

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Philippians' Gift to Paul Philippians 4:10-20 Part 1**

Hopefully all of us have given gifts and received gifts. But how much thought have you really given to this whole exercise?

We know that at Christmas and on birthdays it is culturally acceptable even expected that gifts be exchanged between family members and perhaps close friends. When you do this what are you attempting to accomplish with your gift? What benefits will be derived by the person receiving the gift? What benefits will you derive from giving your gift?

Your response to these questions might be, “Who cares?” This might be your thinking but this certainly was not the thinking of the Apostle Paul. He cares a great deal about the answers to these questions.

This will be very evident as we examine **Philippians 4:10-19**, which is the last major section of this epistle. Let me read this passage for you, **“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. (11) Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (14) Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. (15) And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; (16) for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. (17) Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. (18) But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. (19) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Christ.”**

This passage records for us Paul’s response to a gift that he received from the Philippians. Typically when we receive a gift we respond with a simple, “Thank you.” This obviously was not how Paul chose to respond. The Philippians got far more than just a simple thank you. They got a rather substantial outpouring of thought that contained very valuable instruction. The question that I would like to begin to address this weekend in light of **Philippians 4:10-19** is, “What did Paul’s thank you to the Philippians involve?”

The challenge that we will face in our study of this passage is to discover those key thoughts and then to apply those thoughts to our everyday lives. The study of this passage has the potential of dramatically impacting our lives and hopefully this is exactly what will in fact take place. What is the first major area of thought in Paul’s thank you to the Philippians?

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Thanking the Philippians involved telling them how their gift made him feel. Let us read verse 10 **“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.”** Paul’s response to the financial gift of the Philippians was great joy.

Hopefully many of you remember that Paul, according to **Acts 28:16**, was under house arrest in Rome. This was a great arrangement for Paul since it allowed him to conduct an active and ongoing ministry. But it also appears to have had certain financial costs associated with it. The Philippians became aware of the situation and responded by sending a very substantial financial gift to him as an expression of their concern. And this action caused Paul to rejoice in the Lord greatly, or in other words caused him to greatly rejoice with a joy that flows from and is consistent with the life of Christ. This is why he calls the great joy he experienced a joy that was **“in the Lord.”**

When people are being tested particularly when they are being financially tested it is a wonderful opportunity for people such as ourselves to express our concern for them through financial gifts.

When our children were still at home Lynn chose to be a full time mom and homemaker. This meant we had to raise our family on the rather meager salary of a small church pastor which was significantly lower than a teacher in the public schools. From time to time before our church became the size that it is today people were moved by the Lord to help support us in our ministry by extending financial gifts to us. Do you remember our old 1985 Toyota van? We were able to buy that van because of a gift. Let me ask you a question. Do you believe that this gift we received in the time of our need caused us to feel as if someone was concerned for us? And the answer is yes! And did this realization cause us to rejoice? And the answer is yes!

This is one of many expressions of financial generosity that Lynn and I experienced during those very difficult years when our church was much smaller than it is today from people both inside and outside of the church that chose to express their concern for us in this very tangible way.

It is a wonderful thing to know people care . And this is what Paul felt when he received the gift from the Philippians that caused him to greatly rejoice.

It is interesting how Paul refers to their concern for him. He refers to it as a revival of concern. The word “revive” (ANATHALLO) means “to bloom again.” Paul is not complaining about the Philippians reviving their concern but rather he is marveling at it. Like a person rejoicing over the signs of spring after a hard winter, so Paul rejoiced to see again the signs of personal concern from the Philippians after a long interval of silence. This reference of a revived concern should in no way be interpreted as a rebuke but as a compliment.

Paul clarifies this very point in the very next part of the verse. Let us look at the second half of **Philippians 4:10**, **“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.”**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

He begins by saying “**indeed, you were concerned before.**” Paul is making very clear to the Philippians that even though he had not received financial help from them over a considerable period of time he knew that they had never ceased being concerned for him.

Let me ask you this question. Prior to the most recent gift, how long had it been since the Philippians had given a financial gift to the Apostle Paul? He gives us the necessary information to answer this question in **Philippians 4:16**. The last time he received a gift from the Philippians was while he was in Thessalonica. Or in other words, Paul had not received a gift from the Philippians for his personal needs in 10 years. But even though it had been ten years, Paul never questioned their concern. In fact, the concern that they had for him which expressed itself in those initial gifts at Thessalonica was seen by Paul as expressing itself again in their most recent gift.

Why hadn't they continued to send gifts to Paul? The only reason why the Philippians had not sent other financial gifts to Paul was not because of a lack of concern but rather a lack of opportunity (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). What did the verse say? “**But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.**” Why had they lacked opportunity? Was it for lack of contact? This certainly would not have been the case. Over five years earlier Paul had past through Philippi on his third missionary journey, not only once but most likely twice. It is interesting to note that when Paul was passing through Philippi on those occasions a gift of money was received by him from the Philippians, but it was not for him but for the poor among the church in Jerusalem and Judea.

Paul writes about this gift given by the church of Philippi and other churches in the area of Macedonia to these poor saints in **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**. Let me read for you the words of the Apostle Paul written while he was actually in Macedonia to the church at Corinth on his third missionary journey, “**Now, brethren, we wish to make know to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, (2) that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (3) For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, (4) begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, (5) and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.**” The Macedonian churches, which would have included the church at Philippi, were described by Paul as poor. And what little money they had and could have perhaps shared with Paul was in fact collected by him to give to someone else. Therefore though they may have had the desire to share with Paul and to support him in his ministry they would not have had the opportunity. And that is the very point that Paul wants to make very clear to the Philippians in **Philippians 4:10**.

