



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Philippians 46 Contentment Part 03

Philippians 4:10-20, *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ 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.

Paul writes a new large section before some conclusion.

This section as a unit because it is a unit of thought. Contentment is the thought which occupy the Apostle Paul.

Bible has lot to say about being content.

1 Timothy 6:6-8, *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

Hebrews 13:5, *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Bible identifies contentment as a virtue and commands us to be content as well.

You are to be content with whatever you have.

You are to be content with food and clothing.

You are to be content with your wages.

You are to be content because you understand that an utterly, totally, infinitely, and supernaturally resourceful God will never leave you or forsake you.

- ✓ Contentment is a virtue.
- ✓ Contentment is a command.

We are called to contentment.
We are called to be satisfied.
We are called to say I have enough.

Most of us don't experience that.
Paul did.
Paul was a satisfied man.
He was a contented man.

When we write a letter to someone, we love will include some expression of thanks for something that they have done for us.

That is common part of the letter. The apostle Paul, before he concludes this letter to the Philippians whom he loved very deeply, wants to express at some length his gratitude to them for their kindness. They have loved him ever since the beginning.

They had opportunity to share that love with him by sending Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus brought some gifts to meet his needs. The church sent him to meet the needs of Apostle Paul.

The whole text is intended as a final statement of gratitude for the generous gift received at the hands of Epaphroditus.

Paul writing this letter as a prisoner. He is chained to a Roman soldier. He was under house arrest in the city of Rome. He is in

isolation. He is unable to move about. He has lost the freedom to work and minister.

Therefore, he is in need.

He is afflicted with the difficulty of being a captive. During this need the Philippians having heard of it have sent to meet his necessities.

Very trying time. Paul had very little or nothing of what this life considers benefits. These dear Philippians, having heard about his need, had sent gifts and he expresses gratitude to them.

So, that the primary intent of these verses is an expression of thanksgiving. Typical of Paul's letter beneath the surface of the expression of thanks the Spirit of God goes deeper than what we read initially to show us something that is profoundly impactful in our own lives.

Here we find a contented man!

1. God's Providence

Having confidence in God's providence.

2. Satisfaction

Satisfaction with little.

3. Freedom from circumstances

Freedom or independence from circumstances.

4. Divine Power

This matter of contentment demands not only a confidence in God's sovereign providence, a satisfaction with little, and an independence of circumstance; but, fourthly, Paul was content because he was sustained by divine power, he was sustained by divine power.

5. Look out for others

Most of us never experience contentment because we demand our world to be exactly the way we would like it to be.

That is a curse. We want to force everything into the mould that we have made.

We want our partner in life, husband, or wife, to be exactly the way we would expect them to be in order to fulfil our expectation and our design and our agenda.

We would like our children to absolutely conform to this pre-written plan which we have ordained for them to fulfil.

We would like everything in our world to fall into its perfect niche in the little cupboard where we want to compartmentalize every element of existence.

You will never know contentment until you get off that area of designing your own agenda and lose yourself in a preoccupation with the well-being of others.

Paul prayed this for the Philippians.

Philippians 1:9, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,*

What does that mean?

To be concerned with others.

Philippians 2:3-4, *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

The attitude of Christ who didn't look out for His own interest or He would have stayed in heaven, but looked out for the interest of wicked, sinful, fallen men, thus He left heaven to meet their need.

This has been of grave concern to Paul.
He prayed for this.

He exhorted toward this.

He is concerned that the Philippians understand that they are to live for others rather than for themselves.

Contentment belongs to a person who is not demanding that everything in life fit their personal agenda, who is more concerned with others than self.

V 14, *Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.*

Paul is a prisoner, incarcerated in apartment in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier.

He is in a very difficult situation physically. Must have been enduring meagre subsistence. Has great need. We do not know what all his physical needs were at that time, but we can understand the basic needs of life.

In the middle of that need, the word comes to the Philippian church that he is in fact having need and need that is not being met.

So, the Philippians out of love send a man by the name of Epaphroditus who takes with him supplies for Paul, food, and clothing perhaps, and money. Epaphroditus comes all the way to Rome from Philippi to deliver this to Paul.

It is a generous gift.

It is a sacrificial gift.

Philippians were basically poor.

They were poor. They were a church in Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2, *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: ² that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*

The Macedonian churches were a poor people. They did not have much. What they did have, they sacrificially sent to the apostle Paul.

Paul has just received that gift from Epaphroditus in recent days. Epaphroditus has stayed and ministered to him.

Now, Epaphroditus is going back and with him is going this letter. So, they are going to read things like this.

V 11, “I don’t have any wants. I have learned to be content.”

V 12, “I know how to get along with humble means and I know how to learn the secret of going hungry and of suffering need.”

V 13, he can endure anything because of the strength of the Spirit within him.

They are going to conclude, if he stops at that point, “This guy didn’t need anything we sent him.

We made a terrible mistake.

We made this major sacrificial act of giving and he writes back.

