

Session 14: A Thankful Heart...A Giving Heart...a Tender Heart!

Philippians 4:10-14, *“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. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased (reduced/humbled), and I know how to abound (to have plenty). Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound (be filled) and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.”*

“Your care for me has flourished again”: This refers to the financial support brought by Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25). Paul didn't want to imply that the Philippians didn't care before, only that previously they **lacked the opportunity**. Opportunity meaning that they did not have the means to get and give the support (monetarily) to Paul...and now, their **means of support** for Paul not only **flourished again, but that now they have people who can and are willing to give the support (money and prayerful support) for him and to him.**

One of the promises in the Word of God...is the promise of “the giver will be blessed.”

Acts 20:35, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said:

‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

The three (3) “Gs” that define true giving.

We must GIVE:

(1) **Generously**—Deuteronomy 15:7, *“If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight fisted toward your poor brother.”.....Proverbs 31:20.... “She opens her hands to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.”*

Proverbs 22:9, “A generous man will himself be blessed.”

Romans 12:6-8, *"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us....if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously...."*

(2) Graciously—With the grace that was given to you.

You are to be gracious as God was gracious to you....

Romans 5:17, *"...we have received God's abundant provision of grace."*

Paul stated in Philippians 1:7, *"All of you share in God's grace with me."*

If God can give grace graciously...If Jesus gave his life willingly...and graciously...why should we who long to be like Jesus, not want to be gracious in our giving?

"It is by grace you have been saved...." (Ephesians 2:5)

(3) Gladly—"Serve the Lord with gladness..." (Psalm 100:2)

"God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:7 (One that gives gladly and joyfully).

If you want to open the floodgates of heaven into your life....yes, your life...all you have to do is to learn to give as an act of love and obedience to the King of Glory.

- **"Not that I speak in regard to need":** Paul reminded the Philippians that his thankfulness for the Philippians' giving (monetarily) wasn't *because* he was needy (though he was in fact in need), but because it was good for *them* to be givers.

What is the opposite of being a giver?...A Taker!

- **"I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content":** This was *how* Paul could say that his thankfulness was not based upon his own need. Even though Paul was in need, he was content where he was at - even in his Roman imprisonment. Have you heard Paul, in any of his circumstances after being born-again, gripe and complain about the circumstances (predicaments) he finds himself in?

Why? Because he longs to be at home with Christ, but knows that his life on earth is for a purpose...that of yielding to what the Lord desires him to do.

“I have learned”: Paul had to *learn* contentment; it isn't natural to mankind. Learning can be different than being taught. Learning requires experience, action, and being able to make choices during crisis; being taught is listening to a teacher, watching a teacher, or performing after a lesson has been taught (maybe with the mentor observing and testing).

- **“I know how to be abased (reduced...even to be humbled to the point of having nothing), and I know how to abound (be filled and have plenty)”:**

*Paul reminds us that his contentment was not only theoretical. He actually lived this. Paul had been financially well-off; he had been financially needy. Remember, he came from a scholarly background (well-educated; *Gamaliel being his teacher) and politician (A Sanhedrin) to one being accused of murder on one side and a traitor on the other. He was in the cross-hairs of the right and left. God permitted his chief apostle to be reduced! The grace of Christ supported him under every ordeal and every circumstance! This was not in Paul's demeanor...to be patient. Jesus can change your whole attitude, disposition, and temper.*

**In the Christian tradition, Gamaliel is celebrated as a Pharisee doctor of Jewish Law. The Acts of the Apostles chapter 5 speaks of Gamaliel as a man of great respect who spoke in favor of the arrested apostles of Jesus in Acts 5:34, and the Jewish law teacher of Paul the Apostle in Acts 22:3 .*

Paul also knew how to abound. “When some ministers are in the lime light and getting accolades, their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall.” (Spurgeon)

One professor at SAGU put it this way (mentoring young ministers). This has already been discussed previously, but it is worth repeating.

“There are the 3 G’s you have to watch out for when you start to minister.

1. Gold (money, wages, gifts),
2. Girls (flirting, tempting of the opposite sex),
3. Glory (accolades, name in the headlines, position).

- **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”:** This refers to Paul's ability to be content in all things. To achieve this contentment, he needed the strength of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, many people take this verse out of context and use it to reinforce a "triumphalist" or "super-Christian" mentality, instead of seeing that the strength of Jesus in Paul's life was evident in his ability **to be content** when he did **suffer need**.

We must always also put this precious statement of faith in connection with the last part of John 15:5, “...*for without Me (Jesus) you can do nothing.*”

With Jesus we can do all things, without Him we can't do anything.

- **“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress”:**
In speaking about his ability to be content, Paul did not want to give the impression that the Philippians had somehow done something wrong in supporting Paul.

But there was a real sense in which the giving by the Philippians was better *for them* than it was for Paul (you have done well).

Godly giving actually does more good for the giver than for the one who receives.

Luke 6:38, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Questions to ask yourself before the next session:

- **Why give when the world is not willing to understand the giving principle in lieu of the “get all you can while you can” principle?**
- **Do we give for something in return, i.e. monetary gifts to charity organizations for tax purposes, giving in order to be recognized in a program as a contributor, giving to our church because our friends are going to be asking if we are tithers and support our place of worship?**
- **How can we have the peace of God without allowing the peace of God to be evident in our lives (how we live, attitudes, confident in bad or troubling circumstances)?**