

Last week we looked at the previous passage and found that the phrase, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me", does not mean we can bench press 500 pounds. Nor does it mean that we can resolve any conflict. The context was in regards to being content in poverty or abundance because of the strength we have in Christ. (4:12) We can face any situation in life through Christ's enabling power. That makes all the difference in our current economic downturn. Believers who are in Christ have the strength to go through their situation with contentment. There is a peace and joy that is a witness to the world of the difference we have in Christ.

Our secret is not just knowing Christ, but being *in* Christ. (1:1) We can know Christ and yet be in our old nature. We can respond to our circumstances in the Spirit (which is in Christ) or in our carnal nature. (Romans 8:13) The believer gets to choose. The unbeliever only has the old nature to rely on. The old nature can grin and bear it only so long. It has no external power source to turn to. The believer turns to Christ and is empowered with the strength and joy He gives. The situation is not necessarily changed, but our attitude certainly is. That is the noticeable difference that those who are controlled by the Spirit exhibit to the world. (Romans 8:9)

In today's passage Paul continues his words of thanks to the Philippians for the gift that they sent. Paul had just thanked them, but added that he was content even without their financial support. ¹⁴ *Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.* He appreciated the kindness of these brothers and sisters in Christ as much as the gift. It was an expression of their love. (2Corinthians 8:3-5) We often hear the phrase that it is the thought that counts. Sometimes the thought behind the gift is more heartwarming than the gift itself.

An expanded translation of the Greek is that they partnered or shared with him in the pressure of his imprisonment. The presence of Epaphras was as much a participation in the pressure as the financial gift, nevertheless, he did have a financial need to pay for his food and the housing.

The next verses tells us that the Philippians had been generous like this before. 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.* When the church first began there in Philippi, they saw the need to support Paul's ministry. Paul had told the Corinthian church that it was only right that the laborer receive wages. The one who plants eats of the crops. If he had sown spiritually into their lives then it was only right that he be rewarded with his physical necessities. (1Corinthians

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 4:12 (ESV)

¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Commented [Paul2]: Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Commented [Paul3]: Romans 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Commented [Paul4]: Romans 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Commented [Paul5]: 2 Corinthians 8:3-5 (ESV)

³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints' and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

9:11-12) The workman is worthy of his wages. In other words, he earns his wages because of the labor he exerts. (Luke 10:7)

That is not to excuse those who would be rich from their particular ministry. Paul was speaking of his necessities, food, clothing, and shelter. He even refused to receive support from the Corinthian church because he knew some would be offended by it. (1Corinthians 9:12) The advancement of the Gospel was far more important to Paul than his physical comfort or financial support. He was daily dying to self to fulfill his calling. (1Corinthians 15:31) Those who use ministry simply to enrich themselves will answer to God. (2Peter 2:3)

Paul used a word in this verse that he just used in the last verse, partnership. He considered their financial gift a partnership with him. It comes from that word we are familiar with, *koinonea*. They fellowship with him through their giving. Missionaries often use the term when raising support. They ask if you will partner with them. **It is very Scriptural to express financial support in those terms.**

Last week I shared with you the various ministries we partner with. Don't downplay the importance of being a financial partner. We make works like Young Life and Sonshine Rescue Mission possible. The souls they win to Christ, the lives they see transformed are a part of your giving ministry. We team up with them and make it possible. Long ago I thought it was a compromise to tell people that not everyone was called to be a missionary, but that they could participate in the Great Commission by giving. That we actually do partner with the evangelist or missionary is evident by the wording in this verse.

That does not mean that we don't need to share Christ with those God places in our life. Our joy and peace should be so evident that people ask why we are different. We are to always be prepared to tell them of the hope within us. (1Peter 3:15) We should actively watch and pray for opportunities to share.

You have faithfully partnered with me in giving and receiving just as they did with the Apostle Paul. In providing my necessities you enable me to study and pray about what to share each week. You are a partner in the ministry of my books and web site that reach out to thousands every month. We will share our heavenly reward because of our partnership in the Gospel. (Matthew 10:41-42) Thank you! How generous and faithful you have been. Some have worried about a downturn in the finances of the church because of the economic situation, but you have been so faithful that we have never lacked!

