

#11 Philippians (final)

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Verse 4:8: 'Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are just*, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.'

Whatever things are true: not, whatever things seem true, or feel true, or might be true but, rather, whatever things really are true... not mostly true but, truer and even truest.

As example: I could set my mind on this truth: 'I could have made it in Christian music but God kept me from it.' That could breed bitterness and resentment... like it did for so many years. Or, I could set my mind on this, even truer truth: 'I could have made it is Christian music, but God, in His all knowing Wisdom, knowing that I, if a successful singer/songwriter, would have fallen into far greater sin and disgrace than I ever did. That could, at least, cause me to go... 'whew!' Or, I can set my mind on this truest truth: 'God, in His love, grace and mercy, has, throughout my life, been preparing me for the incredible plans He has for me, throughout eternity.' He specifically planned my DNA, both my parents, my family and all my ancestry, all the way back to Adam and Eve. He planned where I would be strong and where I would be weak, my victories and my failures. And through it all, He has been at work, within me, to accomplish all He has planned for me in this life and **especially** all He has planned for me after we leave this part of life to go into the Millennium and Eternity. I am being trained, now, through all my victories and all my failures, to be prepared for the unbelievable task of ruling and reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ, first, for 1000 years on Earth and then for all Eternity throughout all the vast, far flung Universe.

That is the absolutest most truest truth we can set our hearts and minds upon. God will be glorified and He will glorify Himself through all His vast and incomprehensible plans for me.

That's what it means to really set my mind on things above, not on things of the Earth.

Something to always remember when studying God's Word; the Bible is not, even though some study and teach it as such, a disconnected, disparate collection of random thoughts and verses. In reality, It all meshes together into one complete integrated revelation of God, from God.

When Paul writes to the Philippians, and to us, to think and meditate upon that which is true, just, pure, lovely and praiseworthy, we should pay attention to what came directly before that. He had written to Euodia and Syntyche, that they should go beyond their disagreement and to be of the same mind. He had instructed Epaphroditus to help them to walk in unity. Now, Paul is telling us how to be of the same mind and spirit: first, to think, together, on what is pure, true, praiseworthy, etc. If we are, together thinking on the same things, then we will be of the same mind. But beyond that, as we think of each other, as Euodia and Syntyche thought of each other, they, and we, are told to think about those aspects of each other that are, in fact, true, noble, just, pure, etc. When we concentrate on the character qualities of each other that do reflect God and truth, then, we will not leave room for thinking about each other's qualities that are less than true, noble, etc. Paul is telling all of us, down through the centuries, to think on the same things, things true, noble, just, pure, etc. and to set our hearts and minds on things above and not on things of the Earth, so that we will be thinking the same things and so, be walking in unity.

'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!' Psa 133:1

'... being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' Eph 4:3

'Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.' Col 3:14

We are commanded to love each other in order to better walk in unity. Instead of focusing on each other's faults, we love; love is patient, love is kind, love does not act unbecomingly, love does not keep an account of wrongs suffered, etc.

Once again, all through the unified tapestry of God's Word, our command is, love and unity, but only unity that is based on truth. We are never to unify with lies or false teaching; we are never to unify with false, imitation '*christians*' or *churches*.

Verse 9: 'The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.'

Paul says, 'think like I do; set your heart and mind of Jesus Christ.

'Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.' 1 cor 11

Then you will have the peace that the World seeks after but never finds.

Verse 10: 'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.'

Paul is thanking the Philippians for their faithfulness in sending their financial help to him by way of Epaphroditus. He may have, at times, felt some degree of discouragement from the fact that many groups who actually owed their very lives, their eternal life, to his faithfulness in enduring all manner of persecution in order to take the Gospel to them and to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul is the one who wrote to the Galatians: 'Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 'Gal 6:6

Paul is saying, simply, 'I have taught you the Words of Life; is it too much for you to help me financially?'

To the Corinthians, he wrote: 'Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; ² for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. ³ Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; ⁴ lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation. ⁶ But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So *let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ¹¹ while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. ¹² For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, ¹³ while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!' 2 Cor 9

Paul felt it necessary to often teach the importance of Christians giving liberally to each other's needs and to support those who teach them.

As New Testament believers, we are not under the Old Testament laws of tithing, and yet, we are instructed to always be generous in the support of all other **believers** in need.

Verse 11: 'Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:'

Of course, Paul did have needs, needs that required money for payment. He paid rent in Rome when he wasn't in prison, he had to eat and he probably always helped with the needs of other believers from his own meager ability. But he is saying, 'God is the One Who supplies my needs and He can accomplish it in any way He chooses. I am content to rest in, and rely on, Him.'

He is the One Who sent Peter to catch a certain fish with a coin in its mouth: 'When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?" ²⁵ He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from

strangers?"²⁶ Peter said to Him, "From strangers." (We are the sons, not the strangers.) Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free."²⁷ Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you." Matt 17:24

There is no indication that Paul ever worried about his financial condition but it was right for him to teach the believers about the importance of being generous, especially in light of God's unbelievable generosity to us.

