

Paul's letter to the Philippians



Peace and contentment

Philippians 4:8-23



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4:8 ~ Worthy thoughts to occupy the mind

Eight specific qualities that should fill the thought life of every Christian:

- **“true”** (*alēthēs*) - literally, “nothing hidden.” It is exactly what it appears to be, without pretense or deception.
- **“honorable”** (*semnos*) - reputable and worthy of respect for its quality or character.
- **“right”** (*dikaios*) - “righteous,” upholding the standards of God.
- **“pure”** (*hagnos*) - “clean,” blameless or innocent.
- **“lovely”** (*prophilēs*) - “friendly toward,” pleasing, agreeable, uplifting, and positive in outlook.
- **“of good repute”** (*euphēmos*) - well spoken of, commendable, and reputable.
- **“excellence”** (*aretē*) - high moral standing or valor in achievement.
- **“worthy of praise”** (*epainos*) - laudable, commendable, of high quality.

4:9 ~ Learning to practice godly habits

- Paul added a command to **“practice these things”** (*prassō*, ^{present tense imperative}) ~ implies more than a single act of “doing” but of performing something repeatedly and habitually until it becomes a natural part of one’s life.
 - **“learned”** (*manthanō*) - To truly learn something, one must come to understand it through experience and practice it so it becomes a regular habit in one’s own life.
 - **“received”** (*paralambanō*) - to take to one’s side or to receive as being true or valuable. This requires a value judgment about what is worth keeping and making part of our life.
 - **“heard”** (*akouō*) - to learn by hearing, whether through spoken instructions, admonitions, or stories of the life experiences of others.
 - **“seen”** (*horaō*) - viewing a living model with one’s own eyes is a powerful learning approach. Having a godly example as a pattern for one’s behavior may be the best learning approach of all.
- Practicing these things will result in **“the God of peace”** bringing the **“peace of God”** (4:7) into one’s life.

4:10 ~ The Philippians revived their concern

- **“But”** (*de*) ~ the same word that Paul often used to introduce a new topic, which is typically rendered as **“Now”** (e.g., 1:12; 4:20).
- He began by sharing his own reaction: **“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.”**
- The Philippians had **“revived”** (*anathallō*) their concern ~ pictures a flowering plant that grows or blooms again; preceded by two adverbs of time: **“now”** (*ēdē*, “at the present time”) and **“at last”** (*pote*, “at length or from time past”). **“concern”** (*phroneō*) ~ to think or exercise the mind.
- They **“were concerned before”** (*phroneō*, ^{imperfect}_{tense}) ~ an action that began in the past and had continued up to the present time. Paul gave the reason: **“you lacked opportunity”** (*akaireomai*) ~ **“now at last”** the Philippians had the perfect opportunity to renew their concern for Paul’s needs.

4:11-13 ~ The attitude of contentment

- Paul's "**great rejoicing**" was not motivated by relief from "**want**" (*husterēsis*) or rescue from desperate physical need. He will explain his reaction later in 4:17-18. Here Paul said that he had "**learned**" (*manthanō*, see 4:9) an important skill: to be "**content**" (*autarkēs*) no matter what his situation.
- "**know**" (*oida*) ~ to learn through personal observation or experience.
"**learned the secret**" (*mueō*) ~ initiated into contentment by experience.
- He then shared several contrasting situations:
 - how to get along with humble means** ↔ **how to live in prosperity**
 - being filled** ↔ **going hungry**
 - having abundance** ↔ **suffering need**
- The secret: "**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**"

4:14-15 ~ The Philippians' partnership in ministry

- Paul now returned to discussing the Philippians' renewed concern for his needs. Paul directly commended them for sharing with him in his trials. **"share with"** (*sugkoinōneō*) ~ a form of the term Paul used previously when he mentioned the Philippians' **"participation"** in the gospel (1:5) and the **"fellowship"** of the Spirit (2:1).
- **"you have done well"** (*kalōs*) ~ excellently, nobly, or commendably. They had been his most faithful ministry partners.
- **"the matter of giving and receiving"** ~ an illustration from financial accounting with debits and credits on a balance sheet.
- **"no church ... but you alone"** ~ The Philippians were unique in their awareness of Paul's needs and taking steps to assist with them.



4:16-18a ~ Profit accruing to their heavenly account

- Paul had begun his Macedonian ministry in Philippi, spending a short time there. But immediately after he departed, the Philippians had sent funds to Paul in Thessalonica and elsewhere.
- He continued his illustration from the world of business or accounting. Paul did not “**seek**” the gift, but he did “**seek**” (*epizēteō*) the “**profit**” that would accrue to their “**account**” ~ picturing their gift as a deposit to their account in the bank of heaven which compounds with interest over time.
- “**I have received everything in full**” ~ Paul stamped **PAID IN FULL** on their receipt. He received everything they sent, he now has an abundance, and this ample surplus would provide for his needs both now and into the future.

4:18b-19 ~ God will supply all your needs

- Paul switched metaphors, describing their gift as “**a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.**” Old Testament burnt offerings were said to be a fragrant or soothing aroma that was acceptable and well-pleasing to God (Gen 8:20-22; Exod 29:18; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; Num 15:2-3). Their generosity is a sacrificial act of worship.
- A benefit of sacrificial giving: “**God will supply all your needs**” ~ the Philippians may have given so generously that they themselves were now in need. Paul reassured them that, just as they had ministered to his need, God will meet their “**needs**” (*chreia*) too.
- “**riches**” (*ploutos*) ~ the inexhaustible wealth of the Creator. He is not reduced in means or impoverished after giving to meet our needs. God has an infinite supply of riches.

4:20-23 ~ Final greetings

- After mentioning God's inexhaustible riches and power, Paul breaks into spontaneous praise!
- As he closed his letter, Paul desired that they pass on his own personal greetings and gratitude to **"every saint,"** especially for the generous gift to which each of them contributed. Paul's trusted ministry companions in Rome also sent their greetings. In addition, he sent greetings from all of the believers in the churches of Rome.
- **"especially those of Caesar's household"** ~ the Philippians may have been personally acquainted with members of Caesar's household, so they would have rejoiced at hearing of the salvation of many of them.
- Paul bookended this entire letter with the **"grace"** of God.