Paul says,

- I did not need it,
- I did not want it,
- God would provide in His own time,
- I am committed to the sovereign providence of God,
- I am satisfied with very little,
- I live above my circumstances and
- I am sustained by divine power.”

If that were the end of the epistle, they would have felt very bad, and it would not exactly have been a thank you note.

In spite of the fact that I am content,

In spite of the fact that I am strengthened by Christ,

In spite of the fact that I trust the providence of God,

In spite of the fact that I live above my circumstances,

You have done well. You did a noble thing.

You did a right thing.

You did a lovely thing.

You did a beautiful thing.

“You shared in my distress”

Greek word, *thlipsis*, meaning pain, pressure, tribulation, and trouble.

Paul's stress was no imaginary thing. This was a real difficult situation he was in, very real.

Paul said, "You did a noble thing when you shared with me, when you partnered up along with me, when you joined me in a partnership, by your giving so generously. You really did a noble thing."

How could it be so noble if Paul did not need it?

V 15, *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.*

Paul says that I am not telling you something you do not know. First preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone, for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

Paul is going back ten years. Now, it has been ten years since he had received a gift from them, ten years since he left their area.

Paul is looking back, and he is saying that you do well to share with me in this recent gift. But you Philippians, ten years ago when I first preached the gospel in Philippi and the church was started. After that I went to Thessalonica and to Berea. That time you were the only church that really helped me.

After I departed from Macedonia to go into Achaia and the two cities there were Corinth and Athens, you were the only people who sent me a gift.

Paul is saying that has not forgotten how generous they have been to him.

V 10 is the fact that they would have done it a lot more often, but they never had an opportunity in the intervening time.

2 Corinthians 8, they gave liberally to Paul out of their deep poverty.

When Paul came to Corinth, he did not want to take any money from the Corinthians. He did not want to charge them for the gospel at all.

2 Corinthians 11:8, *I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.*

He took it from those poor churches. He saw it even as a sort of robbery. They were so poor.

These dear loving generous kind Philippians, sending him what he needed, and then eventually when he departed and left for Achaia, they were the only church that sent him anything.

Paul mentions this sharing and he calls it *“the matter of giving and receiving.”* / *“concerning giving and receiving”*

Those are all business terms.

The word “matter” can be translated “account.”

The term “giving and receiving,” could also be understood as terms which expenditures and receipts.

In this whole accounting business of receipts and expenditures, you were the only ones who shared with me when I left Macedonia, and you also sent me more than once gifts in Thessalonica.

Paul was a very careful steward and that he kept accounts of receipts and expenditures so that he could maintain his accountability to the churches that supported him.

Paul writes very often about the fact that he did not want to make anybody chargeable for what he did, so he worked with his own hands.

V16, *For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*

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

The Philippians supported him in his mission to Thessalonica.

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

He was not alone but he had a group with him. They worked as hard as they could to make sure they did not charge any of those new areas for the preaching of the gospel. They had to depend on the labour of their hands and the gifts of the poor Philippians.

Paul was very grateful for the generous kind way in which these dear Philippians had expressed their love to him.

When he went to Corinth, he did not have to charge the Corinthians anything and he didn't have to ask them for food. He could preach the gospel to them and work and toil with his own hands.

1 Corinthians 4:12-13, *And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; ¹³being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*

V 17, *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*

Why is he so happy?

V 10, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that you revived your concern,"

Why is he rejoicing over their gift?

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account

It is not that I want the material benefit in my account.

It is that I want the spiritual benefit in your account.

That is how the man lived.

That is how Paul lived.

He lived preoccupied with the well-being of others.

He was not concerned about his own well-being.

He was not preoccupied with whether he was comfortable, well fed, satisfied and all of that.

Paul is saying, "I am so glad you gave it not because I want the gift but because I want to see it go on your spiritual account."

This is what he had been praying for.

Chapter 1 verse 9, that their love would abound more and more. Chapter 2, that they would continue to manifest that attitude of looking not on their own things but on the things of

others and considering others more important than themselves.

Greek word *karpon*, that profit that goes on your account.

It is what Jesus called treasure in Heaven.

It is laying up treasure in heaven.

It goes on your spiritual account.

Here was a man who was content because he was not concerned with consuming.

He was not concerned with what he got. He was deeply concerned with the spiritual blessings that came to others.

Do you rejoice more in the blessing that comes to others than you do in that which comes to you?

Are you content to be without as long as someone else is blessed?

This is the heart of Paul.

He is interested not in accruing benefits in his own life, but in accruing eternal dividends to the life of the people he loved.

Paul was so thrilled because it would benefit them so much. That was his joy.

Now, they are poor and out of their deep poverty they give liberally, they have given sacrificially. He does not really need it and God certainly would have provided it somewhere else.

But why is it then that this somehow benefits them, or how does it benefit them?

Proverbs 11:24-25, *There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. ²⁵ The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.*

You give away, you get an increase.

You hoard, you have nothing.

Picturing a farmer.

What a farmer does?

A farmer sows seed.

