

The Joy of Supporting Gospel Ministry

Philippians 4:10-23

I would invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to **Philippians 4** for this message entitled, “The Joy of Supporting Gospel Ministry.” Our text for today is **Philippians 4:10-23**, and this message will conclude our study of this remarkably instructive letter which Paul wrote to his beloved friends in Philippi.

It’s been quite a long time since we have taught on giving from the pulpit. In fact, the last time I could find is six years ago when Pastor Leake preached a series on stewardship as the church prepared to purchase this building. **There are two reasons we’re going to talk about supporting gospel ministry today.** First and most important, it’s the next and last passage in our verse-by-verse study of Philippians. As such, God’s providence requires us to consider biblical principles of supporting gospel ministry. But also, in God’s providence, we are in a long season of transition in the life of our church.

The most obvious transition is the fact that we have been looking for a senior pastor for two years. That search continues, and while there’s been some interaction with applicants recently, there haven’t been any strong candidates for a while.

Another transition of sorts is that the Lord keeps bringing new people to the church such that over 25% percent of our members have joined since Pastor Leake was promoted to heaven. That doesn’t include the new group of members we’re about to welcome in a couple weeks. This membership class, I believe, is the largest class we’ve ever had. The transition in this respect is that we need to respond to that growth in various ways.

With these transitions we all need reminders and encouragements regarding the support of gospel ministry. So this text is, by God’s design, very relevant for us today.

If you’re there in **Philippians 4**, please follow along as I read **vs. 10-23**. . . .

As you can see this is a very personal part of the letter. It's so personal it may have been embarrassing for the Philippian church to later realize this letter would be spread around because it highlights their unique personal relationship to Paul as well as their generosity—something they probably would have preferred stay secret. Nevertheless, here it is. And because it is here in God's inspired, inerrant word, it is profitable for us.

In this text we find five lessons of how God provides for the spread of the gospel. Though Paul speaks very directly of the gift from the Philippian church, and he speaks very directly about his own contentment and his financial situation, we should not forget that the gospel is God's gospel—His good news to the world. And Paul is Christ's apostle. And the Philippian church is Christ's church. And all the resources in the world belong to God who is the Creator of all.

So when Christ commissioned the Apostle Paul to go and proclaim the gospel, and when Christ gave birth to the church in Philippi, He did not then step back and let the chips fall where they may. No, He has been intimately involved in caring for and providing for everyone involved. It is Christ who ensures that the material means necessary are provided so that the gospel can indeed go forth. But He doesn't do that by raining money from heaven like manna—He provides for the spread of the gospel through His people. And therefore it is our privilege, yes, our joy to be used by God to see His kingdom advance in this world.

The five lessons of how God provides for the spread of the gospel are these: **First**, He stirs the hearts of His people. **Second**, He grants His workers contentment. **Third**, He enables givers to be generous. **Fourth**, He rewards those who give. And **fifth**, He provides for all His people.

Let's begin with the first way that God provides for the spread of the gospel, namely. . . .

1. He stirs the hearts of His people.

LOOK at **vs. 10** . . .

Paul rejoices in the Lord that the Philippians have a revived their concern for him which resulted in their sending a financial gift. The word “concern” is actually the word “to think,” and the idea is similar to how we might say, “Thank you so much for thinking of me.” The Philippians thought about Paul, they thought about his situation being in prison for over two years, and their hearts were stirred to take action and so something.

It's no slip of the tongue that Paul says, “I rejoiced *in the Lord*,” instead of, “I rejoiced in you!” You see Paul viewed their financial gift through the lens of God’s word, and as a result the Spirit produced delight in him. And while there was certainly delight in the action they had taken, his initial delight is in God’s work of stirring their hearts.

