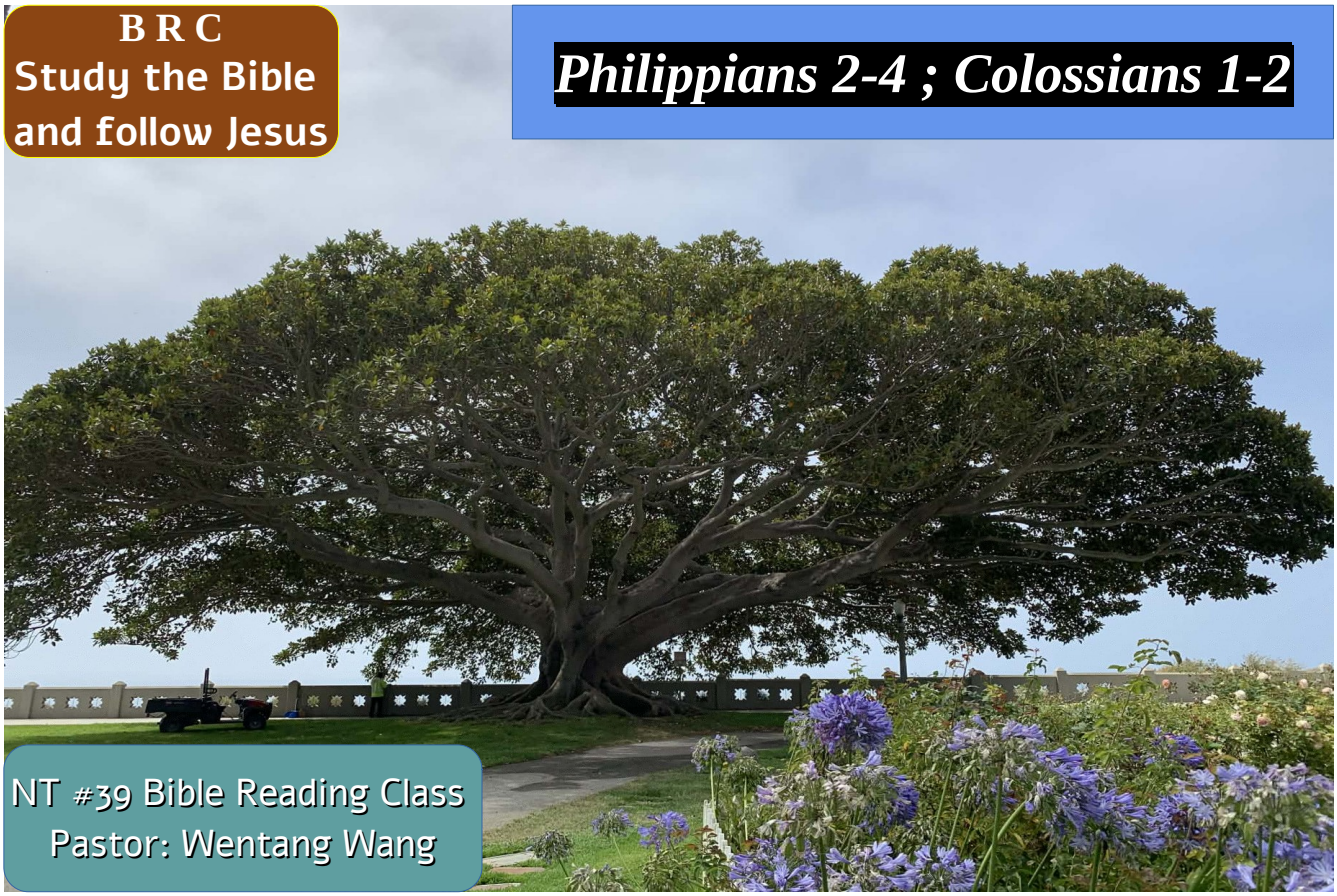

B R C
Study the Bible
and follow Jesus
Philippians 2-4 ; Colossians 1-2
NT #39 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- ***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)***

A Blessed Journey	Study the Bible, follow Jesus
1. May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will. 2. May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved. 3. May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.	

