

Studies In Philippians (29)

Sharing With Paul

Philippians 4:14-23

Tonight, I would like to resume an ongoing study we have been engaged in on a monthly basis at Rose Avenue. We have been systematically going through the book of Philippians, a letter which theme is to rejoice even in troubling times. Paul, writing from prison, encourages these brethren to endure even as they faced threats and perhaps even persecutions. He has humbly appealed to his own example of how one can endure. And so we must also do. In chapter 4:10-13, our last lesson, we noted Paul's contentment, regardless of whatever state he found himself in. This is found with gratitude as he acknowledges their supporting him.

He then commends them for their financial fellowship with him in the gospel. Our focus this evening will be on the final verses of this chapter – Philippians 4:14-23

I. Sharing With Paul (14-20)

- a. Vs. 14 – ***You have done well in that you shared in my distress.*** Recall that prior to this, he is grateful for their gift to him, but he wants them to understand that he is satisfied no matter what state he finds himself in (content).
 - i. BUT, he wants them to understand he IS grateful and acknowledges what they did for him as a blessing. Do we recognize the good done by others? I think of Jesus noting the widow with 2 mites – Luke 21:1-4
Barnabas – translated, son of encouragement – he was known for his good deeds – whether it was selling land to help needy brethren (Acts 4:36-37), or standing up for Paul when he sought to join the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-27), or defending John Mark (Acts 15:36-37), etc.
We need to take the time to recognize those who have done good, whatever that might be.
 - ii. They had done well – it was a good thing they had done. Some are worthy of praise for their good works.
 - iii. The word for **sharing** here (and in vs. 15) is a compound word that includes the Greek word for fellowship. In whatever ways they had helped Paul, he saw it as fellowship with them. We will address this again in a few moments.
- b. Vs. 15-16 we find the nature of their help. ***They had supported Paul in some way, and they had done so more than once, including in Thessalonica.***
We find here part of the pattern for churches supporting preachers in other places, AND how preachers are to receive support.
 - i. First, we must not forget that in the New Testament, each congregation is independent and autonomous (self-governing). Whatever work is to be done by a local church must maintain that autonomy and respect the autonomy of any other congregation. That is why we cannot create any organizational structure larger than a congregation, nor can we surrender our work to another congregation (e.g. a sponsoring church).
 - ii. Their support was sent directly to Paul. There was no centralized organization, nor was it sent to a congregation where he was working. It was sent to Paul as the preacher – this showed confidence in him as he worked for the cause of Christ, REGARDLESS of state of the congregation. IOW, wherever Paul was working had no oversight or control over the funds Paul received.
CONSIDER how this enables a preacher to preach the truth **even to a hostile group** – they had no power to withhold his support from other places that showed confidence in him.

- iii. The word “shared” indicates there is a relationship with the supporting church and the one they are supporting. It is a form of the Greek word for our English “fellowship”. Paul was appealing to a spiritual bond that they shared together – namely their relationship with Christ Jesus. Their fellowship was in Christ (1 John 1:3, 6-7) – it bound them together. As such, there needs to be confidence in the one being supported. A preacher being supported, and a church privileged to support other preachers, BOTH ought to take seriously this fellowship. In it, ensure that what is being supported is truth and not error (cf. Ephesians 5:11).
- c. Vs. 17-18 - ***Not that I seek the gift, but the fruit that abounds to your account.***
 - i. Paul again expresses his contentment – “*I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you.*” He is thankful for what he has received. Recall that in the previous verses Paul mentions their supporting him on several occasions. First there was at least twice in Thessalonica, and possibly other times as he left Macedonia (Thessalonica is in Macedonia), and then you have Paul NOW in Prison in Rome and Epaphroditus has again come to him from Philippi – so we see multiple occasions when they had helped Paul. He is so grateful for what they have done for him over and over.
 - ii. BUT there was something more important than the physical gift – the “fruit” that abounded to their account. He would describe this gift as a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.
 - 1. In this we find the TRUE motive that ought to accompany giving. It is not about self-serving desires or to be seen by men. It is not a “seed-faith” offering expecting God to give you what you are selfishly asking for. God doesn’t want that – Matthew 6:1-4 describes how Jesus wants us to share. (cf. Matthew 23:5). This is true, whether we are dealing with helping others (James 1:27, 2:14-17), or in contributing to God (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
 - 2. It is about bearing fruit (spiritual fruit) – Paul observes that their gift was fruit abounding to their account. The idea of fruit is the produce or product (the result) of something planted. Jesus often made reference to fruit to describe the types of works one was doing, whether good or bad – Matthew 7:16-20 – where He noted you will know them by their fruits
2 Corinthians 9:10 speaks of God increasing the fruits of your righteousness
Galatians 5:22 describes the “fruit of the Spirit”
Colossians 1:10 speaks of being fruitful in every good work
Hebrews 13:15, let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks...
The wisdom from above is full of good fruits.
The point being, God knows what you are doing for Him and it DOES produce results!
 - 3. It is a sacrifice to God – A sweet smelling aroma to God.
Another concept the Christian must grasp. Sacrifices have ALWAYS been important to God. But acceptable sacrifices had certain qualities.
 - a. ***They needed to offered according to God’s will*** – that is seen in the very first sacrifice recorded in Genesis 4:3-5, where both Cain and Abel made offerings to God. He accepted Abel’s sacrifice and rejected Cain’s. It is necessarily concluded in this that God had given instructions. Abel followed them and Cain did not.
 - b. ***They had to be the best*** – from instructions to Israel concerning their offerings (they had to be without blemish, and often their very best- such

as the firstborn, or first fruits). Malachi 1:6-8 describes defective sacrifices and how God felt about such.

- c. ***They also needed to be of value to the one sacrificing*** – the very definition of a sacrifice is offering something of VALUE to God, or a cause. If something is of little or no value to you, it's not meaningful. Recall how David said on one occasion when he needed to offer a sin sacrifice to God said, *"Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel. 2 Samuel 24:24-25.*

And our sacrifices STILL do: Consider

Romans 12:1-2 – present your bodies a living sacrifice

Ephesians 5:2 – walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Hebrews 13:15-16 – the sacrifice of praise to God, doing good and sharing – with such sacrifices the Lord is well pleased

4. It is about pleasing God – what the Philippians did was well-pleasing to God. May we in all that we do, strive to please Him . Colossians 1:10, Paul's prayer was that they walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work,...

iii. How does God view OUR fruit to Him?

- d. Vs. 19 - And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Paul concludes by observing His desire that God supply all that we need. So much could be said about this, but I just want to say, we serve a God who IS ABLE to do all that we need of Him. Ephesians 3:20, *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*
NOTE: In this we must ensure that what we desire is according to His will (cf. 1 John 5:14 – our confidence, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.)

II. **Final Greetings (20-23)**

- a. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever, AMEN. Typical of Paul's concluding admonitions – may God be glorified as He deserves.
- b. Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus – mutual greetings sent both ways. This shows this letter was not fabricated, but genuine as Paul addresses real people and sends greetings.
- c. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household – The impact of this is to understand that even in the palace of Caesar there were Christians. If this is the Caesar we believe, it was Nero who was hostile to Christians. But even at this time, Paul had had success. Never judge someone unworthy to try!
- d. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. A typical benediction for Paul. AMEN.

And thus we conclude our study of Paul's letter to the Philippian brethren. It is a very fitting letter for troubling times such as these. Within its pages we learn how to be joyful at all times and to live with a view toward eternity. Think about it!