right mindset in the Lord. Wow.

And as if these women are not able to help themselves, Paul appeals to a yoke-fellow to help these women. That is very interesting. He wants his yoke fellow to help these two women.

I'll unpack some of those. But just for a minute, let's begin to look at who these women were: Judea and Syntyche. We have no further information in the New Testament or elsewhere in the Bible about these two women.

So, this is the only place we actually get to know anything about them. What seems to be clear is that they are singled out in this discussion and given some degree of prominence, indicating that they have the potential influence to build or to hurt the church if they don't sort things out. Natural way of dealing with conflict and issues in churches will tell us that normally contentions like this are not only individual, but normally they come in cliques where strong personalities have followings, and so they help to foster and feed into each other to cause more problems.

So, with all indications, we may be able to make a very good guess that these are prominent women who are actually the champions of some contentious issues in the church. Some scholars have identified one of them with Lydia. In the introduction of Philippians, I reminded you that one of the key figures who came to the Lord when Paul went to minister in Philippi was Lydia.

And I also drew your attention from Luke's account in Acts that there were a lot of women who were ready to listen to Paul when he came to the city. And so some say maybe one of these women is actually Lydia. The Tubingen School, which has come to be discredited in most grounds because of their extreme liberal and highly speculative conclusions at some point, have also suggested that actually these are allegorical representations of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

So, if Judea is a particular symbol representing Jewish Christians, then Syntyche would be kind of a representation for Gentile Christians. That is a very, very big move to actually arrive at that conclusion. So, who are these two women? Answer.

We don't know. Oh, my students hate that. How can you have a PhD and say you don't know? Oh, yes, we don't know.

We don't have any further evidence beyond what Philippians tells us about these women. We can infer that they are leaders. We can infer that they had a prominent standing in the church.

We can infer so many things about their role. And clearly, they were prominent figures. That is all conjecture.

And it's as close as we could be. Paul's point, though, is if they are going to stand firm in the church, and they will stand firm in the Lord, then these women have to develop the right mindset in the Lord. And if they would develop the right mindset in the Lord, they will help accomplish the unity he so desires and wants to see in the church.

But who is your fellow, you may ask? Paul talks about a yoke-fellow that is supposed to help this woman. Who is the yoke-fellow? Well, it seems that the yoke-fellow is someone who is mutually known to Paul and the church at Philippi. It seems that this particular yoke fellow doesn't even need a mention in terms of name because people know him.

Perhaps sometimes refer to him as, some people refer to him as, oh, Junior Paul, Paul's buddy. So maybe even that nickname is there that this guy is someone people know that you see him, you see Paul. Who is that? We can say in the first place that the person was a known figure.

And the person held enough respect in the congregation to be asked to help this woman who was having problems. It could be Epaphroditus, it could be Luke, it could be whatever, but we don't know the name of this person. But we can only surmise that indeed there are, that this is a person that is known to all the parties involved.

Some scholars have suggested that this yoke fellow should definitely be Timothy. Paul talks a lot about him. Well, that is a possibility, but that is just a conjecture.

Some say it's Epaphroditus, and some say it's Silas. Silas was in jail with Paul when they ran into trouble at Philippi. So, it could be Silas.

Some say, oh, it could be Luke, the physician that he named when he was writing to Colossians. Well, it is possible, but we are still in the field of conjecture when we think about this. One of the early church fathers, Clement of Alexandria, actually says he thinks we should think about this yoke fellow in terms of Paul's wife.

And this yoke fellow who is Paul's wife is most probably Lydia. That is very interesting. That will get you scratching your head because we have been thinking about this, and we've been trying to study and find out whether Paul was married or not, and by all indications, Paul was not married.

Clement said, this yoke fellow, I mean, yoke fellow, I mean, somebody who is so linked intertwined, almost one soul, one body, that's Paul's wife. And he thinks we should think about Lydia. Oh, Paul is clever, then.

He's hiding that from us. No, let me just caution you about something about Clement of Alexandria. In early biblical interpretation, we had two key church fathers who had a significant influence in Alexandria and Egypt, Origen and Clement of Alexandria.

