

## Phil Ch 4 Vs 9-13

Obligation or Opportunity?

It's been said that you can give with out loving, but you can't love with out giving. And over the next couple of weeks or so as we close out the book of Philippians (though we'll focus on a couple of different things) the primary emphasis of the remainder of this book is upon Paul's thank you to the Philippians regarding the financial gift that they sent to him in order to minister to his practical needs. Having invested into them spiritual things, the bible teaches that it's right to support that man through material things.

Paul is commending them for their obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting them, not because he seeks the gift, but because it will attribute huge heavenly dividends to their account in heaven (we'll get into that more next week.) But this letter (though dealing with many life changing principals) was primarily intended as a thank you, the Philippians had sent him aid while he was in prison and his response was to thank them for that aid and as long as he was writing, to deal with a few issues that God had put on his heart regarding their spiritual well-being. Encouraging unity, encouraging a godly mindset rather than a carnal mind set, to have a single mind focused on Christ and His purposes for my life rather than a peripheral issue that only served as a distraction. To have a submissive mindset rather than a stubborn one that always had to be right, to have a spiritual mind rather than a carnal one being willing to let go of the things of this world that we might gain Christ and be found in Him.

Then finally to have a secure mindset rather than a scattered and unstable mind always worried about things rather than simply praying over every issue and receiving the peace knowing that you've given your situation over to God and now it's in His hands and I trust Him with the results. But Paul wasn't one who had all the right ideals about life but didn't demonstrate them in his own. Much like the Lord in that respect he wouldn't require anything of his readers (in his authority as an apostle) but that it wasn't already real in his own life. and He would encourage people to examine his life, to place his life under the scrutiny of godly standards so that they could be assured that we wasn't in the, "do as I say not as I do" category. He said, do what I do, follow my example, imitate me, because I'm imitating Christ, I'm convicted every time I put serious thought into the idea of inviting people to examine my life under close scrutiny. Not that I'm not pressing toward the mark, or aiming for the goal, not that I don't seek to be pleasing to God because I'm doing all those things. But I'm so far from there, if you don't believe me talk to my wife, but such was not the case with this man, the apostle Paul. Oh, he wasn't deceived, he knew he wasn't perfect and he readily admits that in this epistle, but he could confidently say (notice vs 9 of ch 4).

## Vs 9

This is where we left off last week briefly considering these 4 words, (learned, received, heard, and saw). Paul says do the things, which you learned, from me, the things, which you received from me, the things you heard from me, which practically speaking is the things, which you saw *in* me. The things I taught you are the things, which you saw, lived out in me. and We spoke of the significance of these words; he wasn't merely saying the same things in 4 different ways. He says the things, which you *learned* from me the word "learned" meaning basically to be informed, those things I informed you of. Speaking of an intellectual understanding, and those things which you "received" from me; speaking of taking this principal and applying it now to my life, it speaks of not with holding obedience, you received it inwardly allowing it to be assimilated into the inner man.

1 Thess 2:13 says, *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."* You see when you "receive" a truth, it effectively works in you, it changes your life to whatever degree depending on that which you've received. To understand it another way, simply put, facts in the head aren't enough; we need truths in the heart. and He says the things that you heard and saw in me, again he practiced what he preached, not only teaching it, but living it out so that those whom he taught could see the truth lived out in his own life. and Such needs to be the case in the life of every believer; we need to hear the word, learn the word, receive the word and do what it says.

James said be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves. If we do these things, if we mimic the life of the apostles, if we're doers of the word, receivers of the word, if we're hearers of the word, not only in our head but in our hearts, the result will be a peaceful contentment in life. You see inward attitude and outward actions can't be separated. Sin, (unless the conscience is completely seared) will always bring an unrest, an uneasy disorder and instability. As to where purity (in keeping with vs 6-8) results in peace. Remember what James said? The wisdom that is from above is 1<sup>st</sup> pure, then what? Peaceable, 1<sup>st</sup> purity, then peace, Isa 32:17 says, *"The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."* Do these things, pray about everything, meditate on good and pure things, virtuous things, be a doer of the word and not a hearer only and the God of peace will be with you.

