

for their every need. Furthermore, Paul indicates that God supplies our need according to His riches, not according to our needs. His riches exceed our needs.

“The phrase ‘in glory’ in verse 19 requires careful consideration. This phrase modifies fill; it does not modify ‘His riches.’ Glory is the expression of God; it is God expressed in splendor. God’s rich supply to the believers, who are His children, expresses God and bears the glory of God. The apostle assured the Philippians that God would abundantly supply all their needs so as to bring them into His glory.

“Here Paul is not saying that God’s riches are the riches of glory. Rather, he is testifying that God’s repayment to the giver is in glory. In glory God will fill every need of the Philippians. In doing so, He will show forth the splendor of His glory and bring the givers into this glory.”

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 30, pp. 259-261)

Note: **Bold type** and/or underlining have been added for emphasis in the above verses and quotations.

Suggested Supplementary Reading

The Holy Word for Morning Revival— Philippians: Week 6, Days 4-6

The Life-study of Philippians, Messages 29-30

Our Experience in the Church Life

Prayer Burdens

1. Please continue to pray for the 15 to 20 grade 6 young people and their serving ones.
2. Pray for the Chinese speaking Tulip gospel trip, that the gospel friends who go with us may receive salvation.
3. Please pray for the Up-coming Victoria weekend conferences here in Toronto for Chinese-spkg (at Hall #1) and English-spkg (at hall #3). John Myer from the church in Columbus will share with ES saints.
4. Pray for the Spring cleaning time that the saints would be encouraged to take care of the hall practically and be ushered more into the reality of the church life. The Chinese-speaking saints of hall one will clean hall one, while the English-speaking saints will clean hall 3; both will start at 9:00 am with breakfast provided.

Announcements:

General

1. Victoria Weekend English Speaking Conference

The Church in Toronto will host a conference on May 19 and 20 at Hall 3 for the English speaking saints to fellowship about the present church life the Lord has prepared for us. John Myer from the Church in Columbus will be with us. The schedule is:

May 19 Sat

4:00 - 6:00pm Meeting 1

6:00 - 7:30 pm Love Feast (bring dish)

7:30 - 9:00 pm Meeting 2

May 20 Lord's Day

10:00am - 12:00 Lord's Table and Meeting 3

12:00 - 1:00pm Catered meal

1:00 - 3:00pm Meeting 4

The church in Toronto

Philippians Week 20

May 7 - May 19, 2007

Having Christ as the Secret of Sufficiency (3) — The Believers’ Fellowship with the Apostle and the Apostle’s Secret of Sufficiency

Weekly Bible Reading:

Philippians 4:10-20

Hymns:

579; 539; 601; 447

Monday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 4:10-12

- 10** But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because now at length you have caused your thinking for me to blossom anew; for which matter you had indeed taken thought, but lacked opportunity.
- 11** Not that I speak according to lack, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.
- 12** I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

The Secret of Sufficiency in Christ

“In this message we shall consider Paul’s secret of sufficiency in Christ. Paul had learned the secret of sufficiency, of satisfaction, of contentment. This secret is actually Christ Himself. In chapter one, Christ is the life for us to live; in chapter two, Christ is the pattern for us to follow; and in chapter three, Christ is the goal and the prize for us to pursue. Now in chapter four, Christ is the secret and also the power for us to enjoy. In doing many things we must first know the secret and also have the power, the strength, the energy, to accomplish those things.

1. Learning the Secret

“In teaching people to do things, even insignificant things, we mainly teach them the secret. This is true, for example, in teaching someone the art of barbecuing meat. If a person does not learn the secret of barbecuing, he may ruin the meat. One side may be overdone, and the other side raw. Likewise, we may not know the secret of sufficiency in Christ found in Philippians 4. We may talk a great deal about the book of Philippians, but not know the secret of experiencing Christ. To change the figure of speech, because we do not have the key, we cannot open the door to the experience of Christ. I say again, in chapter four we have the secret and the power. On the one hand, Paul says, ‘I have learned the secret’ (v. 12); on the other hand, he testifies, ‘I can do all things in Him Who empowers me’ (v. 13).