The Guiding Principles of BRC

- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement

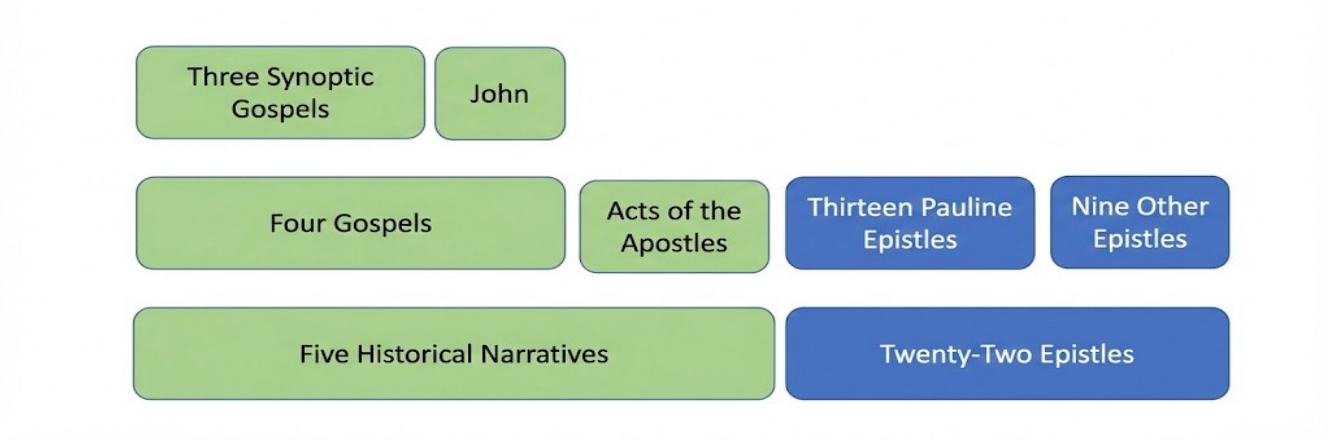
I'll complete weekly reading assignment

I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety

I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John
- The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)
- Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching



the
Prison Epistles
Philippians

Philippians: Shining as Lights

• Philippians is a letter Paul wrote to the church in Philippi while under house arrest in Rome, around AD 60. Philippi was the first church Paul established in Europe, around AD 50.

• Philippians is a warm and affectionate letter. Paul writes with two identities: first, as a missionary, thanking the church for their support and reporting his situation; second, as a spiritual father, earnestly reminding the household of God about matters they should pay attention to.

• The letter contains no rebuke—only gratitude, encouragement, and reminders.

• It emphasizes the joy of the Christian life.

• It contains no quotations from the Old Testament (Philippi was a Gentile church).

Outline of Philippians

1. Thanksgiving and Prayer, 1:1–11
2. Report on Paul’s Personal Situation, 1:12–26
3. Encouragement for the Church to Be United, 1:27–2:18
   - Unity outwardly, unity inwardly, unity in the Lord
4. Two Faithful Co-workers, 2:19–30
   - Timothy and Epaphroditus
5. Two Dangerous Types of People, 3:1–21
   - Legalists and libertines
6. Final Exhortations, 4:1–23

Key Verses in Philippians

1. He Who Began a Good Work

• ***"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (1:6)***

2. To Live Is Christ

• ***"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (1:21)***

Key Verses in Philippians

3. Have the Mind of Christ

- ***"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:"***
- ***"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped; but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross."***
- ***"Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (2:5–11)***

Key Verses in Philippians

4. Shine as Lights

• ***"Then you will shine among them like lights in the world as you hold out the word of life." (2:15–16)***

5. Christ as the Supreme Treasure

• ***"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." (3:7–8)***

Key Verses in Philippians

6. Press On Toward the Goal

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

7. The Peace That Surpasses Understanding

• *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (4:6–7)*

Philippians: Shining as Lights

• We take the phrase **“shining as lights”** from the book of Philippians as the theme slogan:

• “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like lights in the world as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.” (2:14–15, NIV)

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

1. **A Heart That Is Not Bound**

• Paul had the mind of Christ Jesus. Though his body was bound, his spirit was not bound. While in prison, he wrote letters—not with sorrow or discouragement, but filled with hope. He thanked God for the Philippians, prayed for them, and encouraged them to rejoice, shining like lights. Between the lines, we see the grace, truth, and power within him.

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

1. Everything You Do Flows From Your Heart

• Proverbs 4:23

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." (NIV)
"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." (NASB)

• The original Hebrew word for "flows" or "issues" — tôtsā'âh — carries the meaning of "to pour out, to produce, to grow forth."

• Scripture teaches that the outflow of life comes from the heart; the results of one's life spring from within. Everything you say and do, everything you think and imagine, originates from the heart. The condition of your heart determines the condition of your entire life. Therefore, you must guard it diligently—more than anything else—so that it remains in its best state.

• The heart is in its best condition when it is **in Christ.** A heart that abides in the Lord is the healthiest heart.

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

1. A Heart That Is Not Bound

• “Brothers and sisters, I still have this to say: rejoice in the Lord!”
• “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!”
• “I rejoiced greatly in the Lord!”
• “With all boldness, whether by life or by death, Christ will be exalted in my body!”
• “I can do all things through Him who gives me strength!”

Shining as Lights (1): Free from Bondage

2. The Gospel Is Not Bound

• Paul is a servant of Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1). Though he was in chains, he seized every opportunity to preach the gospel.

• The key to evangelism lies in one's heart and resolve. Those who have a heart to share the gospel will always find a way to share it. Those who lack the heart will always find it impossible. The same is true for the church.