He takes his money; he goes down to the seed store and he buys seed. He spends his entire amount of money on seed.

That is a risk.

Then he takes his seed and throws it away into the ground. The one who does that, who throws it away, scattering it, is the one who increases more.

The generous man will be prosperous.

The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered. That is a promise from God, that God does not remain in debt to anyone.

Proverbs 19:17, *He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.*

The Lord will repay him.

Luke 6:38, *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

Give and it will be given to you!

2 Corinthians 9:6, *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

The principle throughout Scripture is this: that what you sacrificially give becomes treasure in heaven and God in response to that will give in return.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11, *Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,¹¹ while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

All of this because of the liberality of Philippians contribution. Pauls says to them dear Macedonians gave generously, and I

will tell you, God will give back to you. It has accrued to your account which will bring spiritual dividends, the blessing of God.

Paul is not nearly so concerned that he has earthly blessings as that they have spiritual blessings. He is concerned only with it accruing to their spiritual account.

V 18, *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.*

“I have received everything in full,” is a technical, commercial term meaning to receive a sum and give a receipt for it. You have sent me more than I needed, I have a full reception of what you sent, and I am now receipting you for it.

“Not only have I received everything in full, I have an abundance,”

Paul just overflowing with everything they had sent.

“I am amply supplied,”

Paul filled up completely.

Paul use of those three verbs which all express full complete satisfaction.

He says, “I am overwhelmed with what I have received from Epaphroditus in what you sent. I have everything I could ever ask for.”

Paul satisfaction comes not because of what he got, but because of the Philippians loving sacrificial generosity, because it accrued to their spiritual account.

This thrilled his heart.

“What you gave me was a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to God.”

Paul was saying to the Philippians that you did not give it to me but to God. It was a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to God.

Sacrificial language taken out of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, a sacrifice was to provide a fragrant aroma to God. It was to be an acceptable and only an acceptable sacrifice and the heart attitude of the one giving it was to be pleasing to God.

You can go all the way back to

Genesis 8:20-21, *Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.*

Exodus 29:18, *And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the Lord; it is a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.*

Leviticus 1:9, 13, & 17, *but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.*

¹³ *but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with water. Then the priest shall bring it all and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.*

¹⁷ *Then he shall split it at its wings, but shall not divide it completely; and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.*

In the Old Testament and God will say, “I want an acceptable sacrifice, I want a heart that is well-pleasing to Me, I want a fragrant aroma.”

Here in the new covenant Paul is saying just as that was required and received in the Old, so it is required and received in the New, only now it is not an animal. It is still fragrant, acceptable, pleasing to God.

It was a spiritual act of worship!

Romans 12:1, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

So, we as Christians today make sacrifices.

Peter says we are a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices to God.

1 Peter 2:5, *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

We are offering spiritual sacrifices. They are to be fragrant, acceptable, and well pleasing to God.

That is why Paul was so grateful, because he knew that what this sacrifice was. He was greatly encouraged and joyful, and he expresses that joy.

Paul joy came not because he got what he wanted. His joy came because the Philippians had given God something that honoured God and would accrue to their spiritual benefit.

This is a man who is preoccupied with the well-being of others.

V 19, *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

That verse is known to most Christians, is quoted often by many, but needs to be set in its context.

What Paul is saying here is very simple.

- I know you gave sacrificially.
- I know you gave to me in a way that left you in need.
- I want to assure you that God will not be in your debt.
- This has accrued to your spiritual account because it is a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice well pleasing to God.
- God is giving back to you pressed down shaken together and running over.
- God will move men even, if need be, to give to you.
- He will not be in your debt.
- He will supply all your needs.

“all your needs” means material needs, earthly needs which had been to some degree sacrificed by the Philippians and would be replenished amply by God in response to the sacrifice.

If you sow bountifully with God if you put treasure in heaven bountifully!

Receive Bountifully!

If you give, it will be given to you.

If you scatter abroad, the Lord will increase you.

The Philippians had given sacrificially, and God would not remain in their debt. Their needs would be met.

Proverbs 3:9-10, *Honour the Lord with your possessions, And with the Firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

If you want God's blessing on your earthly enterprise, then put your treasure in His hands.

To what extent will He supply?

He will supply all your needs.

To what extent?

According to His riches.

Not out of His riches.

When God gives to you He doesn't give you a pittance out of; He gives you according to His riches, His glorious riches. The riches in glory that belong to Him, in His eternal kingdom that are yours in Christ Jesus. What a statement.

His kingdom and everything else He take care of. Glorious. God is so good, and no gift given to God will make a Christian poorer.

If you are in Christ, it is there.

Where does contentment come from?

It comes from trusting in the providence of a sovereign God.

It comes from being satisfied with little.

It comes from being independent of circumstances.

It comes from being sustained by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

It comes from a preoccupation with the well-being of others.

You could sum it up in five words:

faith,

humility,

submission,

dependence, and

unselfishness.

That makes a contented person.

Paul was that kind of person, content.