

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

III. Philippians: Nurture In Living In Preoccupation With Christ

Q. Gaining Peace With Our Individual And Church's Financial Welfares (Philippians 4:15-20)

I. Introduction

- A. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, his readers were concerned about his imprisonment for the faith as seen in Paul's words in Philippians 1:12-13 that encouraged his readers in view of his imprisonment.
- B. Paul wrote to encourage his readers in several realms, including that of his material welfare as a materially oppressed prisoner of Rome (Philippians 4:10-14), but beyond testifying of the Lord's help for Paul in his case, Philippians 4:15-21 teaches a wonderful material provision from God for the local church and its individual donors who give to missionaries like Paul. We view that passage for insight and edification:

II. Gaining Peace With Our Individual And Church's Financial Welfares, Philippians 4:15-20.

- A. Having testified in Philippians 4:10-14 how he as a materially afflicted prisoner of Rome had gained inner peace with his personal material ups and downs, Paul reversed course to discuss the giving of His readers who had faithfully donated gifts to him to address his material needs, Philippians 4:15-18:
 1. After the Philippians had been converted in Paul's ministry in Acts 16:11-40, they were the only Church to send him material support when he then went into Thessalonica 100 miles west of Philippi, Phil. 4:15; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 401; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, Map 13: The Missionary Journeys of Paul.
 2. Then, since Paul had remained at Thessalonica for several months (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.), these Philippian believers had sent another donation for Paul's material support, Philippians 4:16; Ibid.
 3. Paul claimed that he was not referring to these past gifts of the Philippians to imply that he wanted another gift from them, but that the Philippians might be credited in their account by God Who was keeping an account of their gifts to Paul's ministry, Phil. 4:17; J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Ep. to the Phil., 1974, p. 166.
 4. To confirm this claim, Paul added that he had "received full payment, and more" (Phil. 4:18a ESV, NIV), that he was "amply supplied" in Epaphroditus' arrival with the gifts they sent with him, Phil. 4:18b ESV.
 5. Indeed, Paul added that their gifts were a "fragrant offering," a term used of an offering that pleased God and "was also used in Ephesians 5:2 of Christ's offering of Himself" (Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 665), that they were thus "an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God," Ibid.; Philippians 4:18c NIV.
- B. Now, Paul was a "missionary" in having been sent forth under the Lord's leading by the leaders of the Church at Antioch in Syria who aimed to disciple regions not yet reached by others, Acts 13:1-3 with Rom. 15:20-21.
- C. Thus, as the Church at Philippi was committed faithfully to meet Paul's material needs as God's missionary, God was committed to meet every material need of Paul's supporters, Phil. 4:19; Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Phil. 4:19:
 1. Paul wrote that God would "fill" (*pleroo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 676-678) "every" (*pas*, Ibid., p. 636-638; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 691) "need, lack" (*chreia*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 893) of those who gave to his needs according His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, Phil. 4:19.
 2. This promise carries a two-fold application -- one at the corporate level, and one at the personal level:
 - a. First, this promise involves the **local church** that *corporately* gives seeing its *corporate* material needs as a body met by God in remuneration for its faithful *corporate* donations to God's Biblical missionaries!
 - b. Second, as "every" (*pas*) such need of this body would be met, there is also an implied promise that God will address the *personal* needs of **individual donors** who *contribute* to the church's missionary giving!
 - c. Thus, for the **church body and** for the **individuals in it who faithfully support God's missionaries**, God is keeping a financial record of their giving (Phil. 4:18c) and reimburses the church body and its individual donors in line with their respective contributions! (cf. also 2 Corinthians 9:6-10)
- D. God's blessing to Paul through the Philippian believers' ministry of meeting his material needs and the Lord's rewarding that giving Church and its individual donors with provisions led Paul to give a short doxology, praising God the Father for the eternal glory of His own graciousness to all His people, Philippians 4:20.

Lesson: God views as pleasing acts of worship and keeps a record of personal and church body faithful giving to missionaries He raises up so as to meet every material need of each person and church in line with their giving.

Application: May we individually and corporately faithfully donate as repeat acts of worship that are pleasing to God toward the material needs of God's missionaries, knowing He will reimburse such donations in accord with His accounting, meeting each need of each donor, both individually as well as corporately as a local church body.