• "Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ." (Philippians 1:12–13)

• "For this gospel I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained." (2 Timothy 2:9)

Ah, That Long-Lost Friendship!

• "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this: that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (1:3–6)

• Reading the book of Philippians is like enjoying blossoms in the springtime of friendship, like drifting in a little boat on the river of love—it captivates the heart and stirs deep longing. Paul begins by expressing his affection for the Philippians, saying, **"You are in my heart." (1:7)** Wherever he was, they shared God's grace with him. Not only did he long for them; they longed for him as well: **"You have renewed your concern for me." (4:10)** Such mutual care and heartfelt remembrance go far beyond the mechanical relationship of "pastor and congregation," entering into the realm of true friendship.

• Long-lost friendship—can it still be found between pastors and congregations today?

The Reason for His Joy

• Friendship marked by loyalty and love is certainly a source of joy, but Paul had an even greater reason to rejoice. He said that the reason for his joy was this: **“because from the first day until now, you have been united in advancing the gospel.”** Friendship was Paul’s springtime, but the gospel was his entire life. Philippi was the first church Paul established in Europe—there were Lydia the seller of purple cloth, the jailer, and believers such as Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement. Not only were they deeply connected to Paul in affection, sending money and even people to care for him; what brought Paul even greater joy was that they were of one mind in advancing the gospel. Paul was their spiritual father, and what delights a father most is not only that his children love him, but that they grow well, do well, and have a promising future. Seeing this “child of the gospel” now flourishing in the work of the gospel filled Paul with profound comfort.

• A pastor’s greatest joy is not only that his love is reciprocated, but that the gospel he preaches is prospering. Philippi was a child who made him proud; whenever Paul thought of them, his heart warmed with satisfaction and his face lit up with joy.

Discerning Love

• "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (1:9–11)

• Paul prayed for the Philippians that their love would **"abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment, so that they may discern what is best."** In an age that blindly talks about love, we must understand that Christian love is a discerning love. It is not a vague feeling, but a clear seeing—able to distinguish what is good, what is better, and what is best. Christian love always chooses the best.

Loving What Is Excellent

• In the Chinese Union Version, after the phrase “discern what is right,” a parenthetical note is added: “or love what is excellent.” The NIV translates it as “to discern what is best,” while both the NKJV and NASB render it as “approve the things that are excellent.” The original Greek carries the meaning of “tested and proven, discerned through examination.” Paul prayed that the Philippians’ love would “abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment,” enabling them to distinguish and love what is excellent.

• It turns out that love must have discernment. A love that delights in what is truly good is genuine love. In Christ, what is truly excellent? When we reach chapter 3, Paul says that he considers knowing Christ Jesus his Lord as the supreme treasure. For him, the truly excellent thing is Christ Himself.

• In Ephesians, Paul says that a love rooted and grounded can grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. In Philippians, Paul prays that the Philippians’ love would have knowledge and discernment so that they may love what is excellent. Brothers and sisters, true love and true excellence can never be separated from Jesus Christ.

What Does It Matter? Christ Is Preached!

• "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice." (1:18)

• Suppose one person preaches a message that is pure and faithfully proclaims Jesus Christ, yet his motives are wrong—he preaches for other purposes. Another person has very pure motives and sincerely preaches a prosperity gospel, yet does not preach Jesus Christ. Between these two, which one would you choose?

• Paul chooses the one whose message is pure. As long as Christ is preached, whether from false motives or true, it does not matter. Paul says that while he was in prison, some preached Christ sincerely, while others preached Christ insincerely, with motives that were not honest, intending to increase Paul's suffering in chains. Paul says, "What does it matter? Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and because of this I rejoice—yes, I will rejoice!" (the repetition intensifies the joy!)

• Paul valued the content and effect of the gospel above all else. As long as you preach Jesus Christ and lead people to Christ—even if your motives are not pure —Paul still rejoices, because Christ is preached!

The Practical Aspect of Salvation

• ***"For I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." (1:19)***

• What does Paul mean by "will turn out for my deliverance"? At this point Paul was already advanced in age. Does it mean that after preaching the gospel for so many years and leading so many to salvation, he himself was still not saved? Of course not! Paul had already believed in the Lord and received salvation on the road to Damascus.

• Modern believers often think of salvation merely as "forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, and going to heaven after death." But the Bible's definition of "salvation" is not so narrow. In Scripture, besides the eternal aspect, "salvation" often carries a practical, present-life meaning. Here, when Paul speaks of salvation, he means that God would deliver him from prison and grant him release.

• Paul said that in Asia he had suffered greatly, burdened beyond strength, even to the point of despairing of life. Yet God rescued him: ***"He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us again. On Him we have set our hope that He will continue to deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1:10)*** What Paul speaks of here is also salvation in the practical, everyday sense.

