

Fellowship of Joy: God's Provision Philippians 4:10-23

Preached by Caleb Mayberry 9/28/2008

Introduction: In this passage we see Paul expressing his thanks to the Philippian congregation for their generous monetary gift. This indeed was the motivation for him to write the letter in the first place, and so as he concludes he wants to reiterate his appreciation. In addition to thanking the Philippians, Paul has taken aim to deal with disunity that he's heard has been festering in the church. Paul, not surprisingly, lifts up Christ and in particular his example of humility, as the way in which we are able to cast aside our pride and lay down our differences for the sake of the gospel. Paul in concluding his letter of thanks and exhortation gives us a beautiful picture of a loving God who provides for us in three ways: God gives us the ability to rest, the opportunity to participate, and the resources to rejoice in Christ to his glory. When we begin to believe in the goodness of God and his provision for all of us, our prideful, selfish desires will lose their power and joy, unity, and the glory of God will more readily manifest itself.

Body: In this passage we see God's provision in at least three ways:

1. God gives us the ability to rest (or be content in all circumstances) v10-13

Verse 13 is often quoted by preachers and teachers that want to instill hope into their hearers that they are able to accomplish great things, because Paul says "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." So we take this and believe on God for getting an A on a test we didn't study for. Or we look to God to enable us to get a promotion or maybe to score a touchdown in a football game, fantasy of course. Why? Because God gives me the strength to do all these things? Perhaps, but this is most certainly not what is at the forefront of Paul's mind when he writes verse 13. In the context Paul is really speaking of enduring. "I can do all things" is referring to the different circumstances that Paul has found himself in life. Whether it is abundance or need, plenty or hunger, Christ gives him a supernatural ability to rest in whatever situation he finds himself in. This is not so much about him actively doing something than about his being able to persevere through good times and bad times with a heart that can truly rest in God and be satisfied.

Questions: Do you feel at rest with God in your current circumstances? Are you satisfied with the life God has given you?

2. God gives us the opportunity to participate (time/talents/treasure in God's work) v.14-18

Though Paul was deeply appreciative of the Philippian's gift, what's telling is that Paul is more excited about what their giving is providing them than how the gift helps himself. Paul says he is seeking the fruit that increases to the Philippians credit. As the Philippians give of the finances, Paul says the fruit is being credited to their account. This fruit could be both the spiritual growth in giving and the work of the gospel that this enables Paul to do. The ability to participate in the gospel, financially, is a gift from God. When we give, we bring fruit to our credit, or profit to our account. We become partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is indicative of our spiritual growth as our heart beings to care for the same things that Christ cares for, most importantly, the formation of true worshippers of God.

Questions: Does giving bring you joy? Do you feel fruitful when you give of your time, talents, or treasure? Do you think of your giving as partnering in the gospel?

3. **God gives us the resources to rejoice in Christ to His glory v.19-20**

Verse 19 is one of the favorite verses of prosperity gospel teachers. They hear “riches and glory” and think Rolaxes and Benz’s. Paul knew nothing of this prosperity gospel. He writes from jail to a church that is likely facing sharp persecution and he is confident that God will provide all their needs according to God’s riches and glory. So clearly need is not defined here as comfortable circumstances and plenty of money. Given the context of contentment that Paul spoke of earlier, the primary focus is on God giving us the resources (spiritual and physical) necessary to rest and rejoice in Christ. We rejoice in God because only He alone is able to overcome our circumstances with supernatural resources in accordance with the splendor of His riches and glory. Sometimes this will be the alleviations of physical hardships through material gifts, as we see the Philippians doing for Paul. But other times, and perhaps more normative, is that God will give us the strength we need to be able to face and endure even the direst of circumstances. We rejoice, not because God gives us everything we ever wanted, but because he gives us the greatest treasure in the universe, namely himself. And in our rejoicing in the provision of God, He is glorified most splendidly, as his name is lifted up as the loving God and Father who has promised to take care of his children, and as the Groom who has sacrificed himself in order to obtain and perfect his bride, we the body of Christ.

Questions: How has God supplied your needs? What did you learn when God didn’t get you out of a situation or change a circumstance, but just gave you strength to endure it?

Conclusion

Paul aims to combat the disunity in the church by pointing to the character of God and that which by virtue of our faith in Christ, must necessarily transfer to us. (i.e. love, unity, joy, etc). The good news is that we get God. In the reality of God’s joy and love for us, there is no room for disunity because its roots have been destroyed by what’s now true of us in Christ, namely that we all share in the Holy Spirit and we have been given the greatest treasure in the world. Disunity thrives on pridefully thinking that we have got something of worth that others do not. But in Christ, this is simply not true. Only the giver gets the glory, and in this letter we see God as the ultimate giver, not just in providing us with our physical needs, and not even in providing us with the supernatural strength to endure anything, but most strikingly in the giving and sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, who humbling gave up his rights, to be spit upon and mocked, beaten and scourged, and finally executed for our sake. In Christ’s humility and perfect obedience and giving up of himself, he is therefore exalted in the highest regard as being the provider of providers, the one who has made all things possible. We rejoice as the ultimate beneficiaries and we praise Christ as the ultimate benefactor, who alone is worthy of the utmost glory and praise.