

## How to Do It All – Philippians 4:10-23

### I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read vs. 10-13 / Finishing Philippians today. Next week, important message.

#### B. Set Scene

1. Paul concludes several of his letters with personal remarks to people in the church.
  - a. He gives a special greeting to a couple people.
  - b. He recommends something to another.
  - c. He expresses his appreciation to those who have visited him.
  - d. Then he ends by commending his readers to the grace of God.
2. He does that here, but he doesn't single any of the Philippians out.
3. He expresses his thanks **to the entire church** because they had **all** helped him.
4. Paul wrote this from Rome while under house arrest. He was awaiting trial by Nero.
  - a. His appeal had been made, his brief written, & he was awaiting his hearing.
  - b. While in custody, he was chained 24/7 to a member of the elite Praetorian guard.
  - c. And though he was under arrest, Rome didn't pay his rent or food.
  - d. Prisoners provided for themselves; depending on the charity of family & friends.
  - e. Paul had traveled a long way to Rome & arrived without any real friends in the city.
  - f. The church there at that time was small & struggling. They didn't really know Paul.
5. Have you ever wondered how Paul's 3 missionary journeys were funded?
  - a. He traveled long distances & was gone for months. **Who paid for it?**
  - b. His home church at Antioch provided some.
  - c. But Acts tells us Paul supported himself **by his trade** as a tent-maker.
6. The Philippians **also** supported Paul over the 12 years following his planting the church there.
7. But after Paul arrived in Rome, **persecution** had impoverished the Philippians.
  - a. It wasn't that they couldn't put together a gift so much as no one could afford a trip to Rome.
  - b. Then came a lightening of the pressure & one of their elders named Epaphroditus was able to go.
  - c. On the way, he became seriously ill. If his mission had been less urgent he would have either holed up somewhere & rested or returned home.
  - d. But it had been so long since the Philippians had given anything to Paul Epaphroditus knew he was in a desperate straits.
  - e. It was expensive living in Rome; rent was steep & food was pricey.
  - f. Also – the way the courts worked, you had to pay stiff fees to get your case through the system. Gold was the grease that kept Roman wheels turning.
  - g. So despite his weakness, Epaphroditus pressed on in his mission to bring Paul the Philippians' gift.
  - h. Paul sent this letter back with Epaphroditus. In **2:25** we read -

<sup>25</sup> Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; <sup>26</sup> since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. <sup>27</sup> For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. <sup>29</sup> Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; <sup>30</sup> because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

8. Here at the end of the letter, Paul expresses his appreciation for their support.

### II. TEXT

#### A. Gracious Thanks

1. We all know that **generosity** is a virtue; a mark of a noble character.
2. While some struggle with giving, we acknowledge it's good to show charity to those in need.
3. What's less often recognized is the **difficulty in receiving** charity; of being on the other end of **generosity**.
4. While a few feel **entitled** to it, **most** people find receiving charity **hard**.
  - a. They're embarrassed by their need.

- b. Receiving the generosity of others makes them feel inferior.
- 5. Paul shows us how to receive a gift graciously & with godly gratitude.
- 6. There isn't an ounce of entitlement on his part; he sees himself as owed nothing.
- 7. His joy at the Philippians' gift is great. He says . . .
- B. Vs. 10-13

<sup>10</sup> 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.

- 1. When Epaphroditus handed Paul the Philippians' gift, he gave thanks where thanks was due – to **BOTH** the Lord & the Philippians.
- 2. He uses a great word to describe the **timing** of their gift when he says it **flourished** again.
  - a. An better translation is '**bloomed** again.'
  - b. It described what trees do in the spring when the thaw comes.
- 3. The **sap** of the Philippians love for Paul had always flown, but persecution had frozen their ability to demonstrate that concern.
- 4. When the pressure let up they took the first opportunity to renew the blossom of their love.
- 5. And now Paul enjoys it's fragrance.
- 6. Having mentioned the **delay** in their support, he doesn't want them to think he's upset or disappointed.
- 7. He's not saying, "Thanks for your long-delayed, it's about time, support."
- 8. He tells them God **used the delay** to teach him something astounding!