The Practical Dimension of Salvation

• When Jesus preached, He made the blind see, the lame walk, and the lepers clean. He befriended tax collectors and sinners, and said to the woman caught in adultery, **“Neither do I condemn you.” (John 8:11)** These are all practical expressions of salvation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to those who repented and believed, **“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” (Acts 2:40)** — this too is the practical side of salvation. Jesus and the apostles never said that salvation is merely believing certain doctrines, agreeing with certain teachings, and then saying a prayer. Nor did they say that salvation is simply gathering regularly, singing hymns, listening to sermons, giving offerings, and then going to heaven after death.

• The salvation spoken of by Jesus and the apostles is not about religion; it is about being accepted by God. Salvation means that the holy God is willing to accept you —a sinner—and restore His relationship with you. This acceptance is accomplished in Christ and continues in Christ. Once this relationship is restored, you will experience God’s work in your daily life. Sometimes He rescues you in suffering; sometimes He helps you through other believers; sometimes He uses you to help others. **God is the eternal, living God.** Your relationship with Him continues into eternity, and you will live before His face forever.

The Practical Dimension of Salvation

• In the New Testament, believers trusted that the risen Jesus was with them. Whether they were preaching the gospel or simply living their daily lives, they demonstrated that the One they believed in was the living God. When they encountered difficulties, they prayed for God's deliverance. For them, "salvation" was not something that happened only after death—it was something happening every day. It was not only deliverance from troubles, but also deliverance from the sinful nature. **As Jesus said: "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25)**

• When Christians lack an understanding of this practical aspect of salvation, their faith becomes a dead faith. They cannot truly be called believers—only religious adherents. They believe in religion, believe in going to heaven after death, yet in real life they doubt God's presence and lack experiences of being delivered. Toward the people around them, they also lack compassion and empathy. Jesus and His disciples cared for the poor, the blind, and the oppressed, but such people feel nothing toward the weak—worse still, they find them troublesome. When salvation is separated from real life, the living God disappears, leaving only increasingly dull religious activities and a growing sense of doubt and fear.

Paul’s Situation and His Hope

• The first chapter of Philippians is Paul’s report on his current situation. He tells the Philippians that he has been imprisoned for preaching the gospel, but he believes that he will soon be released and plans to visit them after his release.

• Paul says that whenever he thinks of them, he thanks God; whenever he prays for them, he rejoices in his heart. From the very first day, they have been united in advancing the gospel. He hopes that when he visits them—or when he hears news about them—he will find that they are standing firm with one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. That would make him even more joyful.

• From the very beginning, the book of Philippians is filled with a spirit of positivity and joy. Though Paul was confined in prison, his heart was full of joy because he thought of his beloved brothers and sisters. **After a lifetime of labor, running for the Lord, now growing old and sitting in a cell, he remembers his distant comrades—and a smile rises on his face: “Philippians, because of you I forget my troubles; because of you I rejoice; because of you I am proud.”**

Shining as Lights (2): Striving Together

• When people are united in heart, their combined strength can cut through iron.

• A united church shares the mind of Christ. Outwardly, they advance the gospel; inwardly, they fellowship and support one another. The enemy cannot withstand such unity.

• Advancing the Gospel Outwardly: One Shared Goal

• "Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

• "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel."

Shining as Lights (2): Striving Together

• There is a common phenomenon in human groups: when there is a shared goal, the group becomes united; when there is no shared goal, the group turns inward and fights. Applying this principle to the church: if the church has a common goal, it will be united internally; if it lacks a common goal, internal conflicts will arise.

• **Take evangelism** as an example. When it comes to building a church building, some agree and some disagree. When planning an outing, painting the children's classroom, or installing a sound system in the sanctuary, everyone has different opinions. But when it comes to preaching the gospel, everyone agrees—no one opposes it. If a church has concrete gospel strategies—such as student fellowships, gospel fellowships, seeker classes—running consistently throughout the year, with people continually coming to faith and being baptized, the church will strive together, and internal disputes will be greatly reduced. Another example is **Bible reading.** People may oppose many things, but no one opposes reading the Bible. If the church has practical methods that draw most members into regular Bible reading, the church will be united. After that, whatever new initiatives are introduced will be much easier, because through reading Scripture, people's minds draw closer to the Lord and closer to one another.

Work Out Your Salvation with Fear and Trembling

• “Fear and trembling” expresses an attitude of utmost seriousness—careful, diligent, and intentional in living out the salvation of Christ. It is not careless, but deeply mindful, constantly considering whether one’s life reflects the salvation of Christ. God is the One working in us; whether we desire or act, it is all from Him, with the purpose of accomplishing His good will through us.