## Vs10-13

So Paul is commending the Philippian church once again, giving God glory over the fact that they were such a giving people, and not because they had a lot of money, as a matter of fact it was quite the opposite. When you read 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Paul makes reference to the churches in Macedonia for the sake of example in this heart of giving, because the church in Corinth *was* much better off than many other churches (materially speaking). and If you remember right in the book of Acts when Paul went to Macedonia it was at Philippi that he stopped 1<sup>st</sup> because it was the foremost city of Macedonia.

We read in 2 Cor 8:1-5, *“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their (listen) deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”* You see the progression, if you give yourself to the Lord, you’ll give yourself to kingdom business, to people spreading the gospel, to right on missions endeavors. They’re supporting their missionary so to speak, the one who brought them the gospel, who taught them the scriptures and the ways of God.

Now I realize (you guys) that there have been a lot of individuals who have raped and milked the body of Christ for money. It’s a sore spot for many believers, but listen, you aren’t going to be held accountable for what they’ve done, you’ll be held accountable for what you’ve done. and It doesn’t matter how they’ve mishandled the word for their own selfish gain; I’m still accountable to do what the bible requires of me. and If you don’t trust any preacher when money comes up that’s fine, I encourage you to research the scriptures for yourself and do what they say. But when we come across these areas of scripture I have to teach them just as strongly as I would anything else, I know it has a tendency to make people uncomfortable, but it’s part of the whole counsel of God’s word and we’ll be talking about it some more next week because it’s the main topic of these last few vs of this letter.

But these guys were giving, not out of their abundance, but out of their poverty, to support the work of God in the apostle Paul’s life. Making sure that his needs were met so that he could continue doing what God had called him to do. In the book of Romans Paul is sharing regarding salvation, the fact that God makes no racial distinctions, that there’s only 1 race, the human race and he says that the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him, *“for whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* and Then he goes on to say, *“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”*

You see the Philippians are doing their utmost to make sure that wherever God would send Paul, and wherever he would plant Paul that nothing would hinder the gospel from reaching that people. That he would be able to eat, or get some new clothes if he needed them or whatever, but that he could share the gospel unencumbered, they are missionary supporters and Paul is saying that’s right on. You guys have caught the vision, and you’ve realized that you’re giving is in reality an eternal investment and an aspect of worship (we’ll touch more on that in the next week or so.)

But notice that giving is God's will for His people; Paul said that they gave themselves 1<sup>st</sup> to God and then to them by the will of God. Why is giving part of God's will for us? Because it's a reflection of His own nature, Agape' love is a giving kind of love, you serve a giving God, for God so loved the world that He "gave" His only begotten Son, so that whosoever would believe on Him wouldn't perish but have everlasting life.

Salvation is "given" to you in Christ, you don't earn it, you don't somehow merit it, God gives it to you. God's nature is to give, therefore when His seed is in you, meaning when you're His child and the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you find yourself desiring to give to His work as well. Maybe not at 1<sup>st</sup>, but as you grow and mature, and your heart is open to hearing God's voice, he begins to soften you in your attitude of giving, regardless of those who have burned you in the past. Because you're not giving to honor a man, but to honor God and in our attitude of giving it's much like what we read in vs 16 of ch 3. To the degree that we've attained, so walk, to the degree that you feel it's right, you do that. I've heard people say, well tithing is an OT principal (tith meaning a tenth) and they say it's not really mentioned in the NT, well, yes it really is.

