

Posted July 6, 2020

Read Philippians 4:10–23. I will print the NET–2 translation.

APPRECIATION FOR SUPPORT

10 I have great joy in the Lord because now at last you have again expressed your concern for me. (Now I know you were concerned before but had no opportunity to do anything.) 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. 12 I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. 13 I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless, you did well to share with me in my trouble.

15 And as you Philippians know, at the beginning of my gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in this matter of giving and receiving except you alone. 16 For even in Thessalonica on more than one occasion you sent something for my need. 17 I do not say this because I am seeking a gift. Rather, I seek the credit that abounds to your account. 18 For I have received everything, and I have plenty. I have all I need because I received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, very pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. 20 May glory be given to God our Father forever and ever. Amen.

FINAL GREETINGS

21 Give greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me here send greetings. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

COMMENTS:

Today we conclude our study of Philippians and tomorrow we will begin our study of Colossians.

One of the greatest blessings in life is contentment. An abundance is no guarantee of contentment. John D. Rockefeller illustrates this perfectly. He started Standard Oil and was at one point the world’s richest man and first ever American billionaire. When a reporter asked him, “How much money is enough?” He responded, “Just a little bit more.”

Paul starts off this reading by expressing his thanks to the congregation at Philippi for their support gifts for his ministry. He said, I was aware of your concern, but you didn’t have an opportunity to help.

Then in v. 11 comes his important teaching on “contentment.” He is not bringing up their gift in order to get a another gift. He says something we all should be able to say: “I have learned to be content in any circumstance. He admits he has been on both sides of the fence on this issue. He has had times of need and times of abundance.

His contentment comes from putting his trust in God, not in trusting in gifts. His confidence is that if his need is real, God will find a way to provide. He is able to be content because he is living under the power of God, not his own power. God is the one who strengthens him.

If v. 14 sounds strange to you, you are seeing the danger Paul saw in his remarks. He didn’t want them to think their gift was unnecessary. He tells them they did the right thing by sending the gift in his time of trouble. He also lets them know he remembers how they did this in the past. They were the only church giving to support Paul and his mission work. They did it more than once.

The burnt offerings God required of them at the temple were a sweet smell to God, so also their gifts to Paul were a sweet smell to God. He gives three commendations to their offering: It was fragrant to God, it was acceptable to God, and it was pleasing to God. May our offerings be the same!

At times like these some become afraid to give. Paul says not to worry about it. God is the one who supplies all our needs. If we come up short of our usual standard of living, God is probably inviting us to look more carefully at what we live without. Isn't it strange that we generally think first of what else we can get rather than how much more we can give!

I have always been fascinated by Ephesians 4:28. Paul suggests the real reason to do honest labor with your hands is so that you can help those in need. We have honored and encouraged the Robin Hoods of the world to steal to help the poor.

God tells us not to steal but work hard so we can help those in need. We try to motivate by telling thieves to mature and stop taking from those who work hard for what they have and become self-sufficient. God suggests a motivation of compassion.

He closes his instruction in v. 20. Make sure the glory goes to God and not to you. His closing remarks show us how we are to have a bigger picture of the church than our congregation. We have had political leaders telling us in this pandemic, "We are all in this together."

That ought to be the first basis of our life together beyond our congregation and denominations. If I believe I will live with them in heaven, should I not be friendly with them here on earth. I'm not suggesting we ignore differences, let's not look at each other as enemies or competitors. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God.

When he mentions those of Caesar's household, he is reminding them that his imprisonment for the preaching of the Gospel has value. It has allowed Paul to reach people he would not have had the opportunity to reach otherwise.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Let's reflect on contentment some more. The most remarkable research is one done between the world's richest and world's poorest. Forbes 400 "richest" list was given a survey and their satisfaction was rated at exactly the same level as did the people of Masai of Kenya and Inuit people of northern Greenland, who have no electricity or running water. Money is a necessity to live but apparently it cannot buy happiness. And as the old saying goes, "Money can buy you a house but it can't buy you a home."

THE END OF PHILIPPIANS STUDY — 07/06/2020