

CONTENT IN CHRIST - PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

10, 14-16 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 . . . Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 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. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

- Earlier help:

- **Acts 16:** Paul travels to Philippi.
- **Acts 17:** Paul travels to Thessalonica and stays there what we can tell are at least a few weeks (three Sabbaths - **17:2**). He went on to Berea and then Athens.
 - We see in **1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8** that Paul did not take anything from the new church. He worked with his own hands. We also know that Paul received help from Philippi while there.
- **Acts 18:** Paul travels to Corinth (where it's believed 1 & 2 Thessalonians were written).
- Either Paul is saying that they sent help twice while in Thessalonica (vs. 16) and also once after he left Macedonia (which is believed to be referenced in **2 Cor. 11:8-9**). However, another interpretation is that vs. 16 is tied to vs. 15, thus referencing the same event. In that case, the idea is that before he left Macedonia, they sent him help twice while in Thessalonica. After looking in more detail at both arguments, I lean towards the latter argument. I'll not get bogged down in detail. Get the overall point - they helped Paul when others didn't.

17-19 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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. And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

- Present gifts:

- **Epaphroditus** was sent to Paul to deliver their gift and remained with him as you remember (**2:25-30**).
- **Acknowledged by God.** It's not that their gift wasn't important to Paul, what what he really wanted was for them to be blessed. God would see their labor of love. They would increase in faith. They would continue to grow by participating in suffering for the cause and sending help when they could. We'll talk about this more next week.
 - **Titus 3:4** And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.
- **Sacrifice to God.** Their gift to Paul was seen as a pleasing sacrifice to God.
 - **Genesis 8:20-21** Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will

never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

- A sacrifice costs you something. It should be "felt."
- We should learn how to view this life through spiritual lenses like Paul, don't you agree? Do we do that? Do we filter conversations with others through the lens? Our lives through the same lens? There's many times more going on (whether it be good or bad) than what meets the eyes.

¹¹⁻¹³ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

- He was "born" with content. No, he learned it. It can seem like others just have the gift of contentment. One of our kiddos, in particular, just seems to naturally be happy with their lot in life (God love 'em). Yet, while there may be something there, the truth is, we all have to learn this one.
- **But what was the secret?** How did he learn to be content?
- "Paul uses one of the great words of pagan ethics (autarkes, Greek #842), which means entirely self-sufficient. Contentment was the highest goal of Stoic ethics." If you want to make a man happy," they said, "add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires." No emotions. You get to a place where you feel nothing. You get to a point where nothing or no one is essential in your life. Socrates was once asked who was the wealthiest man. He answered: "He who is content with least, for autarkeia (Greek #842) is nature's wealth."
 - *They proposed to eliminate all emotion until a man had come to a stage when he did not care what happened either to himself or to anyone else. Epictetus says. "Begin with a cup or a household utensil; if it breaks, say, 'I don't care.' Go on to a horse or pet dog; if anything happens to it, say, 'I don't care.' Go on to yourself, and if you are hurt or injured in any way, say, 'I don't care.' If you go on long enough, and if you try hard enough, you will come to a stage when you can watch your nearest and dearest suffer and die, and say, 'I don't care.'" The Stoic aim was to abolish every feeling of the human heart.* Barclay
 - The Stoic said, "I will learn content by a deliberate act of my own will." Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who infuses his strength into me." For the Stoic contentment was a human achievement; for Paul it was a divine gift. The Stoic was self-sufficient; but Paul was God-sufficient." Barclay
 - Barclay has very interesting comments about the word and its tie to Stoics. <https://www.primobileverses.com/view/william-barclay/the-secret-of-true-content-philippians-410-13-8355>.
 - Money - let's talk about it!

- **1 Timothy 6:6-10** But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.
- **1 Timothy 6:17-19** As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.
 - Listen, we could go on and on about the love of money and riches, building bigger barns, the young rich ruler, etc. If we're not careful we won't balance it out.
- **Hebrews 13:5-6** 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." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"
 - **Proverbs 30:7-9** Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; 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.
- But being content is more than money and homes, right?
 - Content with your talents?
 - Simon the Sorcerer just gained Christ, but then he wanted to gain the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember that? That's not a wise road to go down. We're all needed. We all play a part. We need Peters and Pauls. Surgeons and street cleaners. Einsteins and . . . let's see, who's name here starts with an E?
 - Did you know Einstein would walk outside without pants on? If you had the option of having the intelligence of Einstein or the common sense to put your pants on before walking outside, which would you choose? Look at you all this morning with your pants on! You're doing it!
 - Content with your life in Christ in general?
 - The answer was that Christ was all Paul needed. I'm not trying to sound repetitive, but this relates to last weeks lesson. Does his answer disappoint you? "What does that practically mean" you may ask. I love being practical, but sometimes God and what He does goes beyond what we understand. There's His part and our part. Listen, for Paul, he had deep content in Christ because he truly believed in Christ's goodness and promises. Truly believed. Deep seated belief changes everything. It was because of this belief that Paul was content with whatever situation he found himself in. **The difficulty is not in lacking an answer, but in believing the answer which leads to an acceptance with no regrets.**

21-23 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- And may the Lord be with you!