• When this verse is read together with two other passages, the meaning becomes even clearer:

• “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

• “So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:17)

• “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12)

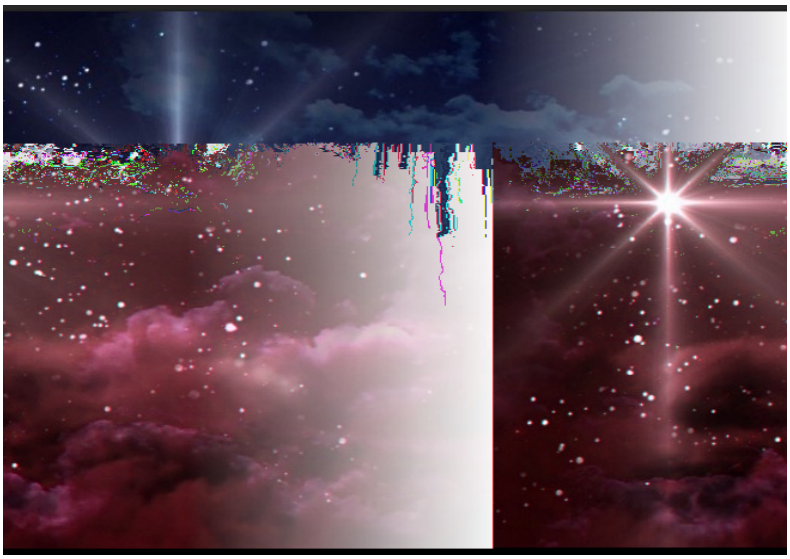
Holding Out the Word of Life

• "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold out the word of life." (2:14–16)

• This lofty passage about shining like lights in the heavens begins with something very down-to-earth: **"Do not grumble or argue."** The testimony of believers before the world is not how lofty our theories are, but how real our actions are. If a church is full of quarrels, gossip, and complaints, who would ever see you as "shining lights"?

• We live in a warped and crooked generation. Fiercely condemning it will not make you better, nor will it move anyone's heart. But if your community is harmonious and sincere, people will be touched—and even drawn. We often hear Christians denounce how corrupt and rebellious this age is, yet their own behavior is hardly admirable. Instead of drawing people to Christ, they drive them away. But those who are obedient, harmonious, and honest shine in the darkness and lead others to the Lord.

Shining as Lights (4): Deep, Costly Affection



- *“ I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.”*
- *“So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.”*

Shining as Lights (4): Deep, Costly Affection

• Scene 1: The Church in Philippi

• “Paul has arrived safely in Rome!”

• “Really? That’s wonderful! Praise the Lord—Lord, You have protected our brother Paul!”

• “He is confined in a rented house, busy preaching, barely having time to eat or drink.”

• “That’s just like him! For the sake of the gospel, he cares about nothing else.”

• “What should we do? I am a woman; it’s not convenient for me to go and care for him,” said Lydia.

• “I hold a public office; I cannot leave my post,” said the Philippian jailer.

• “I will go! I am willing to go to Rome to care for Paul,” Epaphroditus stood up and declared loudly.

• “This… this!! Brother Epaphroditus, the journey is long and dangerous—you must be careful! Lord, protect Your servant Paul, and protect our brother Epaphroditus. Grant him peace!!” The whole church knelt down together and prayed with one voice.

Shining as Lights (4): Deep, Costly Affection

• Scene 2: Inside a Room in Rome

• “Epaphroditus, why are you in tears? Are you feeling unwell again?” Paul asked with concern.

• “No, no, I’m fine. My illness is already healed,” Epaphroditus quickly wiped away his tears.

• “Then why are you crying? Are you homesick?” Paul asked.

• “No… I heard that when the Philippians learned I was sick, everyone became very worried. Who am I, that I should cause everyone such anxiety!”

• “Oh, I see! In that case, let me write a letter, and you can take it back to Philippi. These past days you’ve taken such good care of me. Now that you’re well again, go home, so I won’t have to worry about you,” Paul said.

• “But if I leave, what about you? Who will take care of you?” Epaphroditus asked with concern.

• “There are so many brothers and sisters here in Rome. What are you worried about? Go home with peace of mind,” Paul said with a gentle smile.

Shining as Lights (4): Deep, Costly Affection

• Scene 3: Under the dim light of the room, Paul writes to the church in Philippi…

• "I think it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to you. He is my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, whom you sent to take care of my needs."

• "He longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him—and not only on him, but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad, and I may have less anxiety."

• "So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me."

Shining as Lights (4): Deep, Costly Affection

• Affection 1: The Philippian ecclesia cared deeply for Paul. When they heard he had arrived in Rome, they worried about his daily needs. They gathered financial support, entrusted it to Epaphroditus, and asked him to stay in Rome to care for Paul.

• Affection 2: Epaphroditus traveled a thousand miles to Rome. Not only did he care for Paul's daily needs, he also worked with him in the ministry—and nearly died in the process. He was also afraid that the brothers and sisters in Philippi would hear of his illness and become anxious for him.

