

# PHILIPPIANS

## LESSON THIRTEEN JOY IN CONTENTMENT (4:10-23)

4:10 **But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity**

- A. Again, we learn another source of joy for the apostle Paul.
- B. He found joy in the flourishing of the Philippians' care for him.
  - 1. The Greek word for "care" actually means "to exercise the mind" or "to entertain a sentiment."
  - 2. Thus, it means "to set one's affections on," "to have understanding," "to feel or think," or "to direct one's mind to a thing."
  - 3. In this verse, their care refers to their thinking on Paul's behalf.
  - 4. Vincent writes: "Ye caused your thinking on my behalf to bloom anew."
  - 5. The ASV reads: "Ye have revived your thought for me."
  - 6. And, it has flourished ("to sprout up, grow green again, revive") again.
  - 7. This had happened "at the last" or after some time had passed.
- C. Yet, Paul's joy was not based upon his receiving a gift or monetary support from them – for the sake of the money itself.
- D. The tender relationship between Paul and the Philippians was not built upon whether or not they supported him.
- E. Instead, it caused him joy for it demonstrated their faithfulness to the Lord.
  - 1. They had helped Paul before, early after their conversions.
  - 2. Yet, it had been some time since they last had helped him.
  - 3. This could have been an indication of their drifting away from their service as Christians.
  - 4. However, Paul knew that it was only because they lacked opportunity.
  - 5. So, by reviving their care for him, they showed their continual faithfulness to the Lord and his church.
- F. Paul's joy and contentment was not based upon how much money he had or did not have.

4:11 **Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content**

- A. Paul makes sure that they understand that he was not writing of a sense of dire need.
  - 1. He did not want to imply that God had left him in a state wherein his needs were not being met (cf. Matthew 6:33).
  - 2. Nor did he want them to think that his joy and contentment were based upon material things.
- B. Instead, he wanted them to know that he had learned contentment.

1. It is important to notice that this characteristic had to be learned.
  2. Paul was not born with this attribute, nor was he given it supernaturally when he became a Christian.
  3. Like all Christian characteristics, it had to be learned and matured in the apostle.
- C. The Greek word for “content” is worthy of a closer examination.
1. The word actually means “self-sufficient” or “independent of external circumstances.”
  2. It was a word used by the Stoic philosophers (cf. Acts 17:18).
  3. They believed that man’s life was ruled by Fate.
  4. Thus, a man must be strong to bear the storms of life – he must not be overcome with either joy or discouragement.
  5. A Stoic was to be “able, by the power of his own will, to resist the shock of circumstance.”
  6. However, when Paul uses this word, he does so in a manner that expresses the truth about life and true joy.
  7. Paul was “self-sufficient” only because he was trusting in and dependent upon God. In fact, he was “God-sufficient.”
- D. Contentment must be joined with godliness (cf. 1 Timothy 6:6).

4:12 **I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need**

- A. To be abased is to be humbled, brought low or humiliated.
- B. The word for “abound” means to *superabound* – to excel or exceed a fixed number.
- C. The word for “be full” literally refers to the fattening of an animal – thus, to gorge or satisfy with food.
- D. The word for “be hungry” means to famish, to pine away from hunger, to suffer want.
- E. To suffer need means to fall below or short – to suffer want, be devoid of, to lack.
- F. Another important idea in this verse is when Paul states: “I am instructed.”
  1. This word is a form of the Greek *mueo* – meaning, “to be initiated (into the mysteries).”
  2. It carries the idea of being taught fully or instructed.
  3. However, this word was used by those who practiced the mystery religions of their initiation into their system of belief.
  4. So, here again, Paul takes a religious word and practice of his day and gives its true meaning.
  5. True initiation comes relying completely upon God and the truth revealed in His word.
  6. Paul had “learned the secret” (ASV) of contentment – ***trust in God!***

4:13 **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**

- A. Thus, Paul could face any situation in life for his strength came from Christ and his relationship with Him.
- B. The word “strengtheneth” literally means to empower (cf. Acts 9:22; Romans 4:20; Ephesians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1; 4:17; Hebrews 11:34).