He wants to make sure that the Philippians understand that he knows how deeply they have always cared for him and how deeply their latest expression of caring had touched him.

This morning I would like to express to you how deeply I have been touched by the care you have expressed to me and my family through your generous giving to this church and its ministries over the years. And I am sure that I am speaking for the entire staff of Valley Bible Church when I say this to you. Thank you for caring.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

What is the first area of thought in Paul's thank you to the Philippians? Thanking the Philippians first of all involved telling them how their gift made him feel. What else did thanking the Philippians involve?

Thanking the Philippians also involved clarifying that their expression of care was a greater benefit for them rather than for him (Philippians 4:11-17). This is spelled out for us in **Philippians 4:11-17**. As we look at these verses remember that Paul is going to evaluate the benefits that are being incurred by the Philippians and by himself in a totally different way than the vast majority of the world.

Most people in the world looking at the gift the Philippian church extended to Paul would say that Paul is the one who benefited more than Philippians. They would say this because they view their lives as somehow fulfilled through money or through what money can buy. And this certainly is not the perspective of Paul. He sees those who love the Lord and who are the true disciples of Christ as being fulfilled by pursuing perfect conformity to Christ which is God's ultimate purpose for our lives and the life of every true disciple.

Isn't this what we have already learned in this epistle? Remember again the words of Paul in **Philippians 3:7-11**, **“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, (9) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (10) that I may know him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** God's purpose is to conform us to Christ and the heart of every true disciple of Christ is for that purpose to be fulfilled. And certainly this as being true of the Apostle Paul in the verses that we have just read.

And because of this we can expect that Paul's evaluation of the benefits of the Philippians gift will be based on that perspective. Certainly it will not be based on whether or not we have more money or less money after a particular event takes place. Therefore .....

Paul's clarification begins by looking at how necessary he viewed their gift in fulfilling God's purpose for his life (Philippians 4:11-13). We find this clarification in **Philippians 4:11-13**. Let us read these verses, **“Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”** These words by Paul might seem to be throwing cold water on his expression of gratitude in Philippians 4:11, but these words were from Paul's perspective necessary.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Paul faced the difficult task of showing the Philippians his genuine appreciation for their financial support, both in the past and in the present, which he has just done in **Philippians 4:10**, while at the same time showing them that in terms of what is important in his life and what really matters in respect to his work is neither dependent on nor motivated by their support.

This is the challenge that he faced and he responded to this challenge first of all by saying in **verse 11**, **“not that I speak from want.”** What did Paul mean by this? He is saying, “yes I am rejoicing greatly because of your expression of concern for me in giving me this financial gift but don’t interpret my words of gratitude to mean that I am in any sense desperate for your gift.” Why wasn’t he desperate? Certainly he must have had some pretty significant needs to cause the church of Philippi to respond so generously and sacrificially. But Paul was not desperate for their gift, neither did he sense a need for their gift because he had learned contentment.

Look at the very next phrase in **Philippians 4:11**, **“not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”** Notice that word “content.” What does it mean to be content? The word “content” (ARKEO) means to be satisfied. Paul had learned to be a satisfied man. He was a satisfied man before their gift. And he is a satisfied after their gift. Paul learned to be satisfied in any and every circumstance.

Before their gift, apparently his ability to stay in rented quarters, under house arrest, was very likely being threatened. If he were unable to pay the expenses associated with this arrangement he could very well have ended up in a Roman dungeon. This, of course, would have ended any opportunity he had to evangelize the guards that were chained to him. It would also have ended any opportunity for him to receive visitors from the Roman church or any other church. It would have been quite a set back in terms of the ministry opportunities that he had been enjoying in the eyes of many. But even in spite of this apparent threat he was a satisfied man. He knew that even under that threat, God’s purpose for him could not be thwarted and he was fully satisfied. So whether he received their gifts or did not receive their gifts he was fully satisfied. He was content.

I would like to think the staff at Valley Bible has this same kind of satisfaction. And therefore because of this I would like to think that though we may be grateful for your financial gifts we are not dependent on those gifts or motivated in some way to pursue them by them. And if this is true then we should be fully satisfied and at peace with our lives no matter what the financial future holds for Valley Bible Church.

### CONCLUSION

Those in the world can never know this kind of satisfaction because they do not know Christ.

The people in the world will seek to satisfy themselves by pursuing wealth. They think that when they finally are able to reach their financial goals that they will finally be content or satisfied. This is foolishness. There is no satisfaction in the attainment of financial goals.

The people in the world are seeking to satisfy themselves by pursuing pleasure. They think that if they can just go to this place or that place or to this thing or that thing they will finally be satisfied.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

This is foolishness. There is no satisfaction in the pursuit of pleasure.

The people in the world will seek to satisfy themselves by pursuing accomplishment. They think that if they and do this thing or that thing that everything will be better. This is also foolishness.

They will never be contented but everyone in this room this weekend who knows Christ and who is seeking to be conformed to can learn contentment.

You might say, “Do you mean that you can learn to be content with cancer?” “Are you saying that you can be fully satisfied with your life while fighting this disease?” The answer is absolutely! In fact, I can learn to be fully content in the circumstances of my life including my cancer even while the healthy people around me are dissatisfied and discontent.

Satisfaction in every circumstance can only be learned by those who know Christ.