• Affection 3: Paul sent Epaphroditus back, yet feared that some might misunderstand—thinking he had abandoned Paul alone in Rome. So in his letter Paul praised Epaphroditus with great emphasis, urging everyone to honor such a man.

• Such profound affection—long journeys, physical hardship, deep consideration for one another—took place among people who shared no blood relation. It was the love of Christ that made them one family. This costly, heartfelt affection shines like light in a cold and heartless dark age.

Shining as Lights (5): Pressing Forward

- **A New Value System**
- ***"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have lost all things and consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."***

Shining as Lights (5): Pressing Forward

• A New Value System

• "Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by His Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more." (3:2–4)

• The "boasting" that appears in 2 Corinthians appears again in Philippians. Corinth was in the province of Achaia; Philippi was in the province of Macedonia. Both cities are in present-day Greece, not far from each other. It is likely that the same group of legalists were troubling the churches in that region. Paul spoke of them bluntly, calling them **"dogs, evildoers, mutilators of the flesh."** Paul did not say they were misguided brothers whom we should gently restore. Instead, he directly called them dogs and evildoers, while identifying himself as **"a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee zealous for the law,"** yet willing to discard all his former credentials for the sake of Christ, counting everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Him.

Becoming a New Creation

• ***"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation… From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." (Galatians 6:15, 17)***

• ***"No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out, and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Matthew 9:17)***

• Religious people value outward recognition; Jesus values your relationship with Him.

• Christ is the essence; everything else is secondary. **When the essence is abandoned and the secondary becomes primary,** a crisis of faith follows.

Renewed in Mind and Transformed

• "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)

• "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny (aparneomai) themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

• Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny (aparneomai) Me three times." (Matthew 26:34)

• Apart from religion, the greatest influence on you is the world.

• Renew your mind toward Jesus; let God's Word reshape your old ways of thinking.

• Self-denial includes the denial of old mindsets.

If the Three Worldviews Are Not Torn Down, Disciples Cannot Stand

• ***"See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:10)***

• ***"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have lost all things and consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:7–8)***

• Before building and planting, there must first be uprooting and tearing down**:**

1. **Worldview**
2. **View of Life**
3. **Value System**

Partiality and Malice in the Assembly

• "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the one wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:1–4)

• James saw partiality and malice in the place where believers gathered.

• Judging by appearance, favoring the rich and despising the poor—such behavior among believers falls short of the glory of the Lord.

Instant Value Judgments

• "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27–28)

• How others judge your value:

1. Race
2. Social status
3. Wealth or poverty
4. Gender

Temptations from the “Shared Cultural Mindset”

• ***“Blessed is the one who <u>does not</u> walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night.” (Psalm 1:1–2)***

• ***“For Demas, because he loved this present world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.” (2 Timothy 4:10)***

1. Secularism: This life, this world—nothing beyond that matters.
2. Materialism: Money is the only real power.
3. Individualism: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

Shining as Lights (5): Pressing Forward

• Forgetting What Lies Behind, Straining Toward What Is Ahead

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

• Paul declared that in Christ he had received **"a righteousness not of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith" (3:9).** This Paul, justified by faith, was now imprisoned for proclaiming Jesus Christ. Looking at himself, and thinking of the Lord's suffering and resurrection, he said: **"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."**

He felt that Christ was so rich, so immeasurable, and he himself had not yet fully experienced even Christ's death and resurrection. "I am still far from it," he thought. "All I can do is to pursue with all my strength—forgetting what is behind, straining toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal."

He hoped that one day he would receive that heavenly prize—the prize for which God had called him in Christ Jesus.

Shining as Lights (5): Pressing Forward

• Forgetting What Lies Behind, Straining Toward What Is Ahead

• What Paul meant by **“forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal”** is that he had exchanged his past in legalism for the pursuit of Christ. This radical transformation of life gave him a new power and a new outlook as he ran forward.

He said these words to use his own life experience to remind the Philippians to reject those “dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh,” and to pursue Christ with their whole heart: Look at me—Paul. In the past I was even more zealous than these people, yet now I have thrown away all those worthless things and am wholly pursuing Christ.

Brothers and sisters, you must do the same.

Shining as Lights (5): Pressing Forward

• Forgetting What Lies Behind, Straining Toward What Is Ahead

• "All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained." (3:15–16)

• All among us who are spiritually mature should hold this mindset. And if for any reason you have a different view, God will surely make the same truth clear to you. Yet each person is at a different stage in their spiritual journey. Wherever you currently stand, walk forward according to the measure you have reached.

• Paul's words—**"forgetting what is behind, straining toward what is ahead; living up to what we have attained"**—are not only the best explanation of truth but also the best posture for life. Brothers and sisters, do not look back, do not live in regret. Life is short; do not waste precious time on a past that cannot be changed. Let us look to Christ, look ahead, and keep moving forward.