**4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction**

- A. In spite of Paul's contentment in any situation, it was still a good thing for the Philippians to help him in his need.
  - 1. Paul did not mean to appear ungrateful for their support.
  - 2. Nor did he wish to leave the impression that Christians should not help those who are in need.
  - 3. In fact, Paul says to them, "Well done."
- B. The word "communicate" is a form of the Greek word *koinonia* – meaning "fellowship."
  - 1. This word means to have fellowship with another.
  - 2. It means to be a partaker with another, to co-participate in something.
  - 3. Thus, true Christian fellowship involves sharing what we have to help in another's burdens.
- C. When we practice true fellowship, we will have done well.

**4:15-16 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity**

- A. Paul reminds them that this kind of compassionate giving was something that they had practiced since they became Christians.
- B. The phrase "the beginning of the gospel" refers to the time when the Gospel was first preached in Philippi.
  - 1. Keep in mind the order of events...
  - 2. While Paul was in Troas, he received the "Macedonian call" and immediately sailed across the Aegean Sea to Samothracia and Neapolis (Acts 16:8-11).
  - 3. From there, he traveled to Philippi where Lydia and her household – and, later, the Philippian jailer – were converted (Acts 16:12-40).
  - 4. Following this, he journeyed to Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica and Berea in Macedonia (Acts 17:1-14).
- C. Upon leaving Macedonia, Paul traveled to the southern part of Greece, known as Achaia.
  - 1. In Achaia, he preached in the cities of Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:15 – 18:17).
  - 2. As he preached in these cities (specifically, Corinth), he was supported by the Philippian brethren (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:8-9).
  - 3. Yet, Paul declared to the Corinthians that he took wages of other churches – plural.
    - a. Did others help him later, after the Philippians?
    - b. Did others help him through the Philippian congregation?
  - 4. When he wrote of giving and receiving, he used the words for keeping an account – of funds received and dispersed.
- D. The point here is to emphasize the giving nature of the church at Philippi.
- E. We should be willing to support the work of preaching the Gospel – whenever there is opportunity and even if we must do it alone.

4:17 **Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account**

- A. Paul's praise of them was not because he wanted more money.
- B. Instead, his desire was that an abundance of fruit would be added to their account.
- C. In other words, Paul sought what was best for them spiritually.
  - 1. As they helped Paul, they were helping the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the church.
  - 2. Thus, they were laying up treasure in Heaven (cf. Matthew 6:19-20; 10:40-42; John 15:8; Hebrews 6:10).

4:18 **But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God**

- A. Literally, Paul says, "I have received in full."
  - 1. Not only had he received their support, but also he had all that he needed due to the provision of God.
  - 2. Not only was he satisfied, but also he abounded in blessings.
- B. What he had received from them (by means of Epaphroditus) had satisfied him.
- C. But, more than that, their gift was a sweet-smelling sacrifice that pleased God.
  - 1. See Ephesians 5:2 and 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 on "sweet smell"
  - 2. See Hebrews 13:16, Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:5 on "sacrifice"

4:19 **But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus**

- A. Just as God had taken care of Paul, so He would provide for the needs of the Philippians.
- B. Though they had sacrificed to help Paul, God would reward them by supplying all their needs.
- C. His storehouse of riches is unlimited (cf. Ephesians 3:8).

4:20 **Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen**

- A. In the end, all glory is to God the Father.
- B. He is the source of all blessings received by man.

4:21-22 **Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household**

- A. All Christians are to be received joyfully as brothers and sisters.
- B. This is true no matter one's location, background or social standing.
  - 1. Some were in Rome, separated by miles from Philippi.
  - 2. Some were a part of the household of the Roman Emperor.
  - 3. The planting of the seed of the Gospel in the heart of Rome was the beginning of the downfall of this world power.

4:23 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**

- A. Paul's prayer was for God's grace to continue upon his brethren.
- B. There can be no greater wish, nor a more fitting conclusion to this epistle of joy and peace.