Verse 12: 'I know how to be abased, (humbled) and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.'

He was content to be, at times, humbled, hungry and suffer need because he trusted God to feed and supply his needs when necessary. And, he knew how to abound and to be full without pride but, rather, to be content to always trust God in all things.

Paul said, 'I have *learned* to be content.' That didn't come naturally. He had to learn it through practice, through many times of not being content until he finally recognized that God never forsook him. All the things that Paul taught were things that He had to learn through years of God's 'schooling' but finally, he was able to write these letters to teach them, and us, the precious lessons God had been faithful to teach him.

I can finally teach some things concerning God's faithfulness and of being content in how God deals with us; I have learned, finally, to be content regarding His plans and purposes with the gifts He gave me in music... even if they were only for the purpose of teaching me to be content in Him, it'll've been well worth the schooling.

Debbie is much better with not being concerned about money than I am. She learned, during our time of separation, to trust God. The only way I've learned to be unconcerned about finances is to never even think about it; she handles everything concerning money and if she asks my input, I almost always say, simply, 'Whatever you think is best, dear,' and then I don't give it another thought. If she is satisfied that our 'retirement' is enough, then I am too, even though we'll never really retire from ministry.

Verse 13: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'

Notice the context of this well-worn verse: it has to do with having enough and with suffering need. People try to use this verse to push ahead with the idea that they can, in Christ, do anything and everything but that was never what God said with, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' In fact, the last purpose most people give to this verse is in regard to having, needing and giving.

Now, of course, the principle does hold true that anything and everything which God tells, calls or inspires us to do... He will, always, strengthen and enable us to do it... but only what He calls us to do.

The real meaning of this verse is: 'I can bear up and go through, in Christ, any and every difficult circumstance.' That is something which every pastor should be teaching his congregation. Too many times, Christians try to run from difficult things. This verse goes hand in hand with what we studied in Ephesians 6: 'Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand still and stand firm when any and every attack from the enemy comes.' 'I can stand still and stand firm, trusting God; I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.'

Every difficult circumstance comes coupled with a demonic attack. Every trial brings an evil spirit to whisper in our ear... 'You can't do this... it's too difficult for you... God has abandoned you, He doesn't love you or He would never have allowed such a thing... etc, etc. That is the only kind of attack which an evil spirit can unleash against us. They have no power over a child of God but to lie to us. That's always the attack which comes which is why the various pieces of armor represent the truths we are to set our hearts and minds upon: Truth, Righteousness, the truth of the Gospel, Faith, our Salvation and the Word of God. Remembering and meditating on those things are what will allow us to stand firm, resist the devil and to do all through Christ Who strengthens us.

Verse 14: 'Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress'

See: even Paul had 'distress' regarding his financial situation, even though he trusted Jesus Christ implicitly.

Even though I trust Jesus Christ and know that He will always supply my needs, it is good for you to desire to be involved financially.

Verse 15: ' Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.'

Even way back then, you, my beloved Philippians, have always supported me according to your ability. Your love for me has been such a blessing and encouragement. Thank you.

Verse 16: 'For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.' Even after Paul left Philippi, the Philippians sent him aid; Paul left Philippi to go to Thessalonica, with Timothy, when he and Silas were released from the Philippian Jail. 'But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." ²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:25

Verse 17: 'Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.'

Paul's first concern, regarding money, was that those giving would be blessed by God for their faithfulness but he was also blessed by their faithfulness. Debbie and I have felt this way throughout our ministry; we've had little old ladies, on small, fixed incomes, who would faithfully send \$2 or \$5 every month. We didn't need the \$2 but we knew that God saw and remembered their faithfulness and that they would be rewarded richly when they stood before Him. The lady who would send \$2 has gone on to be with the Lord; we haven't missed the \$2 but we have missed receiving it from her. Just imagine, some little lady who only knew us from the radio, loving us enough to want to sacrifice to help in our support... it was humbling but a blessing, too.

Verse 18: 'Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. God sees every act of faithfulness on our part and He will be faithful to reward us beyond imagination.

'And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." Matt 10:42 and...

'But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.' 1 Cor 2:9

Verse 19: 'And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Here, again, is a verse very taken out of context. Paul promises that God will supply all our need according to His riches in Glory but also according to our faithfulness to generously share in other believers' needs.

He hasn't promised to supply all our need if we are envious or jealous, selfish or miserly. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:37

Verse 20: 'Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.'

Remember, that has always been God's plan from the beginning of Creation: that He would glorify Himself through all angels and humans and before all angels and humans.

No matter our circumstances or abilities, through each one, God will ultimately glorify Himself. Even through His seemingly unused gifts of music within me; through them, He will glorify Himself, and me, throughout all eternity. All I have to do is to trust Him and rest in Him and His faithfulness.

Verse 21: 'Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.