Commented [Paul6]: 1 Corinthians 9:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

¹² If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Commented [Paul7]: Luke 10:7 (ESV)

⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Commented [Paul8]: 1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

¹² If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Commented [Paul9]: 1 Corinthians 15:31 (ESV)

³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!

Commented [Paul10]: 2 Peter 2:3 (ESV)

³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Commented [Paul11]: 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Commented [Paul12]: Matthew 10:41-42 (ESV)

⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.

⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Just last week the board decided to do some significant repairs to the parking and painting. The office needed to update the computer. It amounted to a significant sum, and before we could spend it, more than that amount was donated. Praise God! Thank you for your willingness to partner with Wayside Bible Chapel in its many ministries. Our goal is to partner with others where the finances will be used most efficiently in advancing the Gospel both here and around the world.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Paul wanted to make sure that they understand that it isn't the money that thrills his heart. Their partnership with him makes it possible for him to reach more and increases their heavenly reward. God is just. He keeps track of every act and gift and will reward what is done at the leading of the Spirit. (Matthew 6:19-20) We don't give to get a reward, but God promises He will reward our Spirit directed giving. It may not be in this life, though I've found it true that you can't out give God. The reward is even better if it is in eternity. The interest accrued is much better there. We give because we love Him and in obedience to the gentle prompting of His Spirit. It is a joy to give, and really, we are just giving back, for everything comes from Him. (1Corinthians 4:7) Still, God graciously promises to credit our heavenly account. He's the best! (Luke 6:38)

In a practical sense, Paul needed financial support, but he sought fruit that increases to their credit. Every mentor understands this priority. We are thrilled when we see spiritual growth in those with whom we've been sharing. It is incomparably more encouraging than any gift we might receive from them for the investment of our time.

¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. I can say the same. Wasn't it great to hear the Holcombs say they were fully funded and didn't want an offering to go to them but the children's mission in Mexicalli? That just thrilled my heart!

Epaphrus had brought a financial sum. There were some wealthy people in the church, like the merchant Lydia and the centurion that kept the prison. It was probably a sizable gift. Some had probably sacrificed to give even to the point of lacking their own necessities. Paul called it a fragrant offering. The Jews had certain offerings prescribed in the Old Testament as the burnt offering or fragrant offerings. Paul saw these financial gifts in a similar way, sacrificial giving that was not only acceptable, but pleasing to God.

Have you sensed God's pleasure in something you did, or in giving? (Romans 12:1) I sense it most when I find myself doing something I would rather not do, but deny myself and do it because I know God wants me to. Oh what a feeling! I think that

Commented [Paul13]: Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,
²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Commented [Paul14]: 1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Commented [Paul15]: Luke 6:38 (ESV)

³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

Commented [Paul16]: Romans 12:1 (ESV)

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

feeling is part of the reward. (Hebrews 13:16) The work that we do because of guilt or arm twisting doesn't give us that same sense of God's pleasure. It just wears us out. But when we sense God's pleasure we are energized!

Commented [Paul17]: Hebrews 13:16 (ESV)

¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Now we come to one of those famous Philippian verses that so many have committed to memory but is so often used in a way that is separated from the context of the passage. ¹⁹*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* Besides a doxology and greeting, this is Paul's closing thought. When the church denies self to give sacrificially to partner in advancing the Kingdom of God in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, God will supply our every need.

Just like verse 13 is misused to say I can do anything I set my mind to, so this verse is used to say Christians will never suffer lack. Paul tells us several times in his letters that he went hungry. (1Corinthians 4:11) It does not change the fact that the Lord is our Shepherd. (Psalm 23:1), or that He is able to provide our needs. (2Corinthians 9:8) Paul did not starve.

Commented [Paul18]: 1 Corinthians 4:11 (NIV)

¹¹To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.