Even though Paul doesn’t say it here, elsewhere he identifies God as the source of their generous hearts. Keep your finger here and turn with me to **2 Corinthians 8**. You might want to keep a bookmark in both passages because we’ll come back this passage later. Here in **2 Corinthian 8** Paul writes to the Corinthian church about another time that the Philippian church, as well as other churches in the region of Macedonia, donated to support the believers in Jerusalem. For now just look at **vs. 1 . . .**

Note how Paul says here, the grace of God was given in the churches, and then he goes on to talk about their financial giving. This is his way of saying that God stirred the hearts of His people to provide financially for others. And it is right to call it God’s grace because the privilege to support God’s work is an undeserved gift.

Think about this: anybody with any means has the opportunity to support all kinds of efforts around the world. Anyone can donate to alleviate poverty, help those affected by natural disasters, assist the underprivileged, support animal shelters and zoos, donate to first responder organizations, any many other causes. There are endless non-profit organizations working to alleviate suffering and promote good in the world. Those efforts are good and you are free to direct your resources in any direction you desire.

But all those things pertain to temporal needs and suffering. Because of the sinful nature of man and the curse of sin in the world, all the good we do to benefit others lasts only for this life. I'm not saying we shouldn't do it, I'm just saying it's temporary. We, the body of Christ, have the unique privilege of supporting efforts that have everlasting benefits for those who hear and believe the gospel. We've been given the underserved gift of contributing to the outworking of God's redemptive plan of saving souls and exalting Christ and seeing God's glory displayed in the world.

And yet, because the work of God in the world usually is far less tangible than meeting the physical needs in the world, it can seem less compelling. Missionaries often exert extraordinary effort over years and don't see much fruit. So their reports don't garner excitement. In the local church it can often seem like business as usual week in and week out and not much changes. And so it requires a work of God in the heart to both see the spiritual opportunities and needs, and then desire to participate in what God is doing—especially when one's own resources are limited.

So here we see that the grace of God was given in the churches, and that leads to God's people giving to the work of the Lord. Coming back to Philippians, the Lord stirred the hearts of the people in the church, their thoughts were directed to Paul and his needs, and they took action.

As you look again at vs. 10 you can note that Paul wanted to make sure they didn't misunderstand his attitude toward them. If he had simply said, "you have revived your concern for me," they might have assumed that he thought they had forgotten about him. So to clarify he says, "indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity."

It's been over three years since Paul last visited Philippi. And most of those three years he has been in Roman custody—in Caesarea for two years and now in Rome. For a large portion of that time there was a lot of uncertainty of what would happen with his case—would the false charges of Jews stick and get him executed? Would he be found innocent and let go?

During the two years in Caesarea there was a lot of waiting between hearings and the uncertainty made it difficult for definitive news to travel around Asia minor with any sense of what Paul's needs actually were.

The distance between Caesarea and Philippi was such that it would have taken months for news and updates to get to the Philippians. There was a lot of uncertainty and distance that took away the opportunity for the Philippian church to send support. They were concerned, they just didn't know how to help. But once they heard he had been moved to Rome, that was a lot closer and they were able to dispatch Epaphroditus and his companions and reach Paul within weeks of hearing about his situation.

Being stirred by the Lord to give is a significant distinction between the Old Testament tithe and New testament giving. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says about giving, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Many people use the word "tithe" to refer to giving in the church, but that is not the most helpful word. The tithe was a mandatory tax imposed on the nation of Israel to support the priests and the temple. The New Testament does not use that term in reference to supporting the local church or gospel ministry. You can be grateful that the church does not impose a tax on you when you become a member. So among other principles of giving, we would urge you to consider the opportunities before you and seek the Lord for how He might stir your heart to give.

Consider then the second way that God provides for the spread of the gospel . . .

2. He grants His workers contentment.

LOOK at vs. 11-14 . . .

This section, and especially vs. 13, has been co-opted by many to claim for themselves the ability to do just about anything they set their mind to—through Christ, of course. But we have to understand this section in its context and recognize that while there may indeed be a principle that can be drawn and applied to other kinds of situations, Paul

specifically speaks about his ability to carry out his calling as an apostle regardless of the financial resources at his disposal.