In the late 2nd and 3rd centuries, going into the early 4th century, these were guys who influenced theological reasoning, influenced the interpretation of scripture, and influenced Christianity in significant ways. One of their methods of interpreting scripture is important to note here before we take Clement seriously. Clement was known for what was called the allegorical interpretation of scripture.

He and his colleague Origen would be actually literally identified with an allegorical interpretation of scripture. If you read what they have to say about some of the parables, you may actually fall down laughing, or you may scratch your head until you have no hair on your head. Because what they are able to find and see is remarkable.

But in their view, as long as they are using the text to encourage people in their Christian life, they are fascinating thoughts and people should embrace them. Interestingly, even though they use that approach, their conclusions continue to still shape Christian thinking, and often, we quote them without even revisiting their approach to interpretation. Clement was an allegorical guy, and I would suggest that we don't take him too seriously here on his suggestion that Lydia was Paul's wife, and the yoke-fellow who is supposed to help Euodia and Syntyche is actually Paul's wife, Lydia.

That is a little bit too stretching. John Chrysostom, one of the Antiochian fathers, who would like to actually read the Bible and interpret it clearly, literally, in context, is known as one of the best preachers and Bible expositors of his time. He suggested that the yoke-fellow must be a husband or a brother of one of these women.

For Chrysostom, that is a suggestion, something for us to think about. Well, let's leave it as that. It's a suggestion.

Because Chrysostom does not know. I'm giving you all this so that if you take any commentary that says this is definitely Paul's wife, you know where it's coming from. This is the husband of one of the women.

You know where it's coming from. May I even suggest to you that if, indeed, Chrysostom's suggestion is taken, there is a potential bias in conflict resolution here, isn't it? If the person is one of them, is a husband or brother to one of them, is the other person going to trust that they are going to have a fair play in the way they deal with issues? That's something to think about. The Greek word I give you there, *suzugos*, which is translated as yoke-fellow, has been understood and, in modern scholarship, is widely held as a proper name.

So that means it must be somebody's name. And if it is somebody's name, then this is the yoke-fellow. It's not a yoke fellow, but it's the name of somebody.

The only problem that continues to leave this issue lingering is we don't have any evidence of a text, parchment, or fragment that shows that name anywhere. So yoke fellow becomes this issue here. But Paul's point here is not that we spend hours and minutes and pages trying to figure out who yoke-fellow is.

Paul says these women need to take personal responsibility for themselves to develop the right mindset, and they need help. And he calls on a trustworthy person to help them. That is the key point being made here.

It is with this framework, right after Paul had said to stand firm that he will go on to issue this instruction. Rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Wow.

So, after challenging this woman to bring peace and all that, it is just in case some degree of anxiety or issues are causing, I want you to be able to take note of some key things. He calls, and he actually says rejoice. Just imagine.

Oh, have those women sorted the problems out? By the way, hey guys, chill out. Rejoice in the Lord.

You know, even in the midst of something that looks like confusion and all that, don't panic, and don't make it look like the world is crashing. Rejoice, but not just rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice as you find your place under the mastery of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And just in case you do not get it, again, I say rejoice. Wow. Let me just point a few things out to you as we think about this passage.

Let's, I guess, get too excited and spend more time than I should about this. Paul, in resuming this general admonition, calls for unceasing joy to be found among the people of God in the Lord. Again, in the Lord.

As you go through this biblical studies lecture series on prison epistles with us, please take your time with all these books. Look for those words in Christ, in the Lord, in Christ Jesus, and understand how important that is to Paul. In the Lord, rejoice, and let your gentleness be. Oh, yes, those women may not be that gentle.

They like to fight. Now, by the way, gentleness here has nothing to do with going to Fifth Avenue in New York City and buying the most expensive dress and wearing it, getting the most flashy watch and necklace, and just trying to show off. Well, it has nothing to do with clothing here.

Gentleness, in this sense, has everything to do with attitude and conduct. Let your gentleness, let your social outlook reflect those who live their lives under the Lordship of Christ. And by the way, it's not private.

Let your gentleness be made known to all. Let people see the way you live your life and begin to realize that gentle spirit in you, reflecting in a gentle demeanor and gentle dealings with other people. Paul provides an incentive or motivation.

