

The Gospel According to Philippians
Gospel Contentment
Philippians 3:20 – 4:1; 4:10-20
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Life for Paul was hard but it was not absurd. It was unpredictable but it did not leave him in despair. We will consider Paul's example and then ask where his contentment came from.

I) Paul's example

Phil 4.12: I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

A) Paul's circumstances

B) How does Paul cope? What do we see?

1) Realism

- Like his Master
- Reassuring for us

2) Other-directedness

- Them: v.10, 14, 15, 16, 18b, 19
- God: v. 20

3) Contentment

- Climbing is over
- Settled conviction

C) Thinking about money

- Money is not evil. The love of money is
- "How much is enough?" "A little bit more"
- We are in a race with our money—not to make more money but to give and receive more love

II) Where did Paul's deep contentment come from?

From Jesus: *...in the Lord (v.10): ...through him (v. 13); ...in Christ Jesus (v. 19)*

A) Forgiveness in Jesus

4:18: the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

- How can Paul be so sure their (and our) gifts "smell so good" to God?
- God's "*riches in glory fill every need*" (v. 19), including the need to a safe place at his table.
- Paul was not a "wishful thinker"; he was a "crucifixion thinker"

B) Resurrection in Jesus

4:18: every need...according to his riches in glory:

- Every need?
- "In glory". *Phil 3:20-21: He will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) What is the difference between being a hopeful person and a person of Christian hope?
- 2) Have you ever been through a Job-like experience (in which you were hammered by one terrible hardship after another in rapid succession) or can you think of someone who has? What happened and how did you (or your friend) process it?
- 3) Recall and list the hardships of Paul (he alludes to many of them in Philippians). How would you characterize Paul's attitude in the midst of his struggles (look particularly at Phil 2:10-20)? How do you explain his attitude?
- 4) Reflect upon the following: "We are in a race with our money, but the deepest purpose of the race is not to get more money. It is to give and receive more love."
- 5) Three times in Phil 4:10-20 Paul refers to being "in Christ" or doing certain things "through Christ" (v. 10, 13, 19). This terminology shows up constantly in Paul's writing. Why is being "in Christ" so important to Paul?
- 6) In Phil 4:18 Paul tells the Philippians that their gift to him is "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." How can he be so confident that their gift to him "smells" so good to God? Do you share that confidence with respect to your giving? Why? Why not? Consider Philippians 3:8-9 in your answer.
- 7) Reflect on the following: "We can face the inevitable ups and downs in life if we know that the God who rules all of life is our friend. And this we do know because there is not possibility of any wrath left in his heart towards us if we are in Christ."
- 8) Reflect on the following: "Taking on a 'hopeful perspective' about life is absurd when there is no reason to hope that the world as we know it will ever change. But taking on such a perspective when the God who loves us has entered the real world and broken the power of death in the real world is not absurd at all. It is putting yourself in the center of what is real—of what God in Christ has done and will do."