The key word that defines this section is contentment. Paul wants the Philippians to know that his joy over their gift is not due to desperation. By using the word “want” in vs. 11, the NAS preserves the centuries old use of the term which means “to be in need.” We’re most familiar with the language of Psalm 23 where it says, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” Meaning, with the Lord as your Shepherd, you will never be in need of the necessities of life. Paul is not lacking necessities—he is content with what the Lord has given him because it is always sufficient, if not more so.

Contentment rises out of the perspective that all material goods are finite and this life is temporary, but God is infinite and heaven is forever. So if I have God in my life, I have everything I truly need. In 1 Timothy 6 Paul spoke against professing believers whose eyes were always looking for financial gain. He said, “But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” Food and covering, or clothing—those are the only necessities according to Paul.

It's because of that disposition that he says here that he has learned how to live humbly or prosperously. He learned how to function on an empty stomach when food was scarce, as well as when food was plentiful. He could continue His mission whether he had ample resources or limited resources.

The Lord provided for Paul in a variety of ways. At times he was supported by the people he ministered to. Sometimes he supported himself by making and selling tents. Sometimes he was supported by the income of his ministry partners. And other times he was supported by churches in other places. In Acts 18 for example Paul went to Corinth and at first he partnered with Aquila and Priscilla making tents during the week, and on the Sabbath he would proclaim the gospel in the synagogue. And then it says, “When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely

to the word.” Either Silas and Timothy brought money with them, or they took over the effort of earning an income so Paul could focus on ministry. Either way, it freed Paul up to give himself fully to evangelism without having to make tents.

It was not above Paul to work to support himself, but even that wasn't always possible. In **2 Corinthians 11**, as Paul details the extent of his suffering for Christ, he includes this, “I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” If you think about life in the ancient world, travel was slow and communication with people in other cities and regions was even slower. So as Paul travelled from place to place, there were times when he would run out of money, and there were no ATMs. He couldn't make a call or send an email asking for a wire transfer. And even though he had the skill to make tents, the nature of that work meant he could only do it when he could find an existing business to partner with—like Aquila and Priscilla. So Paul was dependent on Christ to strengthen him both to endure the times of hardship, as well as to resist the love of money in times of prosperity.

Paul had the same disposition as Asaph who wrote in **Psalm 73**, “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Saying that God is his portion, is to say that God is all he needs. He didn't even consider his own health to be a need. With the Lord he was content and strong, no matter what he lacked.

According to **Galatians 6**, envy is a deed of the flesh. And while contentment is not explicitly stated as a fruit of the Spirit, what is contentment if not the mixture of joy, peace, and self-control? Contentment then is a God-given disposition. It begins with a biblical view of life and eternity, and it results in having the right desires, values, and priorities.

So we learn from this text that the Lord provides for the spread of the gospel by empowering his people to preach and proclaim Christ and serve one another regardless of the amount of resources.

Paul ends this section by saying in vs. 14 . . . even though he is content and even though he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him, it was good of them to join in his affliction by sharing with him what the Lord had provided for them. And so it is that today, even though there's a lot of ministry we can do without money—did you get that? Every New Testament command can be fulfilled without a building or vocational staff or air conditioning or material resources. Even though that's true, it is good to take what the Lord has given to us and use it to support the gospel. With more resources there are more opportunities, more dedicated time, and fewer distractions. But whether with much or little, we are strengthened by Christ to be faithful to Him.

God provides for the spread of the gospel not only by stirring the hearts of His people, by granting His workers contentment, but also third . . .

3. He enables givers to be generous.

LOOK at vs. 15-16 . . .

Here Paul reflects not on the current gift from the Philippian church, but on their past generosity. He's really picking back up on what he said in vs. 10 about their thoughtful concern, affirming that the gift he just received is nothing new—this has been their practice from the beginning of Paul's ministry among them.