Commented [Paul19]: Psalm 23:1 (ESV)

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Commented [Paul20]: 2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

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

Commented [Paul21]: James 4:3 (ESV)

³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

There is a big difference between need and want. God doesn't promise to give us what we want. (James 4:3) That would often be detrimental to our eternal good. **If we need a time of hunger, he'll provide it.** If we need a time of rest, He can provide that as well. This is the life of complete trust in God. We should certainly do all that we can to live within our means and work so that we have something to share with those in need, and to give to the work of the Lord. (Ephesians 4:28) But we should not trust in those riches. (1Timothy 6:17) And when the work is not available, nothing changes, for we are still trusting in God who is our provider, our Jehovah Jireh.

Commented [Paul22]: Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Commented [Paul23]: 1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)

¹⁷As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

I can tell you story after story of miraculous provision in my own life and the lives of friends. Mac recently told me about running out of money and food on the mission field and being invited the next day to a wedding which is an all day feast in Botswana. When we give sacrificially to the work of the Lord, Paul declares that all our need will be met in Christ Jesus. Jesus told us that the world worries about food and clothes, but we are to remember that He clothes the flowers of the field and feeds the birds of the air. (Matthew 6:30-33) He promised that if you seek the Kingdom of God first, then those necessities will be given to you.

Commented [Paul24]: Matthew 6:30-33 (ESV)

³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

One of the missionaries we sponsor is brother Binu in India. We give him about \$90 a month for his family. I think we should raise it quite a bit next year. I can tell you that when I see him, he is always filled with joy. How is that possible? He has all he needs in Christ Jesus!

There is another way to read this verse that we tend to overlook. All our need is met in Jesus. Need is singular. **Our one need is Jesus.** In Him is all. He is the great necessity of life. He is our provider. He is what our spirit, soul, and body needs. He should be everything to us. Giving as He leads should be a wonderful privilege. And we do not worry about whether we have enough or not, because if He leads us to give then He knows what is coming. It's by faith because we can't see it yet, but we know He does.

I know many of you are very concerned about the economic future of our nation. We certainly are in a mess because we have ignored some very basic Biblical principles. But you have no need to worry about tomorrow. If you are putting the Kingdom of God first in your life, if you are generous in giving as God leads, then all your need will be met in Jesus. You may have nothing, but all your need will be met. You may have the opportunity to fast, but all your need will be met in Jesus. Be at peace in Him.

Sometimes I'm asked why I don't preach on tithing. When we get to a passage, I preach on that passage. 10% is a great guideline, but don't let it keep you from being led by the Spirit to joyfully partner with ministries and receive fruit credited to your account. Give as the Lord leads.

Here is Paul's simple benediction to close this letter. *²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.* This is what this world and our life is all about, the glory of our God and Father. Every blessing we receive is because of His glory. The whole earth is filled with His glory. Eternity is filled with His glory!

Then Paul adds a final greeting from the family of God in Rome to the brother and sisters in Philippi. *²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.* As Paul had said in the beginning of the letter, he did not want them to feel bad about his imprisonment, for the Word was going out to the Palace Guard. (1:13) Caesar's household had believers in Jesus. We are one huge family that now covers the planet. We love one another because we are the family of God that loves our Savior, Jesus.

And one more line of benediction, *²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.* If there is grace in your spirit, then there can be grace in your soul and body. The Christian that walks in the spirit is directed (controlled) by the Spirit of God within their spirit. (Romans 8:14) That is our source of direction and discernment. It is where our joy and peace reside, and from there it overflows into the rest of our being.

What an awesome letter! Let me conclude as Paul did. Because of your partnership with God's ministers, my God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory in

Commented [Paul25]: Philippians 1:13 (ESV)
¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

Commented [Paul26]: Romans 8:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen!

Questions

- 1 What's our secret?
- 2 How was Paul supported?
- 3 What is implied by "partnership"?
- 4 What does it mean in heaven?
- 5 Have you sensed God's pleasure?
- 6 What is the context for verse 19?
- 7 What does verse 19 mean?
- 8 Might a time of hunger be a need?
- 9 Why should we be at peace if we are in Jesus?
- 10 What is all eternity about?