

Message #24

Philippians 4:10-14

There is no question when we read the Bible that a critical key to our relationship with God is our attitude toward and use of money. When Jesus Christ was here, He clearly stated, “you cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24). Paul specifically said one of the key areas of judgment for the believer, when he gets into eternity, will be what one did with his money in supporting the work of God (I Tim. 6:17-19). If one generously used his money to support God’s work and help others, he will be highly rewarded. If one hoarded his money, he will lose rewards. The love of money is the root cause of all types of evil (I Tim. 6:10). There is no doubt from this context in Philippians that money can be a major cause of anxiety (Phil. 4:6). It is clear that God does keep track of everything His people give to support a faithful minister and ministry.

When you are in ministry, you must live with a difficult paradox if you are a faithful minister. First, you do want God’s people to generously give to the church. Second, the reason you want people to give generously is so they can lay up treasures in heaven. Third, when people do give, you are the one who is in part supported by it.

That point is clearly obvious from this passage here.

WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE SUPPORT A FAITHFUL MAN OF GOD AND HIS MINISTRY, IT MAKES HIM JOYFUL, NOT BECAUSE HE GETS MORE MONEY BUT BECAUSE THEY WILL EARN MORE REWARDS.

When God’s people gave money to Paul, he obviously increased his financial status. But that was not what caused him to rejoice. What brought him the greatest joy about it was the fact that these Philippians were increasing their eternal account (4:17).

Most people believe that really happiness is found in having stockpiles of money on earth. Paul says real happiness is found in using your money so you have stockpiles of rewards in heaven.

I am reminded of a baby that was born November 25, 1835 in Scotland. His family was poor and he was uneducated. He moved to the United States in 1848 and he began working in Pennsylvania in a cotton factory. He later left that job and went to work for the Pennsylvania railroad. While he was working that job he saw the growing importance of iron and steel. So in 1865, he resigned his position from the Railroad Company, got a loan and built a steel mill. By 1899, he was one of the richest men in the world. His name was Andrew Carnegie. Before he died in 1919, he had given away more than 350 million dollars. He built more than 2500 libraries. He established various foundations. He built a scientific institute in Washington. He built a university in Pittsburgh and he built a music hall in New York. He didn’t use his money for God, but he was famous, respected, loved and honored by people all over the world. You would think if one would be happy it would be him. Andrew Carnegie had it all—rich, important, successful. He was generous to all kinds of causes. But the truth is, he was extremely lonely and sad. In fact, on one occasion he said, “Millionaires seldom smile.”

Paul knew the key to having joy in life was a relationship with Jesus Christ and he also knew that a key to having joy was using money to support the church of God, which is the body of Jesus Christ. So in these verses, he addresses that.

Now there are five distinct thoughts that Paul wanted to communicate to the Philippians in these verses:

THOUGHT #1- Paul rejoiced that the Philippians took advantage of the opportunity to give.
4:10

Most don't view giving money as a great opportunity; they view it as a great inconvenience. It had been a long time since the Philippians had given an offering to Paul. But it was not because they didn't care or didn't want to; it was because they lacked opportunity. There are at least three historical realities that would have made it very difficult for them to give their money to Paul:

Reality #1 - Their own poverty (II Cor. 8:1-2).

Macedonian churches had a generous spirit (II Cor. 11:8-9). They gave to Paul very generously, when they were poor themselves (II Cor. 8:1-4). They actually begged Paul to take their money as a gift.

Reality #2 - Paul's various imprisonments.

Romans did not allow prisoners to live in luxury. I just read an article about the life of O. J. Simpson in prison and it said that his life was like a cruise ship with barbed wires. That is not the way it was in a Roman prison. This would have made it very difficult for him to receive generous donations.

Reality #3 - Paul's various travels.

Paul was always on the move and even if you wanted to send him some money, it would be difficult to know just where to send it because you never completely knew where he would be.

But Paul rejoiced because apparently everything came together and they were able to give to him and his ministry. Paul said that once again they revived their concern for Paul and they took advantage of an opportunity to give him a generous gift.

But carefully observe where it was that Paul found his joy. It was not in any gift, it was not in any amount of money; it was "in the Lord." Paul found great joy in knowing these people loved the Lord and loved him and they loved the Word of God and they supported his ministry. He found great joy in knowing that people were using their money to support the work of God. His joy was not in the dollar, but in the Lord.

In the south part of Spain there is a city named Cordova, which used to be governed politically and religiously by a mayor-type individual, known as a caliph. The caliph was a powerful, wealthy, prosperous man.

One of the most famous of these men was a man whose name was Alderman. He held this position for 50 years. When he died, a letter he had written was found which said this: "Fifty years have elapsed since I became Caliph. I possessed riches, honors, pleasures, and friends; in short everything that man can desire in this world. I have reckoned up the days in which I could say I was really happy; and they amount to fourteen."

We cannot find happiness in riches, honor, pleasure or even friends. Riches are found in the Lord. Those who learn this secret even with their use of their money will rejoice.

