

# Philippians

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish

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Philippians 4:10-23

Vss. 10-13

- As Paul draws the letter to a close, he again thanks the Philippians for their gift and thoughtfulness. And while he does not want to sound ungrateful, he wants them to know that he really is ok. He tells them that he has learned to be “content” in whatever his circumstances may be. The word he uses here for “content” is *autarkes*, meaning to be entirely self-sufficient. In Paul’s world self-sufficiency was perhaps THE goal of the Stoics. In our day, there are no people who would say they follow the Stoic school of thought, but there are plenty of people who are determined to be self-sufficient. “I am a rock, I am an island” Simon and Garfunkel sang. I don’t need anyone one or anybody. What those who follow such a path don’t know is that there is a reason the Stoic school failed. On our own, such a life only leads to misery. But when Paul says he is self-sufficient, he knows he is NOT alone. For if he is sleeping on the ground or in a bed with a down mattress and cotton sheets; if he’s wondering where his next meal may come from or if he’s eating at the all-you-can-eat buffet; if he’s rolling in dough or if can’t make a down payment on a free meal; in whatever circumstance he is in HE’S ALRIGHT, because he can do ALL THINGS through CHRIST who gives him strength. The self-reliant person, today’s Stoic, winds up miserable because they are relying on their own strength, which is *never* strong enough and is too limited. For Paul, and for all who closely follow Christ and lean on Him, we truly can be content in all things, for Christ supplies all we truly need.

## Vss. 14-20

- Despite his instance that due to Christ's presence with him, he really has no needs, Paul does want the Philippians to know he appreciates them not only for this gift, but for all they have done for him in the past. When no one else remembered him in order to support him, they were there time and again (2 Cor. 11:7-12).
- Paul gives us a good example as to how a Christian, who may be so good at giving, must also be good and gracious receivers of the gifts of others. Paul gladly accepts their gift as much for what giving the gift does *FOR THEM* as it does for him. He says he gladly accepts their gift because of how it adds to their credit in Heaven. We should never deny anyone the blessing of being the giver, nor the treasure that is added in heaven for them due to such generosity. In God's economy, no one ever became poor for being generous.
- Indeed, Paul tells them that he safely received all they sent by way of Epaphroditus and it is more than enough for him. And that such a gift is in fact a sacrifice offered not to him but to God (Matt. 25:40) and comes to God like a fragrant aroma, a perfect sacrifice. Such spiritually driven generosity, Jesus says, will return to you from God "pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38). God will not forget such generosity, such a sacrifice, and will in turn supply all *their* needs.
- So either by gracious giving in the name of Jesus, or by gracious Christian receiving, God is glorified.

## Vss. 21-23

- Paul concludes the letter with a traditional closing, "Greet everyone". And he adds that the Christian brothers who are with him send their Hellos too.
- BUT THEN he says something earth shaking: "All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." The term "Caesar's household" covers a lot of ground. More than just Caesar's family, the emperor's household would include not only all the servants, slaves, Praetorian Guards, and palace officials, but also all the civil servants who worked for

the emperor and these would travel all over the empire with the emperor's authority. So the Roman's arrest Paul in Jerusalem, he appeals to Caesar forcing them ship him off to Rome where he would stay under house arrest in an apartment in the palace complex. The Romans thought they had Paul, but it was Paul who had them. For at least 2 years (Acts 28:30) Paul was there, sharing the story of how he was a prisoner for Christ. Now the followers of the carpenter from Galilee had reached to the highest levels of power in the Empire in just a single generation.

- When you are given a gift, you want to be able to give something back. All Paul has to give to the Philippians is a blessing, his blessing. What other blessing would the Apostle Paul give but grace? "For by grace you have been saved..." (Eph. 2:8).