You should let your gentleness be known to all because the Lord is near. This could have an eschatological connotation that says the Lord's coming is near, or you are in the space where the Lord's presence is real. Let this be your way of life because the Lord is near.

Whether it is eschatological or it has this immediate special connotation of the Lord's presence here, the Lord is watching how you are behaving. Paul's point is, let your

gentleness, people of God, be made known. Maybe you are beginning to think seriously about how much Paul refuses to present Christianity as this private affair.

No, for Paul, the way we live our lives in this twisted and crooked world should reflect and should make a clear statement to them that those who have come to know the Lord hold to some higher moral standing. Their attitude, their conduct, and their dealings with each other must be desired. That is why, earlier in this letter, he mentioned they should shine like a light in the world.

And then Paul will go on to talk about anxiety. Oh, anxiety is a big issue today. But Paul would say, now as you make your gentleness known to all people, overcome your anxiety with or by the Lord's presence.

Spiritual discipline. Let me try to read that in a minute from verses 4 to 7. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice.

Let your reasonableness be made known to everyone. The Lord is at hand—verse 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Wow. Anxiety.

Be anxious about nothing. Be anxious as you find your standing with God about nothing. That is not to say that as a Christian, there's never going to be a time when you feel as though things are not within your control.

Yes, you are going to feel that. There is going to be the potential to feel anxious. But Paul says, be anxious about nothing.

Don't allow yourself to be trapped in anxiety. That word anxiety, Mary now, also translates as worry. Don't become a perpetual warrior and trap yourself in the state of worrying about everything, and everything seems as though it's coming to crush; it's coming to destroy.

Everything around you seem like shaking and letting you get trapped with this fear and worry of what will happen if. Be anxious about nothing. Note that word, be anxious about nothing, zero.

But in everything, in all things, this is what you should do. Make your request known to God. Find a solace, a place with God and talk to God.

In all things, position yourself in the presence of God. And when you feel as though things are beyond your control, go to God in prayer. Tell him you feel out of control.

Offer your prayers to God. Place your request, your supplication to God. And Paul said, not in thanksgiving, but with thanksgiving, with the heart of gratitude, not with the heart of ungratefulness or entitlement.

I sometimes have to catch myself coming before God in prayer and being so in a rush to tell God what my needs are as if I am entitled to some things God should do to me. Paul says, pause, pause, pause. Let your request, your prayers, and your supplications be made known to God with thanksgiving and a sense of gratitude in your heart.

Realizing that had not God been on your side, maybe things could have been worse. And let that attitude inform how you place your request. I've often heard people say I'm angry at God because I wanted him to do XYZ, but he didn't do it.

But as human as we are, often we may feel that way. But in Paul's instruction here, what he seemed to be communicating to us is, we have to be careful about that attitude. If we came to God with the attitude of thanksgiving and placed our request before him, could we actually find ourselves in a place where we can gather some degree of audacity or paucity to even tell God? Do you know what? You could be as big as what? I am angry at you, and I can pick up a fight with you.

And guess who is going to lose? But in a heart of gratitude, we may come with humility. Imagine approaching someone, asking for help, when in your thoughts, in your heart, you are actually consumed or overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude of what that person has been or done to you. How would your next request to that person be put forward? Paul says, be anxious about nothing, but in everything or in all things, approach God in prayer and supplication with that sense of gratitude.

And if you do so, this is what the outcome is going to be. The result will be that the peace of God, the Irene, the Shalom, and the total well-being that God alone can provide will be yours. And this peace of God is so great that it surpasses human understanding.

It is a peace that can be present in the midst of what seems to be impossible. It is a peace that God can give in a context where one should actually, in the natural sense, feel so helpless and hopeless. It is that sense of peace that can make the person who is found on the deathbed become the strongest person to encourage those who visit them on the deathbed.

The peace of God that surpasses that blows the human mind. Let me try to put it in American translation. The peace of God that blows the mind.

Let that peace of God be the result. And in fact, that is a promise. That will be the result.

If you came to God in your prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Look at the next word. Well, God.