“In verse 11 Paul says, ‘Not that I speak according to want, for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content.’ To what word should the phrase ‘to be content’ be joined? This phrase should not be connected with ‘I am,’ for the words ‘I am’ are related to the expression ‘in whatever circumstances.’ Rather, ‘to be content’ should be connected to

'I have learned.' Paul had learned to be content in all circumstances. He could say, 'I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.'

"In verse 12 Paul continues, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want.' The words 'I have learned the secret' are an interpretation of the Greek word which means 'I have been initiated.' The metaphor is that of a person being initiated into a secret society with instruction in its rudimentary principles. Paul had not only learned a secret; he had been initiated and had learned certain basic principles. "...By using this metaphor, Paul was saying that a church, which is rather mysterious, has certain basic principles. After Paul was converted to Christ, he was in a sense initiated into the church life. This means that he was instructed in the secret of how to enjoy Christ, how to take Christ as life, how to live Christ, how to magnify Christ, how to gain Christ, and also how to have the church life. These are the rudimentary principles of the church life."

"The basic principles of the church life are altogether different from the basic principles of the world. We may know all the rudimentary principles of the world and yet not know anything of the church life. Thus, when we are saved and come into the church, the Body of Christ, we need to be initiated by learning certain basic principles. The secret of the Body is to take Christ as our life, to live Christ, to pursue Christ, to gain Christ, to magnify Christ, and to express Christ. These are the basic principles of the church, the Body of Christ. As one who had been initiated into the Body, Paul had learned the secret.

"Many Christians today have not been initiated into the church life in such a way. Although they have been converted to Christ, baptized, and have joined a denomination, they have not been initiated into the Body of Christ. They have not learned how to take Christ as life, how to live Christ, how to take Christ as their pattern, and how to count all religious, cultural, and philosophical things as refuse in order to gain Christ. In contrast to Paul, they have not learned the secret of experiencing Christ. Paul had been initiated both into the proper Christian life and into the proper church life."

(Witness Lee, Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 29, pp. 243-245)

Tuesday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 4:12-13

- 12** I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.
- 13** I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

2. Applying the Secret

"According to 4:10-13, Paul applies the secret he has learned to his circumstances in prison. As a prisoner in Rome, he was far away from many of the believers and from many churches which had been raised up through his ministry. No doubt, during his imprisonment, he suffered both psychologically and physically. He was in need of a material supply. It certainly was not easy for him to be in prison under such circumstances. "According to the record in the New Testament, when Paul was journeying in Europe for the ministry, the church in Philippi was unique in taking care of Paul's material needs. In 4:15 he says, 'And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the account of giving and receiving but you only.' Paul's use of the word 'account' here indicates that the Philippian believers' supply of material things to the apostle opened an account with him...More than once, the Philippian saints had made deposits into this account. In verse

example, on behalf of God you may give ten dollars, but God may repay you a thousand dollars, that is, a hundredfold. Thus, in your account you have a balance of nine-hundred ninety dollars. This indicates that you are not actually the giver; God is the One who gives. Would you not like to have such an account? No earthly bank account can compare with it. However, if you open such an account with the intention of enriching yourself, God's repayment may not be given to you in this age. Rather, He may wait until your greediness has been dealt with before He repays you.

"Although the Philippians had opened an account with Paul and even in Thessalonica had sent 'both once and again' to his need, there was a period of time when no transactions took place. For this reason, Paul referred to the believers' giving in the past. He expected that the transactions would not cease, but that there would be a continual giving and receiving. As Paul says in verse 17, he did not seek the gift, but the fruit which increases to the believers' account. This refers to the increase on the credit side. In these verses Paul was encouraging the believers to keep their account active, to have no gaps in the giving and receiving. Then there would be fruit which increased to the believers' account."