If you recall it's been about 10 years since Paul first went to Philippi and planted the church there. Acts 16 gives the details of his ministry in Philippi, and then Acts 17 tells us that after Paul left Philippi he travelled through various cities, finally arriving at Thessalonica. From there he went to Berea, and ultimately to Athens where he preached the sermon we studied last week.

The distance from Philippi to Thessalonica was 95 miles—not far by today's standards, but a multi-day trip when you're walking or on horseback. Acts 17 tells us that Paul was in Thessalonica for about a month or more, giving the Philippians ample time to send

people to Paul at least twice if not more to provide support and perhaps getting more teaching from him for their budding church.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Thessalonians, he reminded them of that time saying, “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.” What he doesn’t say, perhaps to avoid shaming them, is that he was also supported by the Philippian church. Well after Athens Paul went to Corinth, and he wrote to that church **2 Corinthians 11:9**, “when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia [aka Philippi] they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.”

Time and time again the Philippian church supported Paul. As great as that is, what’s really amazing is that they did so even though they themselves were poor. If you still have a bookmark in **2 Corinthians 8**, go back there. Listen to what Paul says about the Philippians and other churches there in **vs. 1-5 . . .**

When Paul was travelling back through Macedonia on his way to Jerusalem, he was collecting money not for himself, but for the believers in Jerusalem who were going through a famine. And it appears that he may have tried to avoid asking the Macedonian churches to contribute recognizing that they themselves were going through a difficult time. That would explain why they would have to beg Paul, as he says, to contribute. If that was their heart in being concerned for the physical needs of the believers in Jerusalem, you can understand why they were so eager to generously support Paul time and again as he took the gospel further and further into the Gentile world.

Note that he says they gave according to their ability and beyond their ability. When God stirs the hearts of His people to give, it’s not just the leftovers we are compelled to give; rather He stirs in our heart to give sacrificially. LOOK again at that last phrase of **2 Corinthians 8:5. . . .**

The mindset of sacrificial, generous giving is that you are giving not just your resources, but your whole self to the Lord, entrusting yourself to Him. Go back to **Philippians 4** and see again how this corresponds to how Paul describes their gift at the end of **verse 18** . . . They viewed their gifts as a sacrifice to God.

The Philippian church knew that they were not giving to a man so he could survive, they were giving to God so that God's gospel would have maximum opportunities to spread. Sacrificial giving elevates God's kingdom purposes above personal wants and entertainment and ease and comfort. Generous giving means saying 'no' to some desires so that God's workers can say 'yes' to ministry opportunities. This kind of sacrificial, generous giving is empowered by the Spirit of God who moves in the hearts of His people to give, trusting in Him.

Consider the fourth way God provides for the spread of the gospel . . .

4. He rewards those who give.

LOOK at **vs. 17** . . .

In this short phrase Paul expresses a truth that many today have taken and twisted into false doctrine. The word "profit" is simply the word "fruit." And the word "account" is the word *logos*, which is usually translated "word," but in this and similar contexts refers to an account or a record. For example, in the parable of the talents Jesus said that when the master returned he "came and settled accounts with [his slaves]." That use of "account" refers financial records. Other times "account" refers to historical records. For example, in **Romans 14:12** it says, "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God." And I believe that is the sense we should take here.

When Paul says, "I seek for the profit which increases to your account," he is emphatically not teaching the prosperity doctrine that if you sow a seed of faith by giving money, God will reward you by giving you exponentially more money than you gave. No doubt you've heard that false teaching on TBN or the radio.

Listen: God does not promise that the more money we give to the church or televangelists, the more money God will give to us. That is a false teaching meant only to line the pockets of already wealthy people from the scraps of deceived poor people all around the world.

Whether or not God chooses to bless us financially for our sacrificial giving is a matter of His sovereign purposes and plans, but it is not—again, it is not a promise.