<sup>11</sup> Not that I speak in regard to need,

- 9. He wasn't laying a guilt trip on them.

for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: <sup>12</sup> I know how to be abased, 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.

10. Paul gives us a tender & personal insight into what God taught him during his time in Rome.

- 11. When he says in both 11 & 12 that he **learned** to be content, he's saying it was a lesson he'd experienced firsthand.

- a. It was a truth he'd learned by trial & hardship. Hunger taught it. Suffering brought it.
- b. Being confined in chains, day after day had tutored Paul on what it means to be powerless.
- 12. But as he sat there; hungry, thirsty, & lonely, he had glorious memories of when he was free & travelled around the Mediterranean, preaching the Gospel.
  - a. He remembered standing before hundreds of adoring listeners as he taught about walking with Jesus.
  - b. He recalled the sweet times of worship with friends -
  - c. The many invitations to someone's house in the evening where the food was plenty & delicious.
- 13. At first, as each day went by in Rome, Paul listened for a knock on the door.
  - a. A few believers from the local church dropped by, but there were no friends.
  - b. He hoped the mail would bring a letter from one of the many churches he'd started.
  - c. But there were no letters. No visits.
  - d. Each week that went by, Paul tightened his belt another notch.
  - e. And with few to talk to, he'd taken his thoughts, worries, hunger, thirst & longing for companionship to God in prayer.
- 14. **That's** where he found what he was looking for.
  - a. The **hunger** lost its edge as he learned something Jesus once said.
    - 1) In John 4, when the disciples returned to find Him speaking to a Samaritan woman,
    - 2) They handed him some of the food they'd just bought, thinking He was as hungry as they were.
    - 3) But He replied – "I have food to eat of which you do not know."
    - 4) When they wondered who'd given Him food, He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me."
  - b. Paul's **thirst** was slaked as he turned to Jesus, the fountain of living water who said to the Samaritan woman, "He who drinks of the water I shall give him shall never thirst again."
  - c. Paul's longing for companionship was quenched by the awareness of God's presence.
- 15. You see, Paul was a smart guy. Instead of being **freaked out** by what he **didn't** understand, he **camped out** on what he **did** know.
  - a. He knew God is good, all-powerful, all-wise & perfect in loving.