(ibid., pp. 257-259)

Saturday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 4:18-20

- 18** But I have received in full all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the things from you, a sweet-smelling savor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.
- 19** And my God will fill your every need according to His riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus.
- 20** Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

Our Accepted Sacrifices and God's Filling All Our Needs

"In verse 18 Paul continues, 'But I have all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.' The 'things from you' were the material things given as a supply to the apostle. Receiving these things, Paul could say that he was fully supplied. He regarded the things sent to him as 'a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.' The Greek term rendered 'fragrant odor' is the same as that used as sweet-smelling savor in Ephesians 5:2. It is a fragrant odor of sacrifices offered to God (Gen. 8:21). The Philippians' material gift to supply the apostle's need was considered by him a sacrifice to God, acceptable and wellpleasing (Heb. 13:16). Paul indicates in his appreciation that what the Philippians did to him was actually done to God. This implies his assurance that he was one with God and that his work was by God and for God.

"In verse 19 Paul says that his God will abundantly repay the believers. In his experience Paul had the conviction and assurance that God was his God. He could say, 'And my God shall fill every need of yours.' God was Paul's God because Paul was one with Him. Thus, Paul regarded the material gift sent to him from the Philippian believers as a sacrifice to God. Furthermore, he believed with assurance that God would richly repay them. Here we see that whenever we receive a gift, we need to have the assurance that this gift is presented not only to us, but also to God. Then we need to have the conviction that God will repay the one who gives this gift. In His repayment, God will fill every need of the giver, fully supplying that one and satisfying him.

"Paul told the Philippians that God would fill every need of theirs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Because the Philippians cared for God's sent one, God would care

As we have pointed out, the gospel here equals God's move on earth for His economy. The gospel includes not only the good news of salvation, redemption, forgiveness, justification, and eternal life. Especially in a book like Philippians, the gospel signifies the move of God in His economy. Therefore, fellowship, even in the sending of a material supply, is for the furtherance of God's move in His economy."

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 30, pp. 255, 256-257)

Friday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 4:15b, 17-18a

? ...no church had fellowship with me in the account of giving and receiving except you only;

17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your account.

18 But I have received in full all things and abound...

2 Corinthians 12:14m

14 ...I do not seek what is yours but you...

Matthew 6:20-21

20 ...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not dig through nor steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Readings for Inspiration and Truth

God's Accounting System

"...The secret to understanding Paul's purpose in these verses is in the word account (vv. 15, 17). The Philippian believers' supply of material things to the apostle opened an account with him. In verse 17 Paul refers to the account opened in verse 15.

"In the Bible we have a revelation of the heavenly banking system. In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus speaks of making a deposit in our spiritual bank account. According to His word, we need to make deposits into our account in the heavens. In Matthew 6, of course, the word account is not used. In this matter also, the revelation in the Bible is progressive. Hence, in the Epistle to the Philippians Paul deliberately uses the word account in referring to the heavenly banking system."

Philippians 4:15 "indicates that the church in Philippi was unique in opening an account with Paul. With this account there is the side of giving, and the other side of receiving. Here we have a double entry account, an account of both giving and receiving. To be sure, in the account opened with Paul, the Philippian believers gave a great deal. The church in Philippi had opened an account to care for the needs of the apostle. This account, reflected in verse 15, was kept in the heavenly bank. They sent gifts to Paul, and in return they received God's repayment.

"Paul speaks of this in verse 19: 'And my God shall fill every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' In the apostle's experience, he had the conviction and assurance that God was his God through his being one with Him. Since he considered the Philippians' material gift to him a sacrifice to God, he assuredly believed that God, who was one with him and who was his God, would richly repay the Philippians. On behalf of God, the believers sent something to God's servant. For this, God would be sure to pay them back. He would not owe the believers anything. The heavenly account would enter both a credit and a debit for the Philippian believers.

"Which side of the ledger do you think would be bigger – the debit side or the credit side, the giving side or the receiving side? It is always the receiving side which is greater. For

16 Paul reminds them, 'For even in Thessalonica you sent both once and again to my need.' In verse 17 Paul again refers to the account the believers had opened with him: 'Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your account.'

