



PHILIPPIANS

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For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. Philippians 4:16

Philippi was an extremely poor church as far as worldly wealth is concerned. On the other hand, Thessalonica was much richer. And yet, it was the Philippians who supported Paul while he was in Thessalonica. The Greek reads, "both once and twice" they sent aid to him. It is a way of saying that they helped him, and then sent more again later.

Paul even notes in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians that he worked with his own hands in order to support himself. This is something he could not have written to them unless it was true. Along with his own work, he received from Philippi, but not from the Thessalonians –

For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God." 1 Thessalonians 2:9

"...nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you," 2 Thessalonians 3:8

What this verse then shows us is that those in Philippi helped him not only when he departed Macedonia (verse 15), but even while still in Macedonia and attending to a sister church. It may seem curious that he would accept help from one church that was so poor, and not from other churches which were wealthy, but Paul was teaching each a lesson. The poor were exalted through their giving, while the rich were humbled through his example of working with his own hands.

Neither was inappropriate, but perfect for the circumstances of the church. He wisely instructed others about how to conduct themselves in both spiritual matters, and in life's daily matters which were connected to the spiritual.

Life application: Let us remember those who are in the field and in need, helping them with their necessities. Let us also tend to them with an additional blessing so that they can be filled.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Philippians 4:17

Paul now speaks of "the gift" from the Philippians to him. He is being delicate in order to make it clear that he is not seeking anything more from them. There is no insinuation that he would do so. Rather, he says, "but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account." Fruit in the Bible is that which results from something else. If something positive is done, then good fruit is the result. If something evil is done, then the result will be bad fruit.

Therefore, he is saying that he looks for them to have a positive result added to their account. If it be because of a gift to him, then that is a blessing indeed. He will expand on this in verse 19. His words show that it is as if there is an account set up from which the church draws blessings for their efforts. In the case of the gift to him, their account was growing. This is similar to the thought of Proverbs 19:17 –

"He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord,
And He will pay back what he has given."

Though a poor person cannot pay back a debt, it is considered as a payment to the Lord who can repay it, and He can do so with abundance added in. Such is the general idea of the words of Paul to the Philippians.

Life application: Jesus told Israel to "Give to everyone who asks of you." The idea is that when someone is in need, we should not withhold our hand from helping them. He also tells us elsewhere to be wise and discerning. Therefore, His words are to be taken in the sense of true needs. Let us be willing to help those who are truly in need, not withholding what will help them out.

Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:18

This abounding which Paul speaks of concerns the gift which he has received from them. He was in distress as is noted in verse 14. They understood this and sent along the gift to help him

in his plight. From that gift, he was not only brought out of distress, but he was full, even to over-flowing, as is seen in the words, "I have all and abound." And then again he says, "I am full." There was no lack, but instead he was fully satisfied, as he says, "having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you."

As a congregation, they came together and decided upon a gift for him. After that, they chose Epaphroditus to be the one to carry the gift to him. When he came to Paul, the gift was received by him as a gift not to himself, but as an offering to God of which he was the benefactor.

In Israel, certain offerings were taken to the temple. These were received by the priests and then offered to God. However, in many of the offerings, only a portion was presented on the altar, and the rest became the priest's portion. However, the entire offering was one which was truly considered as given to the Lord. Paul had received this gift in this manner, noting that it was "a sweet-smelling aroma." This is Old Testament terminology for a sacrifice which was acceptable to God. It is not that God has a nose, but that what was offered was considered as if He did.

In fact, certain offerings came with a measure of frankincense added to them. This was taken, along with the portion of meat to be burned, and both were then burned on the altar. The word used to describe this burning (Heb: *qatar*) specifically meant "incense," and it indicated "to make sacrifices smoke." This is what Paul is referring to here. It was thus "an acceptable sacrifice." God was pleased with their offering which was given to Paul as if it was made directly to Him, and it was deemed as such. Therefore, it was "well pleasing to God."

It was as if the smoke of the sacrifice offered by them burned as incense and rose into the heavens to Him as a pleasing aroma.

Life application: When we make an offering with a true heart, and in a manner which is Christian and Christ-like, that offering is considered by God as an acceptable offering to Him. Because of this, let our hearts and intents be pure in our giving. Just because an offering is made, it does not automatically follow through that it is pleasing to God. Only when such an offering is done in faith is it truly considered as well pleasing to Him.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19

The words "my God" here are emphatic. He is making a stress based on what he just said concerning "God." If read together, the stress becomes more evident -

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing **to God**. 19 And **my God** shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

The offering they made was acceptable to God, who is Paul’s God. He will then draw the two thoughts together in the next verse. For now, he says, “And my God shall supply all your need.” In Greek, it reads “And my God will fill up all the needs of you.” It is not just a single need that they will have filled, but all needs, both physical and spiritual. Whatever is lacking will be made full. However, this is not a promise for prosperity. Needs do not equate to desires. God gives us everything we need, but it is not always what we want.

