

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

ON CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT- THE RECENT GIFT, PHILIPPIANS 4:10-14

- A. Paul thanked the Philippians for their demonstrations of concern for him (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.***
1. Their current support was a cause for great rejoicing.
 - a. H. D. M. Spence, *His joy rises from the gift to the love which prompted the gift, and thence to the Divine Giver of that love.*
 - b. *revived means to bloom again, to flourish.*
 - 1) Philippians 2:25, *I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,*
 - 2) Hawthorne, *Like a person rejoicing over the signs of spring after a hard winter, so Paul rejoiced to see again the signs of personal concern from Philippi after a long interval of silence.*
 2. They did not have opportunity until that time.
 - a. Thomas Constable, *Their failure seems to have resulted from some apparently unavoidable circumstance.*
 - b. Max Anders, *Why the Philippians had a time when they could not show concern for Paul we do not know. Perhaps it had to do with the distance to his Roman imprisonment, the lack of opportunity to send messengers that far, or some problems in the Philippian church.*
- B. Paul shared his perspective on contentment (11-12)
1. His joy was in their concern for him and not the meeting of his needs (11), ***Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.***
 - a. Paul's great joy was not in the gift itself but in the hearts of those who gave the gift.
 - b. He explains that need can be controlled by perspective.
 - 1) His circumstances did not determine his contentment.
 - 2) He will share in the following verses his basis for contentment which is superior to circumstances.
 - 3) D. A. Carson, *Paul is not claiming to be so strong that nothing can move him. Nor is he simply resolving to be independent of circumstances by a superlative act of will. Far from it; he immediately confesses that if he has reached this stage of contentment he owes everything to God.*
 - c. Paul took care to not imply that he wanted or expected gifts.
 - 1) Detractors accused Paul of improper motives for ministry, preaching the Gospel for monetary gain.
 - 2) He had the right to support but was cautious to maintain credibility for the Gospel.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 9:12, *If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.*
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:9, *It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.*
 - d. *content*
 - 1) This word means *to be satisfied, manage whatever one has, independent in relation to conditions.*
 - 2) The Stoics, a Greek school of philosophy understood the word as *independent of external circumstances.*
 - 3) New Testament warnings concerning contentment, Hebrews 13:5, *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.*
 - 4) Contentment is learned
 - a) It is better translated *have come to learn.*
 - b) It speaks of entrance into a new condition.
 - c) It had not been Paul's nature to be content until he learned it as a Christian.
 2. He had learned to be content in every situation (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.***

- a. Paul knew how to be content in all circumstances whether he had little or much.
 - 1) His contentment was based on his spiritual not his material condition.
 - 2) Poverty and wealth have their own temptations, Proverbs 30:8-9, ... *give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*
 - 3) Gordon Fee, *Those in want learn patience and trust in suffering; those in wealth learn humility and dependence in prospering, not to mention the joy of giving without strings attached!"*
 - b. Paul again stated that he had to learn to be content.
 - 1) *learned* in the verse is a word used only here in the New Testament.
 - 2) The meaning is *to learn something through personal experience*.
 - 3) In some of the religions of the day, it was the word used *to initiate* (into their religion).
 - 4) Paul was emphasizing that learning to be content was part of the Christian faith.
- C. Paul's strength came from pursuing Christ (13), ***I can do all things through him who strengthens me.***
- 1. This verse reveals how Paul came to the place of contentment.
 - a. In pursuing Christ, Paul received the strength to do what God called him to do.
 - b. Gerald Hawthorne, *The secret of Paul's independence was his dependence upon Another. His self-sufficiency in reality came from being in vital union with One who is all-sufficient.*
 - c. Robert Lightner, *This was not an expression of pride in his own abilities but a declaration of the strength provided by Christ.*
 - 2. This is not unique for Paul but for every Christian as we pursue Christ.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
 - b. J. Vernon McGee, *Whatever Christ has for you to do, He will supply the power. Whatever gift He gives you, He will give the power to exercise that gift. A gift is a manifestation of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. As long as you function in Christ, you will have power. He certainly does not mean that he is putting into your hand unlimited power to do anything you want to do. Rather, He will give you the enablement to do all things in the context of His will for you.*
- D. Paul wanted them to know that he appreciated their concern evidenced by practical help (14), ***Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.***
- 1. This verse seems to be Paul's attempt to thank the Philippians for their gift.
 - a. He did not want them to think he did not appreciate the gift because of his instruction on contentment.
 - b. He saw the gift as their evident love for him because their gift demonstrated they were with him in his difficult circumstances.
 - 2. A gift not only brings blessing to the one receiving it but also, to the one who is giving it,
 - a. D. A. Carson, *Paul is more delighted with the blessings they will experience because they are a giving and generous church than he is with the help that has come his way.*
 - b. Paul knew the Christian life is much more than meeting personal needs but meeting the needs of others.

CONCLUSION

- A. What you think about impacts what you do.
- B. All Christians need to be disciplined by those pursuing Christ.
- C. Contentment is learned as one pursues Christ.