Shining as Lights (6): Standing Firm in the Lord

- **Stand Firm in the Lord, 4:1–9**

- ***"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my dear friends." (4:1)***

Shining as Lights (6): Standing Firm in the Lord

• Euodia and Syntyche

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

• The theme of this passage (4:1–9) is **"standing firm in the Lord."** It is divided into three parts:

1. Urging two senior sisters to be of one mind in the Lord.

2. Encouraging the Philippians to present their needs to God through prayer.

3. Teaching the Philippians what they ought to think about and what they ought to do.

• Christians who stand firm in the Lord bear a testimony of unity; when internal conflicts arise, they must be resolved promptly. Christians who stand firm in the Lord enjoy the peace that God gives, which guards their hearts and minds in Christ. Christians who stand firm in the Lord cultivate noble thoughts, beautiful conduct, and a moral standard that others admire.

Peace Beyond Understanding

• Unexpected Peace

• "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

1. Prayer — speaking to God: thanksgiving, praise, adoration, requests, confession.

2. Petition — presenting specific requests to God: pleading, asking for provision, healing, and intercession.

3. Thanksgiving — counting God's blessings and giving thanks to Him.

What Do You Think About? What Do You Remember?

• What should you think about?

• "Brothers and sisters, I still have more to say: whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if there is any virtue (and of course there is!)***, and if there is anything praiseworthy*** (and of course there is!), ***think about such things."***

1. True — true, honest, truthful: reality, truth, facts, sincerity; not false, not deceptive.

2. Noble — honorable: the opposite of base; lofty, moral, worthy of respect.

3. Right — just: giving to God what belongs to God, giving to people what belongs to people; fulfilling responsibilities and obligations.

4. Pure — pure in thought, motive, and action; not defiled, not mixed with ulterior purposes.

5. Lovely — lovely, gracious: not repulsive, but delightful; seen by others as good.

6. Admirable — admirable, of good report: kind and gracious toward others, winning hearts rather than losing them.

What Should You Think About? What Should You Do?

• What should you do?

• "Whatever you have learned, received, heard, or seen in me—put these into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

• A good example

1. Learned — what you have learned from my teaching
2. Received — what you have received from my instruction and life
3. Heard — what you have heard from my words
4. Seen — what you have seen in my conduct

The God Who Gives Peace

• From the peace God gives, to the God who gives peace

• "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

• "Whatever you have learned, received, heard, or seen in me—put these into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Shining as Lights (7): I Can Do All Things

• A Victorious Life

• "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation—whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength."

Shining as Lights (7): I Can Do All Things

• I have learned

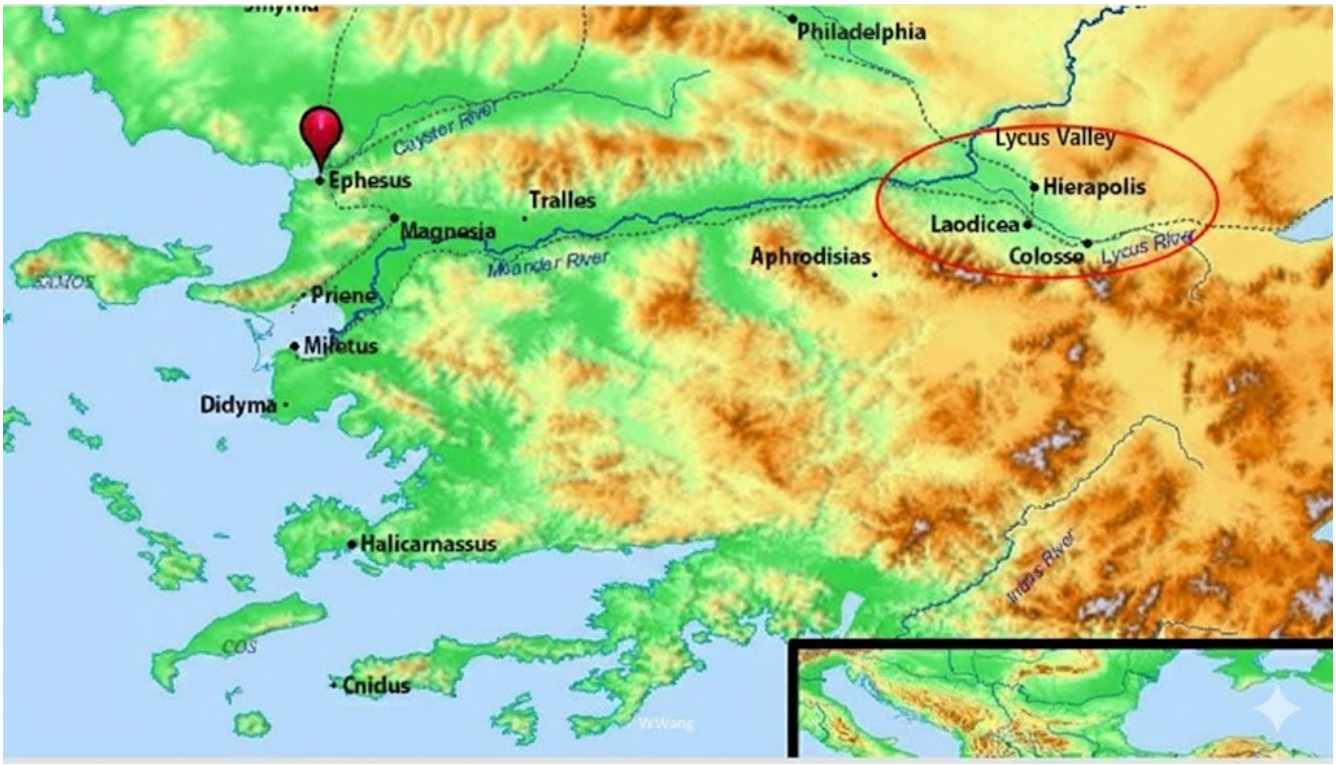
1. To be content in whatever circumstance I am in
2. To know how to live in humble circumstances
3. To know how to live in abundance
4. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength!