We serve the same God, we're under a new covenant, but it's the same God. You recall in Luke ch 11 when Jesus is railing on the Pharisees and He says to them, "*woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*" In other words, you've done well to tithe, you should be doing that, but not at the expense of justice and the love of God. But again just as in the OT, it's not the letter that God's concerned with as it is the spirit of the letter. In other words, it's not a legal, methodical thing we do, we give out of love, our love for God and to the degree we can give with joy we should. But the moment it becomes constraint, keep it because God won't honor money that's given to Him out of guilt, or pressure. That's why Paul wrote, "*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*"

If you can't give 10% with out feeling like you're taking knife to the back, then don't, you give as it's purposed on your heart. But with this text Paul is in regards (I believe) to more of what would be an offering than a tithe; an offering is what is above and beyond a tithe. If you've yet to give 10% then you've yet to offer, you're giving a percentage of your tithe. (and I'm aware of the widows mite, and I believe that whole heartedly)Some people bless the heart of God if it's as much as 2% or even less, and others are probably bordering on sin when it's only 10% because God has blessed them so abundantly. But it's all a matter of the heart, and the tithe I believe the bible teaches we're to bring into the storehouse. So that the ministry to which God has called you to can continue to move forward, my tithe goes to this church and I trust the direction of the Lord in this fellowship with my tithe.

If I didn't I wouldn't be here, but my offering I feel a liberty to do whatever I want with in so much as it accords with God's conviction on my life. If I want to get behind a mission, or designate it to a particular area of church service or whatever, but my general tithe I give to the church. and A portion of my tithe goes to whatever ministry endeavors this body gets behind, when this church gives a donation to a certain mission, or sends bibles to Nigeria, apart of my tithe is represented in that. and What we have here is a church body getting behind a missionary. and So the Pastor probably said something to the affect of hey, we're going to send a gift to the apostle Paul and if anyone has an offering that they would like to add to that, that's right on. and Paul says I rejoiced, (not in man) it's not man who provides for him, but in the Lord greatly. Rejoicing in the Lord has been the theme of this letter, and he says that the reason he's rejoicing is that their care for him is flourishing again. (Note that word will ya) it's flourished "again" this wasn't the 1<sup>st</sup> time that they'd supported him.

This word "flourished" speaks of budding forth fruit, like a tree that's lost it's leaves in the winter but in the spring it buds forth fresh. and Paul is saying that your care for me is budding forth once again like new life, like budding flowers in the spring. and He says it's not that you didn't care in that interim period, you just lacked opportunity. They'd lost track of him during the time that he was in custody, being shipped here and there, (not having phones and e-mail and jet planes) but now that he's wound up in Rome they've found him and at 1<sup>st</sup> opportunity they sent aid to him once again.

You see, the problem in their giving to him wasn't that they didn't care; it was that they lacked opportunity. But with us I fear that the problem isn't that we lack opportunity, we just don't care (by and large). How many times do we plead with God for opportunity to minister to those spreading the gospel and sharing His word wherever they may be should He place that person or that organization on our hearts? Believe me brothers and sisters there is no lack for opportunity, but it's evident in many of us that there's a simple lack of care. What's ours is ours, I earned it, and I'll do as I please with it, how sad. God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others, that we might aid in the propelling of the gospel and it no doubt grieves the heart of God to see those who are called by His name take His blessing on their lives and horde it for their own selfish purposes. Not that it's wrong to have things or even have really nice things as we'll see we're to be content with however God deals with us (or allows us to be dealt with), but where does our priority lie, what's the position of our heart? Is it a "have to", or a "get to", is it "obligation" or "opportunity" Gal 6:9-10 says, "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*" Paul commends them for seeing the opportunity and seizing it.

Vs11

Underline the last ½ of this vs, in whatever state I am, be content. Paul is saying I greatly rejoice on your behalf, not mine, he's clearing up any misunderstanding that would allude to the fact that he couldn't make it if it weren't for them. He trusts the Lord, and so it's not because he was in need that he was rejoicing, because regardless of his personal circumstance, he's learned to be content. and Vs 11- 13 are basically parenthetical, vs 10 and 14 forming the parenthesis and the information in between the clarifying information diffusing any possible misunderstanding as to Paul's motive in receiving the gift. But there's one other thing I want you to take note of in vs11, you've underlined the last half, placing 2 lines under the word "whatever" emphasizing that aspect, but there's a qualifying word that precedes this principal and it's the word "learned" I want you to circle that word. There are many qualities of the Christian life that are learned, they're not innate or intrinsic upon salvation. Remember what the Lord likened salvation to? Being born again, and when a child is born though life is coursing through their veins there are many things that have to be learned as that life is developing and maturing, that aren't "natural" to them. But rather they are a discipline, and the same is true for Christian life.

