**Philippians 4:10-23 – Closing Thoughts On Contentment, The Gospel**

We are finishing up the Book of Philippians today and we are going to look at **Phil. 4:10-23**. Let me share again where we are headed next. We are going to do a series titled “Questions And Answers.” We are going to talk about spiritual renewal (revival). We are going to answer the question about why did God allow people to be wiped out in the OT and is the God of the OT different than the God of the NT as some claim. That will be an important, but heavy study.

We will also discuss the belief that the church is full of hypocrites. We have talked about hypocrisy before but not in the detail we will in that week. And our fourth week, and these are not necessarily in a specific order, will discuss the issue of miracles. There are some wild reports from people, many undocumented, about people raising the dead, etc. We will clarify what the Bible says about miracles. Do they still happen and do they have always be spectacular as some think.

There are a few closing thoughts worth noting. Paul talks about contentment. He talks about how people have cared for him. He had learned some important things throughout his life and what he shares is worth noting.

We begin in **vss. 10-12**. **Vs. 10** tells us that the Philippian church was concerned for Paul’s well-being but had not had the opportunity to help. Now that had changed. They had sent Epaphroditus to help Paul and bring him a gift. This verse is not Paul scolding them as if they had failed to minister to him. Not at all. He knew this church always had him on their minds, but they had not had the chance to minister before to him as they wanted to and now that opportunity had come up.

The word **“revived”** might give the idea that this church had waned in their opportunity to help Paul. Their hearts were always in line with doing what they could to help. The word **“revived” means “to sprout again, grow green again, flourish again, bloom again, to renew.”** The situation had changed and now the people could help.

**Point:** This reminds us that just because an opportunity may have not opened up previously does not mean that it will not open up in the future or that we simply, because something did not happen immediately, decide that it will never happen. We cannot think that way. Sometimes God has a different timetable than we do.

Paul knew that since the last time they had helped Paul (one writer thinks it had been ten years, I am not sure of that, maybe a couple of years but they had lost touch probably regarding where Paul was), the church had not had the chance to do things for Paul and now they were able to so their support of him **“bloom again, flourished” and was “renewed.”** No doubt this was very important to them and to Paul. When we help others, God is glorified and those people we help receive encouragement.

**Vs. 11** is a point we cannot overlook. And it is this:

**1) Contentment comes only through a close tie with God.** Many people are discontent. It does not matter what they have or do not have. They are unhappy with their jobs, with people, with their situations in life and they complain and gripe and at times, take it out on others.

Some people are bitter. For others, it may be selfishness, being what we call “self-absorbed.” Life revolves around them. They are the center of the universe. Others carry anger and a heavy emotional load because of things in their life. They have not learned contentment and in fact, have no idea what it is or what it means. I believe that.

Paul said that he had, and here is a key, **“learned”** contentment **(vs. 11)**. It did not matter the situation or the circumstances, Paul had, over time, developed a content spirit.

Let’s talk a moment about the word **“learned.”** It is an aorist tense verb that indicates that at some point in Paul’s life the light came on, we could say, and he had learned to be content. The word **“learned” here in this context means “to learn by use and practice; to be in the habit of, accustomed to.”**

It is not just about gaining knowledge. As we practice contentment, being thankful for what we do have, when we may not have everything, we desire or want, or need now, we hopefully have over time developed the habit of resting in Christ that He will take care of us as He sees fit.

There is a combination of information and obedience. It is trusting God to do what He sees best. The word for **“content”** here means **“contented with one’s lot (situation), with one’s means, though the slenderest” (Thayer).** It is also not connected to external circumstances. It is a total dependence upon God. Not that we do not do our part like work and pray, but contentment is not based on our bank account, or what we have or do not have. It is totally tied to Christ and our relationship with Him. That is what brings contentment.