So what is Paul saying here? How does the financial gift the Philippians sent produce fruit that increases to their account? God does not promise temporal financial rewards, but He does promise eternal rewards. Again, God does not promise that if you give sacrificially in this life you will be repaid with riches in this life. But God does promise that when we give of ourselves and give back to Him what is His and we serve His purposes, He will repay us with glory forever and ever.

Consider Matthew 6:21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” And then **vs. 24**, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

If we give money to God expecting that He'll give us money in return, we're not worshipping God, we're worshipping money. If God is not the ends, but He is the means to the end of wealth, that's idolatry. No, we ought to give to God as an act of worship, while knowing as a secondary matter that eternal rewards await us where there will be no end to our joy and delight in what God gives to those who love Him.

Consider 1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to

be generous and ready to share, [LISTEN] storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

Jesus said in **Luke 14**, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Time and time again, Scripture emphasizes that the ways in which we serve God in this life—whether it’s serving with our hands or giving of our time or resources—God will lavishly repay in eternity. So, here in **Philippians 4:17** Paul declares he is far more interested in their eternal rewards than his own temporal provision. He rejoices in their gift more because of what it means for their eternal joy than his temporary comfort.

And beloved, this should be our perspective as well. As with so many aspects of the Christian life, we must have an eternal perspective. As long as this life may feel, eternity really is forever. And while the Scripture doesn’t say precisely how our faithfulness in this life translates to rewards in the next, we do know this: We serve a generous God. He is a God who abounds in love and kindness and grace. **Psalm 16:11** says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” If there is one thing I can guarantee about eternity it’s that you will not be disappointed. We will be overwhelmed beyond comprehension at how God lavishes His abundance toward us.

God provides for the spread of the gospel by promising us eternal rewards for all that we do to support the gospel. Finally, consider the fifth way God provides for the spread of the gospel...

5. He provides for all His people.

LOOK at **vs. 18-19**. . .

In the last point we saw that God promises eternal rewards. Here we see that God provides for our temporal needs.

Paul expresses both the reality that God has provided abundantly for him through their gift. And he declares the promise that God will provide for all of their needs as well. Please take careful notice, beloved, that he does not say, “God will supply all your wants or all of your desires.” Do you see that? God does not promise to give you all that you desire. Rather, it says that He promises to supply all your *needs*—that which is necessary.

But doesn't Psalm 37:4 say that if I delight myself in the Lord He will give me the desires of my heart? Yes, it does say that, and that is absolutely true. Here's what that means: the more you grow in your love for God, the more you will love the things He loves and desire the things He desires. Consequently, your former desires for the things of this world will fade. You will come to align your view of needs and wants very differently.

It's amazing how in our prosperous society we have lost sight of what is actually a need. Many kids today believe they *need* a cell phone. We may believe that we *need* a car. We might think that we *need* constant access to the Internet. There are all kinds of things that we convince ourselves that we *need*, and then we craft our lifestyle and expectations based on our perceived needs. And then when we can't get what we need, or we lose what we need, we get angry or depressed. We complain in our hearts to God and others about how we deserve so much more than what we have.

Ten years ago I was in Kenya and taught about 80 Pentecostal pastors for three days—half of them were women pastors. How that came about is a story for another time. But during one of the Q&A sessions, the oldest person in the room asked a question. She was in her 60s but her many years of suffering made her body look like she was over 100. She asked me a question along the lines of, “*Why doesn't God always answer my prayer for food?*” You see this woman lived and ministered in the bush of Kenya where food was scarce. Hunger, not satisfaction, was her normal experience. I guarantee that her definition of *need* was quite different than any of ours would be.

I said more than this, but here's the gist: God provides for His children precisely what they need to fulfill His purposes for their life, until such a time as it is His will to bring their life to an end. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." As the Lord provided daily for the nation of Israel as they left Egypt and wandered through the desert for 40 years, He provides for us as well.