The expression there has some kind of a prison military kind of thing there. Blessing God post. Just imagine the peace of God building this wall around your heart and your mind and say, worry, anxiety, troubles.

You cannot penetrate. You cannot consume the heart and the mind of this individual. Just imagine the peace of God enveloped, enveloping your heart, yourself consuming you.

Even in the midst of the most difficult time. As I said earlier in this lecture, it so reminds me of Psalm 23, verse 4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil.

Because you are with me, for me, that is what the peace of God can do because that peace will guard or will keep your hearts and your minds.

In Christ Jesus. Your heart. In ancient Greek, understanding is the seat of your emotion.

The center of life. Your mind is the seat of reasoning. The center of your moral choices.

He will guard it; he will protect that from being infested or contaminated. By all the pressures that are potential causes of anxiety. Wow.

How often have we thought of that? Because of this military imagery, when I think about my heart and my mind. Being guarded. So that the difficulties, horrors, fears, and insecurities cannot consume me.

I could find even a motivation to come to God when the slightest sense of anxiety begins to creep in. Paul says, in a church at Philippi, as you maintain this unity and you make your demands gentleness known to all, be anxious about nothing.

But in all things, come to God with gratitude, and this will be the result. The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds. One writer put it this way.

The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything. Wow. Before you start this lecture series with us, may I ask?

Have you thought about Paul and his prayer life in these times? Maybe let's make it personal here. Have you actually thought about Christianity in such a personal way? Where prayer, gratitude, character, living at peace and in unity with brothers and sisters are so part of your life to the extent that when you feel as though you are getting caught with an unexpected sense of fear and worry, you could come to God and find that peace. Yes, Irene may be right.

The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything. And Paul will go on to write. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about us.

Let these things consume your mind. Think about these honorable, praiseworthy virtues. Let them consume your mind.

Let them consume what you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me. Practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. I am tempted.

I am tempted to spend a lot of time talking about these things. But let me try to do something here in three minutes or two minutes. When you look at the things that he says, you should think about those that are actually noteworthy, commendable, praiseworthy, and of excellence in a culture of honor and shame.

These are honorable virtues, honorable qualities, things that society will look at and say, yes, these are stuff that are praiseworthy. Paul says, without naming specific things here and there, let these things and the pursuit of these things consume your thoughts: mental activity, cognitive activity.

Christianity is not all about it. I went to church, and we clapped and danced. I left the church, and I felt good. I had my shot. I'm coming home, and by next week, it will be run out.

So, I'll go back. I'll get to praise and dance. I'll hear a good sermon.

I'll get full, and then I'll come back. It will run out another week, and I'll go back and get another shot. No.

Paul says that the way Christians in Philippi think is important. And their thought must be consumed with things that are honorable. Those are the things that will bring glory to God.

Then, look at what else he goes on to talk about after challenging them to think about the right things from verse 9. Learning, thinking, receiving. What you have learned. What you have received.

What you have heard. And what you have seen in Paul. Practice them.

Oh, it's not about theory. It's not about how many verses from the Bible I can cite. Practice them.

Wow. I like that. But take note of this quickly.

Get less; I spend too much time trying to avoid it. Paul appeals to shared fictive kinship as he calls for moral excellence. He's clear.

The thoughts cannot be empty. The thoughts cannot be filled with all kinds of filth. In fact, he says, when you come to God in prayer, your mind and your heart will be guarded.

And let that mind think about these things. What do you think about it? And what consumes your thought as honorable?

Add to that what you have heard, what you have received, what you have learned, and what you have seen in Paul and put them into practice—another promise. Verse 9b gives another promise.

As you do that, guess what happened? And the God of peace will be with you. Wow. The God of peace will be with you.

It's like the end of the prayer. Peace, peace, peace, peace. And the God of peace will be with you.

Having said all this, Paul is ready to bring the letter to a close. He will present the thanksgiving and the final greetings. This thanksgiving from verse 10 to 20 is what some scholars think is a delayed thanksgiving.

According to their view, if you follow Paul's pattern in letter writing, thanksgiving like this comes earlier. Because Paul is bringing it to an end, some scholars say that particular text doesn't belong here. It's probably a different letter that was brought in later.