In **vs. 12** Paul elaborates on **vs. 11** by saying whatever the circumstance, whether he had plenty or not, that did not affect the contentment he had learned. Note the word **“learned”** in **vs. 12**. It is a different word than found in **vs. 11**. This word means **“to teach fully, to instruct, to learn a lesson, to be disciplined in a practical lesson.”**

It came from a word that was used to describe being **“initiated into the mysteries”** and Paul, as the **BKC** notes, had by his experiences in life been initiated into **“being content”** no matter the circumstances.

Whatever situation Paul had been in, he learned (perfect tense verb - action in the past with continuing results) the secret of whether it mattered if he had much or little. God taught Him this contentment as **vs. 13** tells us. He consciously made the effort to allow the Lord to help him to walk through any situation, trusting God to meet his needs and give him what he needed for life **(Mt. 6:33)**.

What he had learned as he notes in **vs. 12** is expounded on in **vs. 13**. Christ gives us the strength, power, ability, to handle those times of lean or much. God empowers us to do His will.

Paul says he can do **“all things”** through Christ Who gives Him the strength to do so. This requires dependence and trust in God. He gives us the strength to do as He desires for us to do, to fulfill his will in our life. It is Christ and Him alone that helps us.

The **Life Application Bible Commentary** puts it like this,

**“Paul could truly be content because he did not let outward circumstances determine his attitude. Christ was giving him the strength to continue with his ministry and the work of spreading the gospel whether he had plenty or was in need. Paul had complete confidence that, no matter what the circumstance, Christ would give him the strength to meet it.”**

**2) Acknowledging the help of others keeps the church strong.** This is what Paul does in **vss. 14-20**. Paul notes their kindness in **vs. 14**. The word **“share”** can be translated **“fellowship, joining with others, to sympathize actively, to relieve.”** The people of Philippi saw Paul’s needs and wanted to help and Paul was thankful.

Though Paul may not have been in some prison cell at this time, it still was not easy and he had material needs that this church stepped up and helped with. In **vss. 15-16** he continues thanking them for their working with him to spread the Good News about Jesus. Even when he was in a different area, they sent help to him so that he could minister.

**Vs. 17** shows that God would honor this church in their willingness to give to God’s work. This verse, along with **vs. 18**, reminds us that God is glorified when we support His work. This is not about making someone rich who is doing ministry. It is about helping them to get the job done for the Lord. Paul never abused the gifts given to him.

When we help others, it really does increase our willingness to look for opportunities. This church was behind Paul 100% in what he was doing, and God would honor them for that. He will do the same for us as well.

Because this church was willing to give to the work of God, in **vs. 19** Paul tells them that God will take care of them and meet their needs as a church. This may not always mean we will be overflowing with money, it can mean spiritual needs as well. God is aware when we step out and help the team, we could say. He has blessed Oakridge beyond belief because we have been willing to step up to the plate.

God would help the Philippian church to continue in ministry and would help the individuals within the church in meeting their needs. As **vs. 20** tells us, it is all about God.

**Point:** Thank people for their service. But also make sure that our motives behind serving are in line with the Lord, that it is about Him, not us. But we cannot take people for granted but we do not serve to get noticed or to think that gives us the right to treat people poorly or to cause disunity. Any strings attached to serving are wrong.

**3) The Gospel does work in unexpected places.** In **vss. 21-23** Paul finishes his letter by sending greetings from those who are with him including all the saints, especially those of Caesar’s household. I love **vs. 22**. There were Christians who worked in the palace of the emperor. That could have been tough but God may have been using them to reach others who filled roles in the government or who simply worked for Caesar.

This statement may have included soldiers who had the job of guarding Paul. As one writer notes, since Philippi was a Roman colony, there may have been some connection between some of the staff in Rome and those who served in a civil capacity in Philippi.

We must never think that God cannot work in some situations. Even when it comes to government it is important to keep in mind that God is changing lives there. What we need are righteous leaders. Not because America has to be a Theonomy (led by the Bible, especially OT laws as some want, but because we need people with a moral compass to lead our land and our local municipalities.

**Point:** Never think that God cannot change lives. We all know He can, but we must not allow what we see to convince us of otherwise. The Lord is at work everywhere, at all times.