

The God Who Supplies Every Need

Thomas Robinson, *Lives Shaped by Jesus 13*, March 10, 2013

Philippians 4:10-23

¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now you have blossomed again in thinking about me. Indeed, you were always **thinking**, but you had **no opportunity**.

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I **myself have learned** in whatever situation I am to be **self-sufficient**. ¹² I know how to **be humbled**, and I know how to **abound**. In any and every circumstance, I **have learned** the secret of facing **plenty and hunger, abundance and need**. ¹³ I **am strong** for all things in **him who strengthens me**.

¹⁴ Yet you did well in **sharing my trouble/affliction**. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, **no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving**, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received everything in full, and I **abound**. I **am filled up**, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a **fragrant offering**, a sacrifice acceptable and **pleasing to God**.

¹⁹ And **my God will fill up every need of yours** according to his **riches** in glory in Messiah Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ **Greet every saint** in Messiah Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me greet you.

²² All the saints greet you, especially those of **Caesar's household**.

²³ The **grace of the Lord Jesus Messiah** be with your spirit.

Philippians 1:1-7

¹ Paul and Timothy, slaves of Messiah Jesus, To all the saints in Messiah Jesus who are at Philippi, including overseers and servers: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Messiah.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of **your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now**.

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Messiah Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all **my co-partners in grace**, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Romans 12:1-2

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the **affliction we experienced in Asia** (Ephesus). For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 9:8

⁸ And **God is able to make all grace abound to you**, so that having all self-sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Changed Hearts, Blossoming Action

Paul concludes his letter with an expression of joy over the gift/support that the Philippians have sent with Epaphroditus. Expressed in a very distinctive way. Some see the letter as an extended thank-you/fundraising note: 'It's always about the money.' Mammon is god.

The Philippians (like us) lived in a world where money talks. It's hard to see any other way.

Paul knew the power of money. He refused to take it when he first preached in a new city.

Paul is living a life you couldn't pay him to live: prison, beatings, stoning; joy, peace, love.

Paul is modeling a life that takes the language of money seriously, but doesn't let it speak for itself. Knows it as a tool, a way to express new values, love, partnership. Paul says he has had to learn, and they are learning. He rejoices in all that their gifts mean:

They're partnering with a man in Roman prison—Jesus' lordship is greater than Caesar's.

The Gospel is not a private wisdom/philosophy. It changes their practical life and action.

Their direct actions flow from the Gospel and are the kind of sacrifice pleasing to God.

A Letter in the Middle of an Amazing Journey

Step back and think about the whole letter. Brief and deep. In the swirl of life. Remember Lydia, the Jailer (Acts 16). 4+ years have passed. Paul in Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Ephesus. Severe persecution, imprisonment. Epaphroditus.

They are all in a hostile environment. Paul takes them into the only resource that can truly give them strength and life. They start with Paul's trouble and their partnership. Paul models a joy and peace that makes sense only because it flows from a grasp of reality made clear by the event of Jesus' coming, ministry, death, resurrection, exaltation. The Gospel is the event that reveals what the world is about, including our particular lives.

Paul shares the transformation of his life, his quest for Jesus, God's call. Most of them have different backgrounds but are called into the same quest. The Gospel does not work simply as story, but because it is true. God is true. He powerfully works in our lives, calling us to his self-giving love, helping us to deal with any circumstances of life.

God's Revelation – Looking into the Life Created by Jesus

Step back another step. Why should this ancient letter matter to us in New York City?

Surely people today are much smarter than people 2000 years ago! Aren't we? Yes, a lot has been learned positively and negatively. It is still hard to make sense of our lives.

This is part of the wonder of the New Testament revelation, its profound authenticity. First the NT takes us into the event of the Gospel – the life of Jesus. In the four Gospels we see Jesus through the living memories of people who were there and whose lives were changed. In Acts we watch their witness to Jesus go out into the world of that day.

Then a letter like Philippians takes us into a moment of life of people experiencing this new life created by Jesus. We watch how people even at the very beginning of this faith dealt with problems we can recognize: disagreements, suffering, deprivation, sickness, hopes.

The presence of this Jesus, just a few years earlier, gave them a new grasp of reality and God's active presence gave them a real joy and peace no matter what the situation.

God gives us letters like this so that we can see through their eyes and recognize our own situation. We are different, but the same core reality of God, gives the same clarity.

Paul in prison says, "I abound, I am filled up." And "my God will fill up every need of yours."

He is speaking truth from experience. The same Jesus will re-center, renew your life. The same God will work in you. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Messiah be with your spirit!"