There are many things that we're to learn as we mature and develop, they don't just automatically spring forth from us but rather they are cultivated and learned through experience and discipline, we're to learn to fear the Lord, Deut 17:19-20 in regards to the word of God says, *"And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."* Isa 1:17 *"Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow."* Again Titus 3:14, *"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."* Jesus said only one is good and that is God, so if we're to learn to do good, meaning things that count for the kingdom, then we need to learn the heart of God through the study of His word. That's why Jesus said in Matt 11:29, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Obedience is a learned thing both naturally and supernaturally, those of you who have kids understand that obedience is something that is learned, those of you who have been kids know obedience was learned. You didn't always do what your parents asked of you, but you learned obedience through the chastening of your parents. The bible teaches that we learn obedience to God through His chastening as well, David said before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. Ps 32 teaches that God would like to guide us by His eye, but if He needs to He'll get out the bit and bridle, so that we'll *learn* the way we should go. So there are several things we learn as we journey through our Christian experience, and time forbids us to get into those things we're not to learn, but there are many things we're to steer clear of as well, that we're not to learn. Things that lead us away from God, be wise in what is good and innocent, unlearned in the ways of evil, but here Paul says that he's learned contentment.

Being content is definitely something that is learned. It's not something that is natural and I wish I could say, that regardless of my state of well being circumstantially, I'm content because my sufficiency is of Christ. But you know I struggle with this one from time to time, I'm not always content, Paul said that we're to avoid those who use godliness as a means of financial gain, manipulating the people selfishly. But he said godliness with contentment is great gain, Prov 15:15 says, "*He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.*" That word "merry" could've been translated as "appropriate" he who has an appropriate heart, a contented heart, has a continual feast. Paul says that by God's grace through various circumstances he's learned contentment.

### Vs12

Now again we'll have to pick this up in greater detail next week (Lord willing) but Paul knew how to be abased, he had learned what it meant to be abased. (Turn to 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 4 Vs 9-13)

Look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor Ch 6 (vs 4-10) we could refer to ch 4 of this epistle vs 8-11, look at ch 11 vs 22-28, You see Paul knew what it meant to be abased, to suffer need, to have nothing, to not be sure if you're going to live through to the next day, will robbers kill me, will I lose my grip in this board I'm bobbing on in the sea, will the Jews execute me.

Will I eat today, how many of us have had to sleep in the woods not being able to afford a place to stay, not having a car and shivered through the night because we really didn't have any clothes? Paul understood what it meant to be abased, and there were other times when it seemed like God opened the windows of heaven materially speaking and he had an abundance, but either way he was content, why because his contentment didn't depend upon his circumstances. Jesus said that our lives don't consist of the abundance of our possessions and He rebuked the mentality of being rich toward ourselves and misers towards God. But Paul said full, hungry, abounding or suffering need he'd learned to be content. (and Again we'll consider this vs in a little more detail next week) But how, was it because he had some incredible will power that just didn't let things affect him? No

### Vs13

His sufficiency wasn't of the things of this world, it was in Christ 2 Cor 3:5 says, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.*" Our adequacy and capability is from God (repeat vs). He is my strength when I am weak, He is the living water that quenches the thirst of my soul, He's my all in all and my sufficiency, my ability to be content rests in Him. (We'll pick up on this thought next week and hone in on these few vs more fully.)

If you're here this morning and find yourself discontented in life, realizing that there is no sufficiency either in you or the things of this world. You've tried various relationships (maybe) you've tried different substances (maybe). Different jobs, different hobbies, various vices and that's all they are, and nothing truly satisfies, that's because the only true sufficiency is from God and it's found in Christ. Who sacrificed His life on the cross so that you might have life, He tasted death so that you might have life, if you desire everlasting life, maybe it's your 1<sup>st</sup> time here, maybe you've heard a call to repentance like this several times, let me encourage you to make today your day, give your heart to Christ, it's a decision you'll never regret.