

*Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

**The Philippians' Gift to Paul  
Philippians 4:10-20  
Part 2**

This weekend we are going to continue to talk about giving and receiving. In **Acts 20:33-35** we learn that the apostle Paul used his own life as an example told the Ephesian elders to help the weak. This particular encouragement is just another way of saying, “help the poor.”

But of course it is not easy for people to give their money to the poor or to support any other worthwhile endeavor if they think that they are going to suffer loss. Therefore in order to encourage these Ephesian elders in this good work of helping the poor Paul went on to remind them that Christ had said, **“It is more blessed to give than receive.”**

Let me ask you this question. Do you believe what Christ said? Hopefully your answer is, Yes! And if your answer is yes and if this truly reflects what you believe then let me ask you this question, “How will this impact your life?” If you truly believe that it is more blessed to give than receive then you will be seeking to give as much money away as possible. Why in the world would you be committed to doing such a thing? Because you truly believe that it is more blessed to give than receive.

If you are here this weekend and you know that this does not describe you. If you are here this weekend and you know that you are not striving to give away as much money as possible and you know that you struggle in practicing generous, sacrificial and cheerful giving then the passage of scripture that we have just begun to study last week hopefully will prove to be very helpful to you.

Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians 4:10-19, **“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.”**

This passage records for us Paul’s response to a gift that he received from the Philippians. This response went far beyond a simple thank you. In fact his response contains a great deal of instruction about this whole matter of giving and receiving more specifically it contains a great deal instruction about the relative blessedness of giving and receiving.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

The question that I began to address last weekend in light of **Philippians 4:10-19** was, “What did Paul’s thank you to the Philippians involve?” The first thing that we saw in Paul’s thank you to the Philippians was that his 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.

Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Being under house arrest provided him far greater ministry opportunities than if he was in a Roman dungeon. But unfortunately being under house arrest also meant that there were certain expenses that he was responsible to meet. The Philippians realizing Paul’s situation plus being in the best financial position that they had been for 10 years reached out once again to Paul with a very substantial financial gift. And this expression of caring contributed significantly to the great joy that Paul felt. And Paul wanted the Philippians to know how their gift had impacted him.

What is the first area of thought involved 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 continue to look at these verses remember that Paul is going to evaluate the benefits that were being incurred by the Philippians and by himself on the basis of God’s purposes and promises, rather than on the basis of dollars and cents.

Paul’s clarification began by looking at how necessary he viewed their gift in fulfilling God’s purpose for his life (Philippians 4:11-13). We found 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.**” What was Paul saying to the Philippians in these three verses? Paul was saying that he was not desperate for their gift neither did he sense a need for their gift because he had learned contentment. This might seem as if he was throwing cold water on his earlier expression of gratitude but this clarification was necessary lest the Philippians come to the false conclusion that Paul had been desperate for their help.

Obviously this was not the case. How did he begin **verse 11**? He said, “**not that I speak from want.**” Paul wants them to know that the great joy he experienced in response to their gift had nothing to do in any way with a felt need. In order to make his point stronger he went on to speak about how content he was. What did he say? “**Not that I speak from want but I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**” He then expands this thought in **verse 12**. He starts with the phrase “**I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity.**” In other words, Paul is saying that he knows how to be brought low through poverty or be lifted up through prosperity and still remain content. He has even learned how to be content even when he was lacking the basic necessities.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Look at the very next part of the verse **“in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry both of having abundance and suffering need.”**

What does it mean to be content? The word “content” (ARKEO) means to be satisfied. Paul had learned to be a satisfied man in any and every circumstance. This is what he is telling the Philippians. He wants them to know that he was in no way desperate for their help. There was no way that he could have been desperate for their help because he was a contented man.

How was this contentment possible? Contentment was possible because he had come to realize that his circumstances were not a critical factor in him achieving the goal that he was pursuing. What was the goal that Paul was pursuing? Paul was striving to be a participant in the resurrection from the dead and to be perfectly conformed to Christ. Whether he had their financial gift or did not have their financial gift was not a critical factor in whether or not he would achieve his goal. This is where we ended the message last week.

This morning I will continue our study of **Philippians 4:11-13** and Paul’s clarification to the Philippians that their expression of financial care was a greater benefit for them rather than for him.

I would hope that as we continue our study this weekend that we might be helped in knowing more about how we might experience this same wonderful sense of contentment enjoyed by Paul. Certainly if we can be helped in knowing more about how we might experience such a thing our lives will be greatly blessed.

Let me ask you this question. What is the goal of your life? I would hope that you would say, “The goal of my life is the same as Paul’s and if it is then you can learn contentment in every circumstance. If your goal is anything other than Paul’s then you will never be able to learn this kind of contentment because certain circumstances will invariably impact whatever earthly goal that you are pursuing in some negative way.