I need to say that knowing that God will provide for us empowers us to give generously, but we should not give recklessly. Meaning, we shouldn't give money to the church or others that is needed to pay obligations like housing or other bills assuming it'll all work out. At the same time, sometimes we obligate ourselves to excess desires. Years ago when we lived in California a man asked the church for money. After meeting with him, the pastor walked him to his car, and saw the man's car was almost brand new and learned he had a \$400 a month car payment. You can probably guess the counsel he was given to solve his financial troubles.

In a more precious case one of our members expressed her sorrow to me that she couldn't give more to the church because she didn't have a job and there was only so much she could pull from her savings to give regularly. As much as I rejoiced in this dear sister's desire to give, I told her this was not the time for her to be giving to the church. Her heart was in the right place but it was making it difficult for her to meet her obligations. So there's a balance between generosity and reckless giving. Having said that, I could be wrong, but my guess is most of us struggle to be generous more than we struggle with reckless giving.

Whatever the case, when we give to the Lord to support the spread of the gospel, we can be confident that God will indeed supply our needs. And most often even beyond that, as it says in 1 Timothy 6, "God richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." And it is because

of the abundance that He gives to us that we have the joy and privilege of giving back to Him to see His gospel go forth and His people built up.

Application

These five lessons of how God provides for the spread of the gospel are as applicable to us as they were to the Philippians and Paul. God stirs the hearts of His people, He gives His workers contentment, He grants gives the ability to be generous, He rewards those who give, and He provides for all His people.

As we look around Hope Bible Church, the Lord is bearing fruit all over the place. From the ministry level such as Hope Academy to Hope Biblical Counseling Center to the individual heart level as He is saving and sanctifying His people. There are significant opportunities before us to press forward and increase the work we are doing for Christ's sake.

In the coming weeks we'll be putting out information about specific opportunities, but until then, we would encourage you to pray and consider how the Lord would stir your heart to give to gospel ministry so that we can continue to see the gospel go forth and God's people built up.

Your giving is between you and the Lord, and we trust that He will work in all of us in order to accomplish His purposes in our church. And with that, we will be content.

Conclusion

Beloved, there is joy in supporting gospel ministry. There is joy on the part of gospel workers in seeing God's work in the hearts of others to give to eternal purposes. And there is joy on the part of givers who delight in participating in the ministry with the time, energy, and resources God has given to them. And the collective joy of gospel workers and gospel givers brings glory to God. LOOK at vs. 20 . . .

God is the giver of life and breath and all things, so He alone deserves the glory. We cannot give anything except what we first received from the Lord. We can't work except with the strength that God provides. And we certainly can't produce fruit in the lives of those to whom we minister except that the Spirit works in their hearts. We give and work and it's our joy to give God the glory for how He uses our efforts.

Paul opened the letter in 1:1 saying. . . . and now he ends the letter with greetings to all the saints who are in Philippi, from all the saints in Rome. LOOK at vs. 21-23 . . .

Saints are not super Christians who've reached some high level of spirituality. Every person who has been washed by the blood of Christ and wears the righteous robes of Christ, being declared holy and righteous by God is a saint—a holy one. From the youngest believer to the oldest, we are all saints in Christ. And that's important to remember if you think back to all that Paul has written in this letter.

Though the letter is loving and gentle from start to finish, Paul addresses sin and problems in the church. He even named two women earlier in this chapter. But no matter how much a person struggles with sin or is involved in conflict, we are all saints before God, and we should view and treat one another as fellow saints in Christ.

The benediction in vs. 23 is a common way of ending a letter, but it's not meaningless. His benediction is an extension of the grace of Christ. Whatever troubles they face, whether due to pressure from the world, conflicts within the church, or their sacrificial giving, they need God's grace. And what the Lord said to Paul, He says to all: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

As we complete the study of this letter, I remind you of its theme: Rejoice! To live is Christ, to die is gain. God's grace enables us to rejoice—to view the circumstances of life through the lens of God's word and allow the Spirit to produce delight and strength in us. God's grace empowers us to live as Christ, dying to ourselves and reflecting His character for all to see. And God's grace reminds us that to die is gain. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to come.