

GOD IS IN CONTROL

TEXT: PHIL. 4:10-23

Introduction:

1. We have come to our final message in our series in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. In this passage, Paul thanks the church at Philippi for their generosity (4:14-17).
2. Many preachers avoid the subject of money and many people do not like to hear about it, but the Bible does have a lot to say about money. Therefore, it must be dealt with. Also, it is an important part of our lives.
3. I think these Scriptures that will look at tonight are a great blessing and encouragement (cf. 4:13, 19). As we study this passage, one thought becomes very clear: God is in control and it is essential that we discover His will for our lives. This certainly includes this matter of Christian stewardship.

I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

II. THE POWER OF GOD

III. THE PROMISE OF GOD

I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

1. The world cannot comprehend the providence of God but those of us that are saved ought to appreciate it.
2. When we speak of the providence of God, we mean that God sees all things beforehand and is working all things out according to His good pleasure. God intervenes in the affairs of men. God is arranging circumstances and events and situations for the fulfillment of His purposes.
3. There are many examples of this in the Bible. Certainly the story of Joseph and his brothers comes to mind. In that wonderful story we see the hand of God at work, ruling and overruling in the affairs of life.
4. Joseph said to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20).
5. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."
6. God in His providence had caused the church at Philippi to become concerned about Paul's needs, and it came at the very time Paul needed their help.

7. George Muller did not directly ask people for financial assistance in his work. He prayed and God put it on people's hearts and then they gave to George Muller's work.
8. We ought to aspire to be like the church at Philippi (4:14-16). Remember the words of our Lord. He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
9. Paul was glad that "now at last" (4:10), after a period of time had elapsed, the Philippians had sent him practical assistance in the Lord's work. Their assistance "hath flourished again."
10. The reason for the delay in help was not that they did not care – they "were also careful" – it was that they "lacked opportunity" to send help (4:10). Perhaps they lost track of where he was.
11. One preacher said that today it is the other way around – today many Christians have the opportunity but they do not care!

II. THE POWER OF GOD

1. Phil. 4:13 is often quoted but few Christians understand the context. We can do "all things through Christ" but certain requirements must be met.
2. First of all, we must learn to be content with what we have. Notice that Paul is not complaining about his lack of money. He says to them: "Not that I speak in respect of want..." (4:11).
3. The word "learned" here means to learn by experience. Paul had to go through many trials and tribulations before he learned how to be content.
4. Paul was content even if he was "abased" (4:12), and he knew how to "abound." (4:13). Either way he was content because he knew he was in God's will. God works things out His way, even though we might not understand it at the time.
5. But when we are content with God's plan for our lives and we understand what His will is for our lives, then we can truly say: "I can do all things through Christ..." (4:13). This is Biblical positive thinking.
6. Many people try to claim the promise of Phil.4:13 but they are out of God's will. The idea behind this Scripture is, "I can do all things Christ wants me to do through Christ which strengtheneth me."
7. J. Vernon McGee said, "I can do all things in Christ" – that is, in the context of His will. Dr. McGee said: "Whatever gift He gives you, He will give the power to exercise that gift."
8. Our Lord said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

III. THE PROMISE OF GOD (4:19)

1. Another verse that is greatly misunderstood is verse 19. Again, we must look at the context. Paul commends the Philippians for their faithfulness in giving (4:14-18). Yet many weak and carnal Christians – who are not good stewards -- some of whom do not even tithe – claim this promise.
2. That is like trying to cash a check made out to some one else!
3. It is apparent that the Holy Spirit placed a burden on their heart for giving to Paul. And they realized that they were not really giving to Paul, they were giving to the Lord. And God was keeping a record of their “account” (4:17).
4. Some people are very concerned about keeping a record of their giving for the IRS. They should be more concerned about the record God is keeping!
5. We need to remember that everything we have belongs to the Lord, and we are just giving back to Him a small portion. Let’s say for example, a man tithes and gives a second tithe to faith promise. Let’s say he gives occasionally to the building fund or other special need. He is still giving less than one-fourth of his income and keeping three-fourths.
Remember: you can never outgive God.
6. Some day this life will be over and then all our opportunities to give will be over.
7. Hudson Taylor said: “When God’s work is done God’s way for God’s glory, it will not lack for God’s supply.” Let’s make sure we are doing things God’s way!
8. The gift which Epaphroditus (4:18; cf. 2:25-30) brought from Philippi is referred to as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (4:18). Our sacrificial giving is described as a fragrant sacrifice, both “acceptable” and “well-pleasing to God” (4:18).
9. Remember that we are a “royal priesthood” and our sacrifices must be acceptable and well-pleasing to God. Let us not be guilty of giving the Lord unacceptable sacrifices (cf. Mal. 1:6-14).
10. It is in this context that Paul gives this well-known promise (4:19). The Christians at the church in Philippi had been good stewards and they had given generously – therefore, God promised to supply all their need– therefore, God promised to supply all their need – “according (not “out of”) to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
11. Illustration: if a rich man told you he was going to give \$1,000 to our building fund, he would be giving “out of his riches.” But if he told us to go down to Home Depot and charge anything we needed to his account, he would be given “according to his riches.”

12. One preacher calls this verse “a note drawn upon the bank of faith” and he put it this way:

My God – the name of the Banker.

Shall supply – the promise to pay.

All your need – the value of the note.

According to His riches – the capital of the bank.

In glory – the address of the bank.

By Christ Jesus – the signature on the note, without which the note is worthless. (from George Williams, cited by William MacDonald.)

12. Notice it is “all your need” (not all your wants).

CONCLUSION:

1. I heard about a deacon’s meeting where several deacons and pastors discussed finances and stewardship. One of the men said he believed one could be a good Christian and not tithe.
2. (Personally I do not think a man like that should be a deacon or a pastor.)
3. One deacon responded to that remark by talking about his son. He said when his son was born he cost him money – hospital bills, doctors’ bills, etc. When his son grew up he cost him money – school, clothing, food, toys, etc. When he got older he even cost him more money. But then after HS graduation his boy got very sick and died. Now his son doesn’t cost him a penny.
4. He concluded by saying, “Gentlemen, if your faith is not costing you anything, you may be sure it is dead.”