

***“Paul's Letter to the Philippians —
True Contentment, Whatever Our Circumstances”***

Review:

- ***Last time, Paul's Final Exhortation, as found in Phil. 4:1-9, was very personal and extremely powerful for those to whom it was addressed — of that we can be sure. And it should be for us as well.***

- ***Its Subject: The Apostle's Dear Ones***

Phil. 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, [my] dearly beloved.

- ***This is a six-fold expression of Paul's relationship with these saints and the exhortation is yet so simple: “so stand fast in the Lord”. What could be better for believers than this, standing fast in the Lord.***

- ***Its Application: Even To Our Ordinary Lives by identifying by name two women from the assembly, Euodias and Syntyche:***

Phil. 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

- ***By name Paul addressed them here and so their “conflict” has gone down in history. But, in the end, unity with Paul is strongly affirmed here and all believers (even the two named women) are greatly honored. This is the unity that has eternal glory: “whose names [are] in the book of life”.***
- ***So there is here a very strong exhortation followed by an equally strong affirmation of eternal glory. Blessed indeed!***

- ***Its Focus: Rejoicing and Again Rejoicing***

Phil. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: [and] again I say, Rejoice.

- ***Think of the many applications of this to our current lives. Note that there is nothing at all here about the conditions of the day, physically, financially, emotionally, politically — nothing of that was important enough, it seems, to have been addressed here.***

What about our lives, our circumstances, with all of their many, many details? No denying it, they are very real. But they are to be over-shadowed but the precious truths Paul writes of here in this letter.

○ ***Its Challenge: The Lord is Near, and Be Gentle***

Phil. 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand.

- ***“Let your moderation be known; the Lord [is] at hand [or near]”: Here, “moderation” = “gentleness”. Let gentleness be known, or, shown, displayed, always. This is challenging, isn’t it?***

Literally, this really does mean “near”, but I do not believe he is writing prophetically of the return of the Lord in this verse. Rather, he writes about the Lord’s most intimate presence with us. He does dwell within us.

Don’t forget Rom. 8:9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

○ ***Its Promise: The Peace of God Is Abundant***

Phil. 4:6-7

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- ***The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”: “keep” here means “guard”, as in a castle’s “keep”, where the crown jewels and gold of the realm are safely secured. BUT THERE IS A CONDITION HERE: THERE IS A BIG “IF” IMPLIED . . .***
- ***“but in every thing [in every circumstance of life] by prayer and supplication”: Prayer and supplication and then finally our requests, should always be preceded by our thanksgivings, in other words.***

- ***“with thanksgiving”: “Meta” = “after”. Our thanksgivings should always influence our requests and every other form of prayer. And they will!***
 - ***“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”: Our understanding is always lacking concerning the many details of God’s working (we do not even know how to pray - Rom. 8:26). We can know however what is revealed and here we find such a great example of that.***
 - ***But, our many concerns are no match for God’s abundant good care of each of us under the abundance of his grace. We are on a path to glory and the Lord will take us to our destination. Such a great promise now follows here. Let us take it to heart.***
- ***His [Paul’s] Calling: Follow Me!***

Phil. 4:8-9

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, **think on these things.**
 9 **Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.**

- ***The “things” we are encouraged to “think” or “mind” are all listed here - as Paul had been and continued to demonstrate to them all. They were now to run the race set before and “practice as a habit” through much exercise of the enablements God has provided.***
- ***The “God of peace” is the wording, not “the peace of God” as in verse 7. We have both when we walk as Paul walked and think and mind, as he did. What an exalted privilege indeed. Amen?***

Today’s Scripture:

Phil. 4:10-13

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Our Outline:

Paul's Testimony of God's Abundant Grace Continues:

- **Rejoicing Though Under Roman House Arrest**
- **Contented Though Suffering the Lack of Many of Life's Necessities**
- **"Initiated" Through the Many Trials of Life**
- **Empowered by Christ Himself**

Paul's Testimony of God's Abundant Grace Continues:

I. Rejoicing Though Under Roman House Arrest:

[READ] Phil. 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

- **"But I rejoiced . . .": Epaphroditus had come from Philippi and had been a great blessing to the apostle (see Phil. 2:25). This was a practical and material matter, but every blessing of the Lord is grounds for our rejoicing. We should not forget this.**
- **That Paul was rejoicing even in his house arrest was important for he had been set forth to be their example. But is there more to this? Yes, as he now continues:**

Paul's Testimony of God's Abundant Grace Continues:

II. Contented Though Suffering the Lack of Many of Life's Necessities:

[READ] Phil. 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content.