"...when Paul was in prison, he had certain physical needs. Because Paul was still human, he expected the Philippians to continue remembering him. But for a period of time, the Philippians did not do this. This is implied by Paul's word in verse 10: 'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew; wherein you did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity.' Notice the words 'at length' and 'blossom anew.' For some time, the Philippians' thinking of Paul had been dormant; it might even have withered. Their thinking for him certainly was not blossoming. But when Paul wrote this verse, winter had passed, and spring had come. He could now say that their thinking for him had begun to blossom anew. Paul was very kind in saying, 'You did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity.' In Paul's words, however, there is the implication that before this blossoming anew of their thinking for him, Paul had hoped to receive from them some material supply. He had hoped to be supplied by the church which was unique in having opened a heavenly account with him. But for a period of time, no deposits came in. The 'blossoms' had withered during the winter. But now that spring had arrived, there was a new blossoming.

"It was sovereign of the Lord that the material supply from the Philippians had stopped temporarily. Yes, they had opened an account with Paul, but what is the use of an account if no deposits come in? This time when there was no supply was a time of testing for Paul, a time for him to be abased. No doubt, when Epaphroditus came with the supply, making a large deposit into the heavenly account, that was the time for Paul to abound. Therefore, in verse 12 he could declare, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.' He knew both how to be humbled and be in lowly circumstances and also how to live with abundance."

"Before Epaphroditus came, Paul was abased. After he came with the supply, Paul was abounding. But he did not know how long this abounding would last. He knew that probably the time would come when once again he would be in want. He had been in a low situation; now he was at a peak. But perhaps in not too long a time he would be low again. This was the reason he first said, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.' But because Epaphroditus had arrived with the supply, Paul then changed the order and said, 'I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want.' Knowing that his circumstances could change again very soon, Paul said that he knew not only how to be abased and how to abound, but also how to abound and how to be in want."

(Life-study of Philippians, Msg. 29, pp. 245-248)

Wednesday

Verses for Morning Revival

Philippians 4:13

13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

John 15:5

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Philippians 3:9a

*Readings for Inspiration and Truth***God's Sovereign Arrangement of Our Circumstances**

"My reason for dwelling on this matter is to point out that our circumstances are always sovereignly arranged by God. Sometimes His sovereign arrangement puts us in a low situation, and at other times in circumstances that are quite good. Paul realized that even though the supply had come from the church at Philippi, his circumstances were still in the hand of God. In God's sovereign arrangement, the Philippian church did not send the supply until now. Perhaps they had the heart to send him a gift, but not the opportunity until Epaphroditus could come. When the opportunity was available, the Philippian believers sent a gift to Paul. This supply brought him out of the condition of humiliation, want, and abasement and set him on a peak. But he did not know how long that would last. Nevertheless, he had the assurance that he knew both how to be abased and how to abound, both how to abound and how to be in want. He had learned the secret; he had been initiated into the basic principles of Christ and the church.

"In verse 13 we find a basic principle related to the apostle's secret of sufficiency in Christ: 'I can do all things in Him Who empowers me.' Paul was a person in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2), and he desired to be found in Christ by others. Now he declared that he could do all things in Him, in the very Christ who empowered him. This is an all-inclusive and concluding word concerning his experience of Christ. It is the converse of the Lord's word concerning our organic relationship with Him in John 15:5: 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.'

Doing All Things in Him Who Empowers Us

"In 4:13 Paul refers to Christ as the One who 'empowers me.' To be so empowered is to be made dynamic inwardly. Christ dwells in us (Col. 1:27). He empowers us, makes us dynamic, from within, not from without. By such inward empowering Paul could do all things in Christ.

"In 4:13 we find the secret to which Paul refers in verse 12. Here Paul says that he is in Christ, in the One who empowers him. In chapter three Paul testified that he pursued Christ in order to gain Him and be found in Him. Now in 4:13 Paul says that he is in Him. In Christ as the One who empowers him Paul could do all things. He could say, 'Christ is my secret of sufficiency. As long as I have Him and as long as I am in Him, I can do all things in Him.'

