

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

ON CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT AND CONCLUSION, PHILIPPIANS 4:15-23

- A. On prior gifts to Paul from the church at Philippi (15-20)
1. He reminded the Philippians of their ministry to him in the past (15-17)
 - a. They were the first to support Paul in his ministry (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.*
 - 1) Paul expressed his gratitude to the Philippians by reminding them of the other times they provided for him in his ministry.
 - 2) The time frame was the start of his ministry in what is now Europe which began in Macedonia, northern Greece and continued into Achaia, southern Greece.
 - a) The Philippians alone aided Paul after planting their church on his second missionary journey.
 - b) The next gift was probably the one that reached Paul in Corinth, 2 Corinthians 11:8, *I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.*
 - 3) Max Anders, *No other church entered into a financial partnership with him. In a sense, the Philippian letter is Paul's official receipt, acknowledging and giving credit for the church's gift to him.*
 - b. They supported Paul in his work in Thessalonica (16), *Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*
 - 1) Paul went directly to Thessalonica from Philippi (Acts 16:12-40), note D. Carson on Paul's missionary schedule, *Paul left Troas in Asia Minor and crossed over to Europe, landing at the port city of Neapolis and proceeding immediately to Philippi. There he and Silas were beaten up, arrested, and eventually escorted out of town, but not before they planted this fledgling church. Leaving Philippi, Paul quickly passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia and arrived at Thessalonica, where in short order he started another church.*
 - 2) The Philippians started sending gifts to Paul while he was in Thessalonica.
 - a) 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,*
 - b) D. A. Carson, *...even by the time he got to Thessalonica and started preaching the gospel there, before he left there to evangelize Athens and Corinth, the Philippians were already finding ways to help and were asking what part they could play in this great ministry. Apparently Paul stayed in Thessalonica only a few weeks, but during that relatively short time, the Philippians came through again and again.*
 - 3) Paul chose not to solicit financial support from the Thessalonians but got provided for his needs through the church at Philippi.
 - a) 1 Thessalonians 2:9, *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:8, *nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.*
 - c) Max Anders, *He (Paul) also acknowledged that he had need even when he learned to be content.*
 - c. He reminded them that the gifts were not as important as their spiritual growth (17), *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.*
 - 1) Since Paul had learned to be content despite circumstances, the gifts reminded Paul of the Philippians' love for him and the Gospel.
 - 2) Paul was always seeking to see converts become mature followers of Christ.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *...the most important thing to Paul was not the gifts themselves. It was the spiritual reward that would come to the Philippians because of their financial investments in his ministry...His writings reveal a consistent concern over good investments that he regarded mainly as investments yielding eternal rewards.*
 - b) 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.*
 - c) Matthew 6:19-21, *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and*

where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

2. He thanked the Philippians for their gracious gift delivered by Epaphroditus (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.***

a. Paul received everything the Philippians had sent him and more, he had seen their hearts of love and service.

b. Because of God's work through them, he was well supplied by the gifts sent him by Epaphroditus.

- 1) Philippians 2:25-26, *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, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.*
- 2) Despite Paul's difficult conditions, he demonstrated his life of contentment in this epistle.
- 3) Charles Spurgeon, *I have been in the Roman dungeon in which Paul is said to have been confined, and a comfortless prison indeed it is. First of all you descend into a vaulted chamber, into which no light ever comes except through a little round hole in the roof. Then, in the middle of the floor of that den, there is another opening, through which the prisoner was let down into a second and lower dungeon, in which no fresh air or light could possibly come to him. Paul was probably confined there...Paul would have been left well nigh to starve there, but for those good people at Philippi.*

c. Their gifts were much more than help for Paul, they were a sacrifice, an offering of praise that pleased God.

- 1) *Fragrant offering* was used in Leviticus for an offering pleasing to God.
- 2) Note Hebrews 13:16, *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*
- 3) It was used of Jesus' offering Himself in Ephesians 5:2, *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

3. He declared that God would provide all their needs (19), ***And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.***

a. Even as the Philippians supplied for Paul's needs, he declared that God would supply all of their needs.

- 1) Proverbs 11:25, *Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.*
- 2) Matthew 5:7, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*
- 3) D. A. Carson, *...God is no one's debtor.*
- 4) Charles Spurgeon, *You have supplied my need out of your poverty; my God shall supply all your need out of his riches. Your greatest need shall not exceed the liberality of his supplies.*

b. God's provision comes through His abundance to those in union with God through Christ Jesus.

- 1) *riches in glory*
 - a) It may be translated *glorious riches*.
 - b) It may also mean *riches stored in heaven*
- 2) Regardless, these riches can only be accessed through Jesus Christ.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *...the supply of our needs comes through Jesus Christ. They come through His sovereign control, through His vast resources, through His infinite wisdom, through His loving heart, and through our union with Him.*
 - b) Max Anders, *How does one draw from these unlimited resources? Through Christ Jesus. Only those in him have access to God's account and can ask him to meet their needs.*
 - c) Charles Spurgeon, *My advice to myself and to you is that we abide in Him. For since that is the way by which the blessing comes, we had better abide in it.*

4. He broke out in praise to God (20), ***To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.***

a. Paul glorified God for His care for Paul, the Philippians and every child of God.

b. We are reminded that our God is our heavenly Father who is able and willing to provide all our needs.

- 1) Paul joined *God and Father* 10 times in his epistles.
- 2) Peter used it once in 1 Peter 1:3.
- 3) John used it once in Revelation 1:6.

c. The time frame glorifying God is for all eternity.

d. D. A. Carson on Paul's instruction on pursuing Christ in Philippians, *Do these believers see that all of Christian discipleship, all of Christian virtue, all of Christian resolution, all of Christian perseverance, must be offered*

to the glory of God, or do they think that these virtues are ultimate ends in themselves?

B. Conclusion (21-23)

1. Final greetings (21-22)

a. Paul requested that those who read the epistle greet every Philippian Christian (21a), ***Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.***

- 1) He encouraged everyone who read Paul's letter to pass on his greeting to believers in the church at Philippi and surrounding towns.
- 2) Max Anders, *The saints are all the members of the Philippian church set aside to serve God. They are saints not because of holy lives they live but because they are in Christ Jesus, the source of holiness and thus of sainthood.*
- 3) Paul probably meant for them to pass on not only his greeting but his encouragement through instruction given in the letter.

b. Greetings were from Christians with Paul as well as those of Caesar's household (21b-22), ***The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.***

- 1) The brothers included Timothy and possibly Luke.
- 2) Others included Roman Christians. Since Philippi was a colony with close ties to Rome, there may have been Roman Christians who had friends in the Philippian church.
- 3) The Gospel had even reached into the household of Caesar.
 - a) Paul had mentioned the Imperial Guard in Philippians 1:13, *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.*
 - b) They probably included soldiers, slaves and relatives touched by the Gospel through the faithful testimony of Paul.
 - c) D. A. Carson, *Paul may be in prison at Caesar's pleasure, but the gospel has penetrated Caesar's household. It is important to remember who is finally in charge and how he works.*

2. Benediction (23), ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.***

a. The fulfillment of Paul's desire to pursue Christ can become reality for Philippian believers and all believers because of the grace of Jesus Christ filling the *spirit* (the seat of our insight, feeling, and will).

b. D. A. Carson, *We resolve to pursue these virtues not only because they are good, but because God demands them and gives us the grace to live them out. And the result is that he receives glory.*

CONCLUSION

A. Paul was thankful for the Philippians' gift but his contentment was in the Lord.

B. Paul trusted God for all his needs because He was in Christ.

C. As Paul pursued Christ, he looked for ways to encourage others.