the
Prison Epistles
Colossians

The Seven Churches of Revelation

• In clockwise order:

1. Ephesus
2. Smyrna
3. Pergamum
4. Thyatira
5. Sardis
6. Philadelphia
7. Laodicea


Philadelphia
Caystter River
Ephesus
Lycus Valley
Hierapolis
Tralles
Magnesia
Laodicea
Colosse
Lycus River
Aphrodisias
Meander River
Priene
Miletus
Didyma
Halicarnassus
Cnidus

Three Cities of the Lycus River Valley:
Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis
Lycus River Valley
Meander R.
Hierapolis
He works hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis, I can testify to this. Colossians 4:13
Lycus River
Laodicea
Colossae

Colossians

1. Author: Paul

2. Date of Writing: Written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, around A.D. 62/63.

3. Place of Writing: Rome, in the house where he was under house arrest.

4. Purpose of Writing:

A. Doctrinal: Paul learned from Epaphras that the church in Colossae was being disturbed by heresies. He wrote to correct false teachings concerning the person of Christ.

B. Practical: To encourage them to live out Christ in their interpersonal relationships.

C. Personal: To have Onesimus (4:9) and Tychicus carry the letter back to Colossae, and for Onesimus to receive forgiveness from his master Philemon.

Colossians

5. Characteristics of the Book:

A. It is the richest epistle in its teaching on the nature and person of Christ.

B. Colossians 1:15–23, together with Ephesians 1:17–23 and Philippians 2:6–11, forms three of the strongest Christological passages in all the Pauline letters.

C. The background concerning Onesimus can be studied together with the Epistle to Philemon.

Colossians

6. **Theme of the Book:** The Preeminence of Christ

7. **Outline of the Book:**

   I. Christ’s Supremacy Above All Things (Chapters 1–2)

   II. Christ’s Supremacy in Our Daily Living (Chapters 3–4)

8. **Key Words of the Book:** Fullness, Wisdom, Mystery

The Structure of Colossians

- Opening Greeting, 1:1–14
- Main Body, 1:15–4:6
    1. The Preeminence of Christ, 1:15–22
    2. The Servant of Christ, 1:23–2:7
    3. Those Who Deviate from Christ, 2:8–23
    4. The Christian Life, 3:1–4:6
- Closing Greetings, 4:7–18

•Opening Greeting, 1:1–14

1. Greeting, 1:1–2
2. Thanksgiving, 1:3–8
3. Prayer, 1:9–14

•The Preeminence of Christ, 1:15–22

1. The Nature of Christ, 1:15
2. Christ and Creation, 1:16–17
3. Christ and the Church, 1:18–19
4. Christ and Salvation, 1:20–23

•The Servant of Christ, 1:23–2:7

1. The Cost of a Servant of Christ, 1:24
2. The Message of a Servant of Christ, 1:25–27
3. The Task of a Servant of Christ, 1:28–29
4. The Encouragement of a Servant of Christ, 2:1–7

•Those Who Deviate from Christ, 2:8–23

1. The Nature of Heresy, 2:8–15
2. Examples of Heresy, 2:15–17
3. The Attitude of Heresy, 2:18–19
4. The Uselessness of Heresy, 2:20–23

- The Christian Life, 3:1–4:6
    1. Personal Life, 3:1–11
    2. Church Life, 3:12–17
    3. Family Life, 3:18–21
    4. Work Life, 3:22–4:1
    5. Prayer Life, 4:2–4
    6. Social Life, 4:5–6
- Closing Greetings, 4:7–18