The Christian who stands ready to be executed for his faith in Christ does not stand and say, “I claim that BMW at the car-lot.” The prosperity gospel is no gospel. The needs of that person are met in his life, or in his death, by God who has promised us so much more than this temporary, woe-filled life. All that He gives for our needs are “according to His riches.”

There is no limit of God’s ability to give. He can and He will provide abundance to each according to the need, but He will also provide so much more at times as well. In our eternal state, we shall never lack or have want. The riches of God will flow like a never-ending river to satisfy His people. Again however, we need to be careful to make a distinction between what is a need and what is a desire lest we fall into the false teaching of the prosperity gospel.

Paul continues by saying that each need is given according to His riches “in glory.” What is on Paul’s mind with the words “in glory” is debated. Some scholars tie this to the word “riches.” Others will connect it with the word “supply.” And then even that can be subdivided between “supply your need with glory” meaning “with glory to you,” or “with His glory.” It is hard to be dogmatic, but Vincent’s Word Studies gives a good, well-rounded thought with, “The need shall be supplied in glory and by glory; by placing you in glory where you shall be partakers of glory.”

No matter which is correct, Paul finishes with “in glory by Christ Jesus.” The word “by” in Greek means “in.” Therefore, it is provided to God’s people by their union with Christ. And so, he is not making a statement to anyone except those who are of the faith. God does not meet the needs of people “by” Christ Jesus for those who are not “in” Christ Jesus.

Life application: It is important to make the distinction between what is a need and what is a want. When we confuse the two, our hope and trust in the Lord may be weakened when we don’t get what we want. Let us understand that God meets all of our needs according to His wisdom. We will never have a time when our needs are not met. But our needs are what He determines, not what we feel is correct.

Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Philippians 4:20

Paul now issues forth a doxology similar to others elsewhere in his letters. Taken with the previous two verses, we see that he is tying “God” here to “God” in the previous verses, but referring to Him in a new way. Here are the three verses together -

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, **well pleasing to God.** 19 **And my God** shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 **Now to our God** and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

He has gone from a general reference, to a specific but singular reference, to a specific and plural reference. In this verse, “our God” is the object of praise from the church as a whole. All share in His goodness, and He in turn is worthy of the worship of all. It is to “our God and Father” then that this is due. Because of Christ, we are brought into the son-ship of God, and we are reckoned as children of God. He has become our heavenly Father because of Jesus.

It is to Him that shall “be glory forever and ever.” However, there is an article which is missing in this translation. In Greek, it says, “the glory.” Paul shows by his use of “glory” in the previous verse, and the use of “the glory” in this verse, that there is a glory which we can participate in, but there is a specific glory which belongs to God alone. It is a part of His nature which is incommunicable. This particular glory belongs to Him, and it does so “forever and ever;” or as the Greek reads “for the ages of ages.” It is a term which indicates in the strongest sense that it will never, never end.

He finishes with “Amen.” So be it, and thus it is so. Using “Amen” here shows the absolute and pivotal importance of the truth of the statement he has made.

Life application: Paul is known to break into sudden doxologies at various times in his letters. Sometimes they happen only at the end, but not always. He let his sense of awe at what God has done guide him in his praise of God – at any and every moment that was appropriate. We should likewise follow in this habit. If we are overflowing with awe, then let it out. Whether walking alone on a path of beauty in the deep woods, or whether posting on FB after contemplating His splendor, let our voices and words reflect His surpassing glory with praise to Him. Don’t hold it back!

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. Philippians 4:21

In many letters, Paul personally addresses individuals. Here he makes a more general statement without specifically noting anyone. It is unsure why this is the case, but it may be

because he has already mentioned several people in the epistle, and he does not want to make specific greetings which might then give the impression that his attitude was less favorable to those he earlier mentioned (such as Euodia and Syntyche) than he led on.

For whatever reason, he simply says, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus." All who are in Christ Jesus are, by default, saints. The idea of sainthood found in the Roman Catholic Church is wholly unbiblical and without any merit at all. Rather, any and all who have received Christ Jesus are "in" Christ Jesus and they are saints. He would have all greeted in accord with this distinction.

