

Philippians (4:14-23)

Paul's Expressions of Thanks (4:10-20)

Chapter 4 includes the following themes: Like-mindedness, rejoicing, selflessness, praying in the place of anxiety, thinking holy thoughts, and being content. This final passage concludes with Christian gratitude and courtesy.

I. Gratitude Expressed (4:14-20)

A. Gratitude for Their Partnership

1. Paul thankfulness is not only for the material gift delivered by Epaphroditus (cf., 2:25), but for the Philippians' partnership in "sharing in his troubles." The Philippians participate in Paul's troubles:
 - a) By actively spreading the Gospel with him in the face of opposition (1:5, 27-28; 4:3)
 - b) By meeting Paul's material needs (4:14)
2. The gift sent to Paul was tangible evidence that the Philippians had fully identified with him in the cause of the Gospel. Although the Philippians did not need a reminder of their own activity, Paul demonstrates Christian courtesy by expressing his deep gratitude to them for their support.
3. Paul recalls the Philippians' tireless, sacrificial devotion some ten years earlier when he stayed in Corinth for an extended period of time (cf., 2 Cor. 8:1-5).
 - a) It's significant to note that Philippian support sent to Paul while in Corinth was sufficient to care for his needs and he refused to take support from the Corinthians (see, 2 Cor. 11:8-9). Paul, therefore, could devote his entire time to preaching and teaching (Acts 18:5).
 - b) Yet, in Thessalonica he worked part-time to sustain himself (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). "Macedonia" in Acts 18:5 and 2 Cor. 8 refers to Philippi exclusively as Philip. 4:15-16 makes clear.
4. Paul seeks not the relief that the support brings, but the blessing bestowed on those who give (4:17; see, Acts 20:35). He's more focused on the giver than the gift. Without saying so, Paul surely believed that it was God who gave the increase (see, 1 Cor. 3:7).
5. To describe the gift delivered by the hands of Epaphroditus as a "fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" is to give it the highest value in God's sight. The expression "fragrant offering" is used of Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:21), Levitical offerings (Ex. 29:18), and the death of Christ (Eph. 5:2).

B. Assurance of God's Provision (4:19)

1. "And my God will meet all your needs" is not a *carte blanche* guarantee that we will always have our needs met, much less our desires. Context must restrict the meaning and significance of this verse. Paul had the advancement of the Gospel in mind, not gaining employment, passing school exams, or what have you. In other words, if it is God's will to do so he will meet our needs in so far as we are seeking to advance the Gospel by sacrificial giving.
2. Moreover, "needs" are not limited to financial/material. They could very well be spiritual, just as Paul indicated that he had learned the secret of contentment while suffering for the Gospel (4:12). There were times when Paul's material needs were not met (2 Cor. 11:27), yet God always met Paul's spiritual needs (2 Cor. 12:9). In addition, Paul has repeatedly shown that he is primarily concerned about what God will do *in* them rather than *for* them (1:9-11; 2:1-5; 2:13; 3:15-16; 4:17).
3. "According to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" is the great caveat in this verse. It is out of God's limitless wealth that he provides for our every need as he determines for his maximal glory. Put differently, God's glory is the *raison d'être* for all that he supplies (4:20).

II. Final Greetings and Benediction (4:21-23)

A. Lessons in Christian Courtesy

1. Paul offers a series of greetings that demonstrate his desire to keep believers connected with one another.
2. Paul extends Christian courtesy by thanking God openly for what he has done in the Philippians.
3. The reference to "spirit" in 4:23 is no more suggesting a trichotomist view of human nature than he is a monistic view of one substance (spirit). He is simply expressing his desire for them to experience grace.