

Philippians 4:10-20 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² 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. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4:10-20 | Church Generosity

We're nearing the end of our summer series where we are looking at three practices of obedience to help us participate in the reality that Christ is sufficient. All that is left is Church Generosity and finally church sabbath. Today we're looking at generosity at the level of the church and our text is a thank you note. Paul while in prison writes with gratitude to the church at Philippi for their generous partnership with him in the gospel. They had consistently provided for his needs in ministry in all kinds of circumstances and had recently supported him while in prison.

As providence would have it since choosing this text I've gained good reason to participate in the gratitude which Paul has for this church in my own personal gratitude towards our church. Its exciting news to share for our church, for the first time in our church's history, here in the summer, not even the end of the year. We are in the black. Giving is greater than spending. No particular big gift. Its just a bunch of members giving to the church as they ought. No big whales, or huge gifts to brake us even. A long tail (I think I'm using that correctly). Who can we praise for that? Obviously this is a work of the Spirit. Here we see that the economy of the Kingdom means that the heart that allows us to receive with gratitude is the same heart that allows us to give freely. This is as Jeremiah Burroughs calls it, "The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment."

1. Philippian's Generosity

Philippians 4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

The Philippian church was a model of generosity in the life of Paul. He completes his letter with thanks towards them in the Lord because through Epaphroditus the Philippians

together had sent resources to Paul. Likely financial and material. Clothing, books, and money would have all been helpful to Paul in his circumstances and he requests those elsewhere. The Philippians were concerned for Paul. They had a deep care for what he was accomplishing. They loved him for his ministry to them in the gospel and their love expanded outward as they desired more people to be impacted through him and they desired to show their love to him even when he was simply in need as he was imprisoned.

Paul explains here that they had revived their concern, but it is concern that was ever present in their hearts. Here we see that the Philippian Christians considered Paul's need as an opportunity to demonstrate their ongoing concern for him. The opportunity that presented itself was likely the availability of Epaphroditus to bring their gift to Paul.

Philippians 4:14-16 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

Paul emphasizes the unique kindness that the Philippians showed, even over and above other churches. You see the way they gave was a means of sharing in Paul's trouble. And this is generosity, it is that we look upon the troubles of others and we make some of it our own. And look at the encouragement it was to Paul's heart. Some people were with him. He emphasizes with gratitude, even when he was in Thessalonica they sent him help once and again, several times that is. They were truly with Paul.

In their generosity God unites all these things. Their concern for Paul is made real. God's provision for Paul is shared by the Philippians. The needs of Paul are covered. Their love for one another and the fruitfulness of the gospel is able to grow. Let's give like the Philippians. Paul rejoices greatly at the care shown by the Philippians. But he is careful to let the Philippians understand precisely the shape of his gladness. He is not like a new kid with a toy. But nor is he like a detached stoic or unaffected Siddhartha. Here is the paradox. **Paul cares way more about their gift than the kid who got a new toy, and he cares way less about his gift than the stoic.**

2. Paul's Contentment

Philippians 4:11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Paul's great rejoicing over his provision is not because of the depth of his need. Paul is not saying, "I had grown so deeply unsatisfied with the lot that God had given to me and therefore when your provision came I rejoiced greatly!" Strangely although Paul was likely in great need, this isn't the heart of his joy. He did not receive the gift from a place of inner turmoil or fear. Because he has learned something. He has learned in whatever

situation he is in to be content. This is that condition and frame of heart available to the Christian. That in any situation we are in, we can be content.

Oh Paul. He's different isn't he. Floats above the earth with no real concerns. Remember Paul describes himself elsewhere as being under a "daily pressure" of his "anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak?" Paul sends to Thessalonica because he can not bear the nerves any longer of wondering how they are! Do not think of him as a man without concerns, he has deep concerns even anxieties but in these, perhaps because of them, he has learned how to be content in the Lord.

Philippians 4:12 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.

Paul knows how to be brought low and how to abound. You see Paul understands that each of these positions hold their dangers for the Christian's contentment. The Christian can be content in abounding but this christian will not be generous. The Christian can be content in their being brought low, but this Christian will only fear and resent those with more. Paul's contentment is absolutely different. The paradox is described perfectly by Burroughs.

A man that has learned the art of contentment, is the most contented with any low condition that he has in the world, and yet he cannot be satisfied with the enjoyment of all the world. He is contented if he has but a crust, but bread and water, that is, if God dispose of him for the things of the world, to have but bread and water for his present condition; yet, if God should give unto him the kingdoms and empires, all the world to rule for his portion, he would not be satisfied with that. (Burroughs, 35)

What is the key to this riddle. That old familiar verse.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Don't you see? Paul's satisfaction is absolutely in Christ. You know we misuse this verse all the time. Going into an exam, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Therefore I'll pass the exam. No. That's not what the verse is for. It's for when you don't pass the exam and you make it through anyway. Because Christ can see you through any circumstance. I can succeed and I can fail. I can be rich and I can be poor. I can be brought anywhere from the heights of Solomon to the depths of Job so long as Christ is with me there to strengthen me. This is the preciousness of Christ.

So Paul is saying he is so thankful for the gift. But not because he needed it. You know he would be fine. And not like, yah I'll be fine. But like he really would be fine. All to him was Christ and there is nowhere Christ can bring him in which Christ will not see him through. So what is Paul's happiness for the gift?

Philippians 4:17-18 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Paul sees in the gift the very fruit of Christ. He sees their gift as an acceptable and pleasing offering to God. He sees this as the very means they have of demonstrating and sharing in the contentment that Christ has given to him!

Paul even jokes here saying he has received full payment and more and the phrase well supplied, Paul is saying he is now rich. Remember, he is in prison. But he says thanks to your gift I'm a rich man! You cannot have this contentment without treasuring Christ. And you cannot treasure Christ unless you are willing to part with your money. So I beseech you all the more, give to your church! Give to one another! Maegan and I after the birth of our third have literally been eating your generosity. Its delicious!

Now to you who are being brought low. Seize this time, and learn to be content. You can be brought low in such a way that advertising does not even work on you. How free you might be able to become as you are brought low! How else can the Lord show you that he is the one that provides if he doesn't remove from you those mechanisms through which you think you provide for yourself!

And look many of you are not brought low, but you're squeezed. Oh praise the Lord! How arrogant you might be without the squeeze. You would not even think of your home as a miracle you would think of it as your due! You're affluence would distract you. Others of you are high. Affluent! For the sake of your soul give your money. Before its too late. Here is the freedom and contentment that you might have like Paul.

3. The Lord's Provision

Philippians 4:19-20 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

What are your needs. Well it is all you need to serve the Lord. All you need to accomplish all that he has asked of you. These are all provided for you according to God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Oh that is abundant beyond imagination and more than that it is perfectly distributed. He'll protect your heart in his distribution and teach you in his mercy to depend upon him. Let our church be as generous as the Philippians. Now there is more than this here. Our church currently supports only one external mission. We can do more. So pray for us to do more.