I explained to you at the beginning of the discussion on Philippians that we don't have much evidence or support to actually say there was any such letter circulating. So we treat this as one. Let's just look briefly about that thanksgiving.

This thanksgiving has been labeled as a thankless thank you. A veiled, a veiled appreciation. You may ask why. Because it's a thank you, but it doesn't really look like a thank you.

Because that's how the text reads, I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now, at length, you have revived your consent for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

But that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Is that how you say thank you to someone? Let's continue. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

And you Philippians yourself know that at the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership *koinonia* with me in giving and receiving except you only. Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases your credit.

I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied. Wow! Is that how you say thank you? Having received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. So, you see all kinds of sandwiching thing going on here.

That is why scholars are not sure what is going on here with Paul. So, take note of this. Commentators have different views about this particular text and how sometimes it sounds like Paul is saying thank you.

Sometimes it sounds like he's saying I didn't need your help anyway. So, some commentators said that Paul actually shows that he's grateful for the care and concern of the church.

Some say he probably did not expect the gifts. But the church ignored his request that he wanted to be independent in his ministry, and they sent him some gifts. So he received it but he was not very happy about it.

Some say oh in the ancient culture if you're true friends you don't have to say too many thank you's when people do good. So, Paul is trying to play that is actually quiet. I'm not sure how to put it, but that view is quite shaky. Some say Paul aims to redirect their focus to the advancement of the gospel.

Some say that Paul attempts to balance appreciation and awareness and that his mission is neither dependent nor motivated by their gift. That is the kind of position I lean towards. A colleague, Frank, puts it this way.

This session is basically an expression of thanks to the Philippians for a monetary gift they sent to him through their messenger Epaphroditus. The note of appreciation appears in three places. In verse 10 where Paul speaks of his great joy because of the Philippian's expression of consent for him.

In verse 14, he tells them that it was good of them to help him in his affliction. In verse 18 where he uses both financial and cultic metaphors to describe the immense value of their gift for him. Paul in effect is saying this.

He rejoices in the Lord for their care and concern. He is grateful for their gift and partnership. Their gift has supplied his needs.

And he has learned how to live in abundance and scarcity. But he also wants to make it clear that, indeed, he can do all things through Christ. Who strengthens him.

For Paul, he has learned to be content regardless of his circumstances. As you remember, 1 Timothy 6:6, godliness and contentment is great gain. Content Paul says he did not actually need their gift to seek to actually survive.

Neither did he even seek the gift. Yet he prays that God may replenish them bountifully. And I like that prayer.

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

And his thanksgiving is as simple and very polite in these terms. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.

All the saints greet you—especially those in Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

As we end this lecture, let me refresh your mind quickly with this image that I would like to make sure sticks with you. In this letter, some key themes have emerged. The theme of friendship and partnership.

Joy and rejoicing in the face of suffering. Humility and obedience in the walk with Christ. Unity in the community.

Kinship being brothers and sisters in the family of God's household. And Christian models. Timothy, Epaphroditus, Paul, and above all, Christ.

In closing, Paul's letter to Philippians has shown that imprisonment and obstacles have not been able to stop the advancement of the gospel. The gospel is been going on.

The church must be encouraged and live in unity. As they tend to live in unity, they should develop the mindset that befits those who call upon the name of Christ. And as they develop this mindset, it is very important to heed the fact that there are models they can follow.

Christ is the first model clearly laid out. Timothy, Epaphroditus, Paul himself. As they do that, they should actually make sure they develop that strong sense of unity.

And for those specific two men, Judea and Syntyche, who are in no good terms in the church. They should take personal responsibility to work together. And a yoke-fellow should help them.

For the rest of the church, their gentleness should be known to everyone. And just in case, there is still some degree of anxiety. Let the church come to God in prayer.

With a sense of gratitude in their hearts. And the peace of God will be real in their life. May I end by saying, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, be yours as well.

Thank you for studying Philippians and all this collection of studies that we've been going through for Prison Epistles. Thank you for studying with us. I hope you are growing and learning as I am.

Thank you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 16, Call for Unity, Philippians 4.