- b. He fed Israel for 40 years on manna & fed Elijah by a raven. He could easily send Paul some food.
  - c. So, if his stomach was growling, it meant it was God's will he be hungry.
  - d. Since God's will is always best, Paul decided to be content.
16. We can be sure he reflected on what happened in Philippi 12 years before. It proved how God **uses hardship** to a good end.
  - a. When Paul first arrived there, he'd been arrested, beaten, & thrown into jail.
  - b. All because he was faithfully preaching the Gospel.
  - c. Instead of being bitter at God & saying, "Is **that** how You treat Your friends?"
  - d. Paul trusted that God had a plan; he just needed to wait it out & it would become clear.
  - e. As he waited, he preached Jesus to the other prisoners & sang praises to God.
  - f. At midnight, an earthquake opened the jail doors.
  - g. The jailor ran out & assuming the prisoners had escaped, drew his sword.
  - h. Rather than face the indignity of a public execution for failing in his duty, he decided to kill himself.
  - i. But Paul's had persuaded the other prisoners to stay & called out to the jailor to put up his sword.
  - j. The jailor couldn't believe the prisoners were still there & brought Paul out to explain.
  - k. Paul shared the Gospel with him;
  - l. He was born again, then took Paul home so he could tell his family. They all were saved.
17. They became some of the first members of the Philippians church, which had supported Paul over the last 12 years.
18. So as he sat now in Rome out of funds, hungry, alone – he realized all over again: God had him right where He wanted him. God was setting **something** up.
19. And he was content to be right there.
20. Try to picture Paul as this lesson on being content regardless of circumstances became clear.
  - a. He's sitting there, stomach growling. Praying, taking his hunger, anxiety, & confusion to God just as he tells us to do in vs. 6-7.
  - b. Then the Spirit opens his eyes to finding contentment in the Lord, not circumstances.
  - c. A smile breaks out on his face as he realizes God has him right where He wants him.
  - d. He looks down at that chain attached to his ankle, follows the chain to that Roman legionnaire.
  - e. The soldier says, "What are you so happy about?" Paul tells him.
  - f. That legionnaire gets saved. **Several** of Paul's guards do. V. 21-22
- <sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.
21. Paul isn't the only one who learned by what he both enjoyed & endured.
  - a. We **also** learn the secret of contentment **because** of what he shares in V. 13 -
- <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
  - b. This flows from what he's just said.
  - c. The "all things" Paul can do refer to the back & forth pendulum of circumstances that mark our lives.
  - d. We're up, then down. We're in, then out. We're full, then empty. We're hot, then cold.
22. But in Christ, our circumstances no longer define us or determine our attitude.
  - a. Jesus is **bigger** than our circumstances - & we are IN Him.
  - b. Circum / Stances = what's standing around us.
  - c. [Elisha & servant at Dothan.]
  - d. We are In Christ & He has overcome the world.
- B. Vs. 14-19
  - <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.
    1. Paul doesn't want to diminish the significance of the Philippians' gift.
    2. It was wonderful to after having learned contentment to have something to eat.
    3. So he thanks them, not just for their most recent gift but for their long-term faithfulness.
  - <sup>15</sup> Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, [12 years before] no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. <sup>16</sup> For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.
    4. They had a long history of supporting Paul.

5. But he wants to make sure they understand his expression of thanks wasn't just a way to fish for more -  
<sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.
6. While Paul **appreciated** what their support provided, what **excited** him was the **evidence** of spiritual maturity their gift proved.
  - a. They'd not only received God's grace, they **were** gracious.
  - b. He knew their generosity would open doors of great blessing to them.
7. To make sure they realize he's not angling for more he says -  
<sup>18</sup> 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.
8. That's why even though he was so ill, Epaphroditus was determined to get to Paul.
  - a. He knew how badly Paul needed the support.
  - b. And he knew it would bring much needed encouragement.
  - c. Epaphroditus knew Paul would be more thankful for the love the gift revealed than the food it would buy or bills it would pay.
9. And that's where I need to launch for a moment.
  - a. A passage like this is where a lot of pastors would start hammering people to give.
  - b. I could easily take these verses & turn them into an appeal to give because -
- <sup>19</sup> And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
10. Many sermons rush over vs. 10-18 to get to 19 so they can say – "Give, & God will take care of you."
11. There's truth there but it's not where Paul's emphasis in this **passage** is.
12. His delight is in the tender love & concern of the Philippians. He rejoices in their hard-won faithfulness.
13. And what Paul said to the Philippians, I want to say to the Oxnardians!
  - a. You have been so faithful to give to God.
  - b. Even in the midst of hardship, you've been steadfast in your giving.
  - c. I am so proud of you. So honored to be your pastor.
14. I recently attended the CC pastor's conference; 700 senior pastors.
  - a. There's a lot of pain out there.
  - b. Many of the churches are struggling.
  - c. Finances are hard, cutting staff & ministries.
15. But let me tell you what's happening here. Last December, elders of both English & Spanish fellowship met to seek God.
  - a. Facility – wall / What going on? / "Build my people, I will build the church."
  - b. Always run thin on staff – work hard. / Hire more. – Put money into people.
  - c. More ministry. = 2 Full time, 3 Part time.
16. And we're able to do that because you've been faithful. That, and we don't pay a whole lot.
17. But here's the thing: If circumstances change, will we still trust God?
18. Will we still be content?

### III. CONCLUSION

A. Vs. 20-23

<sup>20</sup> Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. <sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. <sup>23</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.