- **Just to clarify though, he writes that the ground of this rejoicing was NOT that they had now met his physical need. For, he had learned through much experience how to be always content. Now that would be something great indeed.**

- *The next verses explain this in detail this and contain a lesson for us today that is exceedingly valuable:*

Paul's Testimony of God's Abundant Grace Continues:

III. "Initiated" Through the Many Trials of Life:

[READ] Phil. 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

- *"I know both [how] to be abased, and I know [how] to abound": Here the apostle speaks not only of his "education in life", as if by the mere living of it, it might be sufficient for God's purposes, but that he would come "to see" what otherwise could not be known . And he had come to see so clearly through it the eternal value of both "his humbling or abasing" and also "his abounding", together. ANY TESTIMONIES?*
- *The apostle gets to the heart of his teaching here in this verse. He had learned, as he wrote in the previous verse, to be "always content" because he was "always learning" in all matters of life to be "both abased (or humbled) and also abounding". As he writes here, and this may indeed be most significant, he was in the process of being taught both at the same time!*
- *He uses here the word (only found here in the Greek text) "initiated". He writes here that he has been initiated into a sacred knowledge (perfect passive indicative). This word in the Greek language of his time was commonly used of initiations into a secret knowledge and practice, whether in religious or in philosophical pursuits. It refers to a special privilege granted to the one so initiated. This is a very special verse and demands further reflection:*
 - *The "all things" here surely refers back to the same wording earlier. It points back then to what "following or imitating" the apostle is all about, the point being that as believers today under grace and as members of the Body we should be satisfied with God's poured out grace as we walk with Paul on this same course of life (or death). For walking the path Paul walked is a very special walk indeed as Paul has elaborated throughout this letter starting with his introduction here in chapter 1:*

[READ] Phil. 1:12-13 [The Example: Paul's Imprisonment]

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things [which happened] unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other [places];

...

[READ] Phil. 1:19-21 [The Principle: Christ Shall Be Magnified]

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but [that] with all boldness, as always, [so] now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether [it be] by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain.

...

[READ] Phil. 1:29-30 [The Application: We Also Must Suffer]

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

- ***So the Christian life is one to be lived, walking as Paul walked and suffering as he also suffered. May Christ be glorified, for it is his life that we are living out in this world!***
- ***The next verse further explains this one by using two different words for “energy” or “power” as the apostle finishes his words here in this final chapter or this life-transforming letter to the Philippians:***

Paul's Testimony of God's Abundant Grace Continues:

IV. Empowered by Christ Himself:

[READ] Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

- ***Literally here, “I can do all things” = “I am empowered”; then “Christ which strengtheneth me”. The first is a gift of empowerment. The second the on-going internal energizing it says by Christ himself.***
- ***Which “all things” does the author have in mind here? Again, as before, the “all things” here must refer back to the former “all things”.***

- ***What this does not mean: we cannot do whatever we want with God's supernatural power. So many are teaching this incorrectly today - but they are often false teachers. Amen.***

Application:

- ***So what is set before us is the life of simplicity that Paul demonstrated so well and that we therefore would do well to take to heart. Examples and testimonies are very important to God and greatly used therefore by him.***
- ***We should be encouraged by the knowledge (and experience) of the indwelling Christ Jesus and his Holy Spirit.***
- ***So let's NOT get caught up in the schemes of religion, Satan's playground – rather let's run the race, fight the good fight, looking always for the return and the heaven-ward calling in Christ Jesus.***

Crowns await all that do. Amen.