

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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12- *Finding Joy* being the Right Kind of Church *Philippians 4:14-23*

Php 4:14-23 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul had in one sense declared his independence from human aid in the previous verses. He told them he had learned to do without, as you will recall. He now quickly acknowledges his appreciation for their gift to him and his ministry.

Php 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

He had learned the grace of contentment and he was not saying that he was not grateful for the help in fact he was very appreciative of it. Paul understood that we all are in this together and that we as Christians do not live on an island disconnected from others.

We as believer need to understand just how dependant we are on Christ for salvation, yea all things. We also need to understand how interdependent we are upon each other. I submit to you that one of the great joy enhancers in our life is when we are in the right kind of church and serving alongside fellow saints.

No we are not always going to agree but to be the kind of Church that God uses we

need to work together with the gospel as our singleness of purpose.

I- The Giving Church:

As Paul closed this letter let us take the opportunity to see the kind of Church that Paul was commending.

Php 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

The Philippian church had given to the ministry of Paul before this imprisonment in Rome. In fact, they had contributed to his ministry from the first.

To find the Macedonia background we go to *Act 17:1-10*. *Acts 17:1* says, *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.* Paul went to the synagogue as he did in each city. He preached for three days and many were saved. *Acts 17:5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the*

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city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. There arose such a situation that Paul and Silas were sent away. **Acts 17:10** *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews..*

Paul here expresses that they were the only church to stand with him and support him in his effort. This, my friends is the right kind of Church, one that reaches past themselves.

Why is this important? If a church uses all it's resources on itself, first it is not doing what God called it to do and second, it is a matter of time before they began to have disputes over one getting more than another from the till. I think history shows that God blesses a church reach forth not imploding as a black hole form with no light gets out except under the cracks of the doors.

Let me give a couple of personal examples. While pastor of Cedar Grove in Kingsport I was told many times that the church struggled financially until they made a commitment to give more to the Cooperative Program and began to do missions. God then bless them and their financial funds picked up. Beloved, God does not want us to waste nor to not do what is needed but He also gives us money to use for His kingdom work and not to horde up and set on. I recall a conversation I had with a woman who called from another church. She said, "We have plenty of money because a man just died and left us \$500,000 dollars." I asked her, "What does God intend for you to do with the money?" She admitted they had not thought about what

God's purpose was for it. Would you not agree they should have.

I did some research on this church which will remain unnamed by me. In 1995 they had a great spike in their giving. It rose from under 100,000 in all previous years to almost 600,000 that year only to fall back again in ensuing years. Many would say in our churches today if we only had more money we could do more, right. Not necessarily! Their average SS has not risen above the low fifty's and was as low as 27 in 2007. Beloved, God will bless only if we use what resources He gives us for His glory not our selfishness.

I trust we will grow more and more in being a giving church. Paul commended the Philippians in **Php 4:16** *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*

II- Purpose of Giving:

I know we have touched on a church giving of its resources but next Paul tells them why being the giving church is such a blessing. **Php 4:17** *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

He wanted them to experience the blessing of giving. You may have heard the old saying it is more blessed to give than to receive. Paul told them that it was going on their account. NO, not down at the local bank but on the records of heaven.

Now notice the language that Paul used to describe their gifts that Epaphroditus had brought. **Php 4:18** *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

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Touching Lives by "Exposing the Word" of God

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These gifts were a sweet smell not to Paul but to God. This draws on the image of the sweet-smelling incense burnt on the altar as the sacrifices were offered. These gifts were also acceptable sacrifices that were well pleasing to the Master as worship.

Barnes Notes says concerning this acceptable sacrifice.

Well-pleasing to God - Because it evinced a regard for true religion. Hence, learn:

(1) that kindness done to the ministers of the gospel is regarded as an acceptable offering to God.

(2) that kindness to the servants of God in distress and want, is as well-pleasing to God as direct acts of worship.

(3) that such acts of benevolence are evidences of attachment to the cause of religion, and are proofs of genuine piety; notes, Mat 10:42.

[Mat 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.]

I often wonder if my worship is acceptable and is a sweet fragrance to the nostrils of God.

III- Supply from Riches:

The next verse we address is often misquoted and misapplied. I say this because many times it is applied without proper content. Remember the content is that they had been a church that had given abundantly. Paul tell them that God was

going to supply their need because they had been faithful to give in worship to God.

Php 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Have you ever tried to out give God. I do not think you can. The more we give away the more God supplies. I have said many times that God has cattle on a thousand hills, the Bible says this in **Ps 50:10**. The problem is men keep building fences around God's cattle.

IV- Closing Remarks:

Php 4:20 *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Matthew Henry says he concludes this epistle :

- 1- With Praise to God.
- 2- With salutations to his friends at Philippi.
- 3- He sends salutations from those who were at Rome.
- 4- The apostolical benedictions, as usual.

What better thing to depart such a rich and weighty epistle with than the final verse.

Php 4:23 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Now that is enough to bring joy to all our hearts as we serve one another and seek to be the right kind of Church.