If being financially secure is more important to you than pursuing the resurrection and perfect conformity to Christ you will find yourself getting discontent when the circumstances of your life in some way undercuts that goal. Rather than seeing the uncertainties of the job market or financial markets as an opportunity to get to know Christ better and as a stepping stone to getting to know Christ perfectly at the resurrection from the dead you will begin to fuss and to fume. Your life will be characterized by discontent rather than by contentment.

What is most important to you? Is it getting to know Christ better and ultimately perfectly at the resurrection of the dead or is it some other temporal or earthly goal?

If after reflection you believe that your goal is to be like Christ and that this is the ultimate goal of your life does this necessarily mean that you will be content in every circumstance? And the answer is absolutely not. How do we know this? Because contentment is something that must be learned even by those who are pursuing the resurrection from the dead and perfect conformity to Christ.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Paul had to learn contentment. Look again at **Philippians 4:11-13**. What did he say in **Philippians 4:11** “**I have learned to be content.**” And then again what did he say in **Philippians 4:12** “**I have learned to be content.**” Why is it that so many Christians who sincerely love the Lord and who want to be conformed to Him suffer discontent? It is because they are slow learners. I am very confident that we have a lot of slow learners among us this weekend. And because of this I need to ask a question.

Do you want to learn contentment? If you do then there are two things you need to know. If you want to learn contentment you must first of all appreciate the difficulty of this pursuit. The pursuit of contentment will not be a cakewalk. And those who successfully achieve this goal will have not achieved it by accident. There are just too many obstacles in front of them. What are those obstacles? What are those difficulties?

The pursuit of contentment is difficult because of the world (1 John 2:15). John tell us in **1 John 2:15**, “**Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**” Contentment is all about focus. And those who love the world will never be able to focus on what they need to focus on in order to be content. Their attention will continually drift from the things above to the things of earth.

Someone might ask is it actually possible for a Christian to have their attention diverted away from heavenly things in this way? Of course! If this were not the case Paul would not have had to exhort the church at Colossae to set their affection on things above rather than on things of earth in **Colossians 3**. The world and the things of the world is a threat to our walk and certainly our contentment. Why? First of all because this world is constantly calling out to us and seeking to seduce us in many different ways. Let us for a moment simply consider television.

Let me ask you a question. What is the purpose of TV? Some of you might say that the purpose of TV is to entertain. If this is your answer this is a very naive response. The purpose of TV is not to entertain you but rather to ultimately sell you something. Television exists to take harmless, perhaps even healthy desires and turn them into needs. And as soon as we begin to think of our wants in terms of need there is no way that we will be able to keep our proper focus on heavenly things.

The apostle Paul would not have been a very inviting target for Madison Fifth Avenue advertising gurus. Why? They would not have been able to produce in him a sense of need. Why wouldn't they be able to produce in him a sense of need? Because he had learned contentment.

How do you think he would respond if he were here today and found himself watching all the commercials that we are presently enjoying? Certainly he might look at some of the things that are being advertised and think, “that's really cool.” But there is absolutely no way that he would look at any of the things that were being advertised and think that he actually needed any of it. Why? For Paul the only thing he needed was the grace to continue his pursuit of heavenly things, or in other words the grace to continue his pursuit of the resurrection from the dead and perfect conformity to Christ. This is all that he needed. In terms of the things of this world he was perfectly satisfied in any and every circumstance.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Unfortunately this is not the case for many Christians. Many Christians continually find themselves being seduced by this world and the people of this world. In fact some Christians are so gullible, so vulnerable to the messages of the world that they will find themselves needing things that they don't even want. If you don't believe this is so simply go into the drawers, closets, sheds and garages of professing Christians and see all the stuff that was at one time so necessary just sitting there and serving no useful purpose. If you don't believe that Christians are not susceptible to the message of the world, why are so many in debt?

If you want to learn contentment you must first of all appreciate the difficulty of this pursuit. Why is the pursuit of contentment so difficult? The pursuit of contentment is difficult first of all because of the world. Why else might make our pursuit of contentment difficult?

The pursuit of contentment is difficult because of our sinful flesh (Galatians 5:16-21). Let me read for you **Galatians 5:16-21, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy outburst of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and the things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**” As long we occupy these bodies there will be a battle raging within us between the flesh and the Spirit.

The message of the world which springs from the sinful flesh of mankind in general will continually seek to appeal to the sinful part of our humanness or in other words the sin that dwells in our members. We don't have yield to our flesh impulses, but neither will we be totally free from them either, and this will make your pursuit of contentment difficult.

### CONCLUSION

If we are going to learn contentment it begins by appreciating the difficulty of this pursuit. Why is it so difficult? First of all the pursuit of contentment is difficult because of the world. And secondly the pursuit of contentment is difficult because of the flesh. Because the pursuit of contentment is difficult learning to be content is not something that will come easily.