THOUGHT #2 – Paul had learned to be content with whatever he had and wherever he was.
4:11

Paul says I am not bringing up this subject of rejoicing that you have given me a generous gift again. I am not doing this out of "want."

When Paul mentions that word "want," it means that at times he did have real financial needs and deficiencies. In fact, this was the same word used of the "widow" who gave her two mites or two copper coins (Mark 12:44). That word "affliction" (v. 14) is one that means to undergo great personal financial tribulation and distress.

Paul says that is not what is motivating me to talk about this. Paul had come from a very wealthy Jewish family. Paul studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) of whom it was said by many Jews that when he died the law died. The fact that he was able to study under Gamaliel indicates he came from a very wealthy family.

Paul gave that all up. He was committed to Jesus Christ and in that commitment he learned the lesson of contentment.

That word "learn" indicates that this is something that is learned and ascertained by experience (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 277). It does not happen automatically. Through his life experience with Jesus Christ, he had learned to be content in "whatever." Whatever the circumstances or the provisions, he learned to be content.

That word "content" means he had learned that he always had enough and he always had a sufficient amount. God always met his needs.

This is critical to see. What Paul learned is that the key to contentment is not found in what we want; the key to contentment is found in what we have. William Barclay put it this way: "The secret to contentment is not found in possessing much, but wanting little."

Paul had learned a very important lesson. No matter what the circumstance, God was sovereign. The fact that Paul learned this lesson indicates that it is not innate. It is a lesson we need to learn. This lesson of contentment is a lesson for all.

The philosopher Socrates was once asked, “Who is the wealthiest man?” He said his answer was “One who is content with the least.” That was Paul. Paul was in jail. He had been broke and alone and yet because of his relationship with Jesus Christ, he was the most spiritual, wealthy, happy man on earth.

THOUGHT #3 – Paul knew how to live life in times of poverty and times of prosperity. **4:12**

There are two different Greek words translated “learn” in **verses 11-12**. The one in **verse 11** means to learn by experience. The one in this verse means to learn something that has been a mysterious secret (*Ibid.*, p. 297).

What Paul is saying here is that God has revealed to me a deep secret, which is contentment in times of poverty and also contentment in times of prosperity. Paul says I know how to live contented in any context.

Times of hardship and humility do not faze me, nor do times of prosperity and plenty. Paul says I have learned a great secret which is this contentment is found in the Lord, not in what I have or don’t have.

There were times when Paul was dirt poor and there were times when Paul was extremely wealthy. It did not change him.

In fact, we know that when Paul wrote Titus, he was staying in a very expensive winter resort area, Nicopolis, and he had so much money that he could pick up the tab for Titus and some others traveling with him (Titus 3:12-13). Money did not change Paul, nor did lack of money change Paul.

He was faithful to God in times of prosperity and in times of poverty. Now we know from Paul’s own statement that there was a time when he struggled with covetousness (Rom. 7:7). But Paul learned the lesson of contentment. God had done a great work in his mind and heart to the point that money did not mean anything to Paul, nor did it change him. He was sold out to the Lord no matter what his financial situation.

This is a great lesson to learn. Have you learned this lesson? This is a lesson we all need to learn. I was traveling as sales manager for Kregel Publications, and would sometimes be with other business people who were traveling. This one particular time there was a guy wearing a silk suit, a Rolex watch sitting reading the Wall Street Journal. I was wearing my Casio watch, my J. C. Penney suit and thought well I can at least read the Wall Street Journal. I sat there reading some articles, but then it dawned on me that I was playing some game. So I put the paper down and started witnessing.

The next thing I know, I am in a great theological discussion about Jesus Christ and the Bible and I was as happy as could be. Our happiness is found in our relationship with the Lord and not in a Rolex watch.

THOUGHT #4 – Paul knew the source of strength to cope with all things. **4:13**

Here is undoubtedly one of the most famous verses in Philippians and one of the least understood. **This verse is in a context of giving the secret to contentment, the secret to strength and the secret to endurance.**

Paul had learned that he could endure all things, whether prosperity or poverty through Jesus Christ. In other words, **the secret to Paul's contentment was a strength found in his relationship with Jesus Christ.**

The word “can” is a word that means to have the prevailing power and available strength. The key to contentment is the relationship we have with Jesus Christ.

The key to contentment is not our personal investments, but a personal relationship. It is not in a vacation, but in sanctification. It is not found in a dollar, but in our Savior. It is not found in a bank account, but in our eternal account.

The key to being content is to develop our relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ and Christ alone can give us the power and the strength not found in anyone else or anything else.

THOUGHT #5 – Paul praised the Philippians for contributing to him and his ministry. **4:14**

Paul did very much appreciate the money they gave him not because that money was so important to him, but because their investment was critical for them.

The Philippians saw a need and because of their love for God, they met the need. That is what caused Paul to rejoice.

Paul saw that the Philippians had a proper view of money, and that brought him great joy.