"To appreciate Paul's word we need to join the phrase 'in Him' in 4:13 to the same phrase in 3:9. In 3:9 Paul aspired to be found in Him; in 4:13 Paul declared that being in Him he could do all things in the One who empowered him. This is the secret.

"Have you seen the secret? Do you have this secret? Our circumstances may change. In certain circumstances we may abound, and in others we may be abased. But whether we abound or are abased, the enjoyment of the Lord is the same. It may even have been the case that Paul enjoyed Christ more when he was abased than when he was abounding. Perhaps he enjoyed more of Christ when he was poor than when he was rich. This, however, is my understanding. Perhaps Paul would say, 'No, I enjoy Christ equally when I am abased and when I am abounding. It makes no difference to me whether I am rich or poor, high or low. The enjoyment of Christ is the same.' Even though the enjoyment might be the same, the taste might still be different. Whether or not there was any difference in enjoyment or in taste, it is certain that Paul had learned the secret."

(ibid., pp. 248-250)

Thursday

Philippians 4:14-15

14 ...you did well to have fellowship with me in my affliction.

15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the account of giving and receiving except you only;

2 Corinthians 8:1b, 4b

1 ...the churches of Macedonia,

4 ...besought of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints;

*Readings for Inspiration and Truth***Our Giving – a Fellowship of Life and a Ministering of Life**

"In their giving, many Christians do not have fellowship. By fellowship we do not simply mean communication or mutual participation. Fellowship also involves the ministering of life. When we have fellowship with one another, we minister life to one another. When many Christians give something as a gift, they do not have the deep sense that in this transaction there is the ministry of life...No doubt, the saints in Philippi not only sent the material supply to Paul, but also ministered life to him. Thus, between the two parties, the apostle and the believers, there was the fellowship of life and the mutual ministry of life. It is important that we learn to give in such a fellowship of life and ministry of life."

"In 4:10 Paul also says to the Philippians, 'You did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity.' These words show Paul's experience and maturity. There were times that he rebuked the saints. For example, in writing to the Corinthians he rebuked them and asked if they wanted him to come with a rod (1 Cor. 4:21). In writing to the Philippians, however, he speaks in a very positive way, telling them that at length they caused their thinking for him to blossom anew, that they indeed did take thought, but lacked opportunity.

"...the words 'blossom anew,' a literal translation of the Greek, imply that the giving of material things is a matter of life and of the ministry of life. If this were not so, Paul would not have used such an expression.

We must pay careful attention to the word blossom. This word implies that our giving of material things to any church, to any servant of the Lord, and to any of the saints must be something living that is able to blossom. This fellowship involves more than participation; it involves the circulation of the current of life. According to the Bible, fellowship always comes from life. First John 1:2 and 3 reveal that fellowship issues from life. The source of fellowship is life. For this reason, in Philippians 4:10 Paul uses the word blossom, and in verse 14, the word fellowship: 'Nevertheless you did well to have fellowship with me in my affliction.' It seems as if Paul is saying, 'You ministered life to me and helped to sustain me in my imprisonment. When I was suffering, you helped me by ministering life to me. Surely you will receive a supply of life in return.'

"The fellowship in life can be illustrated by the circulation of blood in the human body. On the one hand, as the blood circulates, it flows out; on the other hand, it returns. In like manner, our fellowship in life always has a going out with a return. Any outflow without a corresponding inflow is not true fellowship. Fellowship always involves circulation. The life goes out, and the life also returns. The life goes with a supply to the other party, and then it comes back with a supply from this party. Whenever we give material things under the leading of the Lord, we should experience such a fellowship in life. There should be the blossoming and the mutual supply of life.

"The fellowship the believers in Philippi had with Paul was for the furtherance of the gospel (1:5). Their sending of the supply of material things was for the furtherance of the gospel.