He then notes that "The brethren who are with me greet you." Why the term "brethren" is used here instead of "saints" is of great talk among scholars. Many say that he is speaking of the Jewish believers that were with him. It is true that there were Jewish believers with him, but this would then leave obvious omissions, and it would also illogically divide the body.

First, it would omit any Gentiles with him. We know from 1:1 and 2:19 that Timothy is there with him. It is not to be expected that he would so faithfully mention him twice and then ignore him in his final words. Secondly, to say that the Jews only were brethren would leave out the Gentiles, but he uses the term of Gentiles elsewhere many times. Suffice it to say that Paul is simply using the term "brethren" as an indication of the believers there with him, each a saint as well.

And as an important note, Peter is never mentioned here, in Philemon, in Romans, etc. when addressing or referring to those in Rome. It shows us without any doubt at all that Peter was not the first "Pope." If he were, it would be the highest dishonor to overlook such a lofty thing as that. The Roman Catholic claim that Peter was the first Pope does not bear up at all when the words of the Bible are considered. The claim is false.

Life application: When reading commentaries, be careful to not just assume that the commentator is correct, thus making a new squiggle in your brain which is incorrect. Instead, read commentaries, and then evaluate what has been written against what you already know about Scripture. Oh but wait! How can you do that unless you ALREADY KNOW SCRIPTURE? Read your Bible!

All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. Philippians 4:22

"All the saints" seems to show that "brethren" of the previous verse are those who were with Paul more directly. The others, being referred to as "all the saints," are those who were found throughout Rome. They, either personally, or by representative coming to visit Paul, had asked to be remembered to the Philippians when he hailed them in this letter.

He goes on to say though, “but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.” This is a term which included all levels within Nero’s scope of influence, from the lowest slave or freedman even to the highest official. The term “Caesar” is an appellation applied to the office, just as Pharaoh was ascribed to the ruler of Egypt. Thus it speaks of whoever is in the office at the time, which during the time of Paul’s letter was Nero.

It is debated why Paul would single these people out, but it may be that it is showing those in Philippi that even the very halls of power were being converted to Christ. If those in such a high place had bowed the knee to Christ, then it was a warm assurance that this life truly means far less than what lies ahead. The place of wealth, power, and pomp was considered as of less importance than that house which is being prepared for those who wait patiently on the Lord.

It can even be deduced that Paul’s chains, as are noted in verse 1:13, were to be preferred above anything that this world could offer, even in the highest place of the Roman Empire.

Life application: There have been many powerful people in church history who have willingly bowed the knee to Christ Jesus. As Isaiah prophesied so long ago, “Kings shall shut their mouths at him.” It is the highest honor of all to be called a Christian, and therefore, we should never feel that our personal state – whether rich or poor, popular or not, or any other worldly distinction – is a reason to be exalted or humiliated. When we have Christ, we are the most blessed of all.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen Philippians 4:23

This final greeting is similar to that of many of his other closing statements. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is one of the greatest concepts found in the Bible. Man is fallen and man needs grace for his salvation and for his continued walk with the Lord. Paul asks for this stupendous blessing to be bestowed upon those in Philippi (and thus us!). In this petition, it is understood that they are undeserving of it. One cannot merit grace. Therefore, the petition is one of hope that this unmerited favor “of our Lord Jesus Christ” will continue to be lavished upon them – sinners already saved by that same grace.

This grace, being unmerited, is especially highlighted here for them to consider their position before God. As with other churches addressed in his epistles, they have been tempted by those who reject Christ; they have been led astray to deeds of the flesh; etc. Paul is reminding them that they stand by grace and that this grace should be with them all. Some Greek manuscripts instead say “...with your spirit.” Which is correct is debated. Either way, the spirit is the highest part of man. It is the aspect of us which is reconnected to God because of grace, not works.

Man spiritually died when Adam disobeyed God; Jesus Christ regenerates our spirit through His work. Faith in that deed, and faith alone, is what brings this about. Paul asks them to consider this and let this grace continue to be that which guides their spirit. And with that, he closes with "Amen." So be it!

Life application: If you have come to the book of Philippians, read it, contemplated it, and still think that you should be pursuing works of the law in order to make God happy (or happier) with you; or if you believe that you can live a life of licentiousness because you are "already saved" and so it doesn't matter, you have a serious issue with understanding grace. You may not be saved at all. One cannot earn grace, and considering grace as a license to sin is perverse. Put away such things, and stop sneering at God's offer of peace. Be reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus Christ.