

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading

of Discipleship

Giving Time, Talents & Resources

Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

September 11, 2022

Day 1: Philippians 4:10-11

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have.

Paul's joy is not that he needed the gift or in the gift itself. His joy is in the greater reality of what the gifts represent. They are the tangible evidence of their long term friendship. This friendship has a greater significance in that it is the renewing of their long term partnership with him in the Gospel. Paul wants the Philippians to know that their friendship is not based on "need" (in terms of they are friends because they need something from each other) but on something much deeper - the love they have for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Because both Paul and the Philippians are in Christ, neither is dependent on the other for life in this world.

Question: Do you think Paul is saying "I don't need your gift but just the love you have for me"? If so, why bother with the gift? What do you think this gift was?

Challenge: Think about how you respond to gifts given to you. Keep a journal of how you respond to gifts given to you for the next month or even a year. Write about how you felt receiving each gift and why?

Scripture: Genesis 33:6-16

Day 2: Philippians 4:12

I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.

Paul is not self-sufficient but Christ-sufficient. Paul is not claiming that he is independent (which is to imply that his strength and support comes from himself) but that he is dependent on God in Christ. The way to think about both wealth and want is to see "want" as teaching us to learn patience and trust in suffering. Those in wealth learn about humility and dependence in prospering.

Question: What do you think is the "secret" Paul is referring to?

Challenge: Think hard about this. Which one do you find hardest - to be in want or plenty?

Scripture: II Corinthians 12:5-15

Day 3: Philippians 4:13-14

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

Paul's point here is that he does not need anything else but Christ in his life to enjoy living. His contentment comes not from within himself but from outside, from being in Christ, on whom he is totally dependent. Paul is sufficient in Christ so that his contentment does not depend on being in want or having plenty. He is stating that satisfaction in his life does not hinge on either having a lot or having a little. After Paul explains how he satisfied in Christ .He goes on to share his gratitude for their kindness. Paul does not want to come off as a person who says "I really did not need your gift." He personally is grateful for their care for him and he is grateful that their care comes from their love for him as a co-worker in the Gospel.

Question: How have you understood verse 13?

Challenge: Think back over that last few years to when you have been unsatisfied with life. What caused it and what did your lack of contentment tell you about your belief that "God will take care of you"?

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-7:1

Day 4: Philippians 4:15-16

You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once.

These next four verses lay out Paul's deep appreciation for the partnership with the Philippians . They may have been the first in Greece to see that the Gospel was not just something to take in and enjoy but something that by its very acceptance demands us to share. When we have experienced the love of God, that experience is complete when we share it with the world around us.

Question: Why do you think this Christian community supported Paul more than the others?

Challenge: Secure a map and using Acts 16:11-18:18, trace Paul's journey through Greece.

Scripture: Acts 16:7-17

Day 5: Philippians 4:17-18

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

The gift is their love for him and their willingness to join with him in his work in other parts of Greece. They are a good example of how we can today support missionaries in various parts of the world. We are just as big a part of the missionaries' service by supporting them financially, prayerfully, and with our encouragement for both them and their families.

Question: How has Paul been paid in full?

Challenge: Take a look at the UMC's web site to see how many persons in missionary work we support.

Scripture: II Corinthians 8:7-17

Day 6: Philippians 4:19-20

And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul seems to assert that in the midst of their poverty, God will provide for their physical needs. In the midst of oppression, God will provide them with the strength and faith to endure. In the midst of challenges to their faith, God will supply grace as they go through the challenges. Paul knows God will supply all this because they gave to Paul generously when they had so little. Their generosity was the evidence that God, in Christ, was already supplying them with what they needed. They had very little yet they freely gave to Paul when others who could have given did not.

Question: Do you sense from the above that Paul is speaking of spiritual more than material?

Challenge: Do a little looking back to see how God has taken care of or showed you how to take care of your needs.

Scripture: Psalm 81