

Catford Lectures 2010-2011

Part 9

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[00:00:00] Guten Abend.

Could we open our meeting tonight with hymn number 20.

Blessed Lord, our hallelujah is now to Thee we raise, never could we fully utter all Thy worth and praise.

Praise the Lamb, yes, Thou art worthy who didst shed Thy blood to redeem Thy saints and make us kings and priests to God.

Hymn number 20.

Blessed Lord, our hallelujah is now to Thee we raise, never could we fully utter all Thy words, and praise, praise the Lamb, yes, Thou art worthy, Thou didst shed Thy blood, [00:01:09] Thou didst give Thy saints and make us kings and priests to God.

Yes, we praise Thee for Thou lovest us, and we hush Thee, Lord, all Thy peace and joy and gladness, which Thou dost afford.

Alleluia, love of Jesus, as our since true love, [00:02:01] Thine we are and are forever, one with Thee above.

Praise the Lord, yes, alleluia, who would hush the song, Thine we're safe from every nation, every tribe and tongue.

Praise the Lamb for He is worthy, sweet eternal strength.

Alleluia, alleluia, praise the Lord, Amen.

[00:03:12] We praise Thy name, Amen. Could we turn to the Epistle to the Philippians and read chapter 4 together.

Philippians chapter 4 from verse 1. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech, Jordias, and beseech, Senteci, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, [00:04:01] with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me do. And the God of peace shall be with you. [00:05:01] But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me has flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strangles me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity, not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. [00:06:05] But I have all and abound, I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Let me just give you an outline of the exercise that is on my heart. First of all, I would like to give a short introduction into the epistle to the Philippians.

And then I would like to speak about three subjects in connection with chapter four. First, about spiritual stability. [00:07:03] Secondly, about contentment.

And thirdly, about Christian giving. These are all basic, practical subjects which we all need to know what the Lord, what scripture says about them. The epistle to the Philippians is in some way a very special epistle because the relationship of the Apostle Paul to the believers in this city was very special. They belonged to the two assemblies of the Philippians. They belonged to the two assemblies of which he could speak that they were his joy and his crown, the Philippians and the Thessalonians. But there was a difference between them. The Thessalonians were, so to say, new converts that just found the Lord. They were at the beginning of their way. The Philippians, when he wrote to them, they had already some years of Christian faith. [00:08:04] Behind them. And this helps us to understand that a good Christian conduct, a spiritual way of life, is possible independent of the fact if we are young in the faith or if we are longer on our way.

We normally try to excuse ourselves with pointing to the other situation.

When we are young in the faith, we may say, well, if I'm as old and as mature and as experienced as brother so-and-so or sister so-and-so, then I would be probably as faithful as they are. Then the Apostle Paul would say, look at the Thessalonians. They were just young converts and they were faithful and they were a joy and a crown to me. The other way around, we could say, well, when I was young, when I was just got saved, I was so energetic in my faith and I was faithful following the Lord. [00:09:01] But now, after all these years and all the failure and disappointments along the way, then Paul would say, look at the Philippians. They are still there on this way of faithfulness, following the Lord, his joy and his crown. Why did he write this epistle? I think there was two reasons, at least we could mention, why Paul wrote this epistle to the Philippians. One was a very practical one that we have read about it in chapter 4. He wanted to thank the Philippians for some practical gift they had sent to him in Rome in prison. But there was also another thing. He saw the Philippians who were so dear to his heart. He saw that they were faithful. He saw they were fighting for the truth and for the gospel. But he had the impression, and some information as well, that there was a lack of unity among them. [00:10:02] A lack of unity not on principle doctrine or assembly practice or something like that, but a lack of unity in working together harmoniously, unitedly for the Lord. And you will find, if you read this epistle carefully, in every chapter Paul mentions this subject of the lack of unity, encourages them to be of the same mind and other things. What is the answer to all our problems in our practical Christian life?

The answer is Christ. And so the Apostle Paul puts before the Philippians Christ in every chapter of this epistle in a different way. In chapter 1, he speaks about Christ as the main thing in his life.

Paul could say in verse 21 of chapter 1, For me to live is Christ.

[00:11:02] Mr. Darby once said that the epistle to the Philippians is the epistle of Christian experience. But we must understand what he means by that. It may not necessarily be your experience or mine. My experience probably may be that I fail and I am restored, that I fall and get up again. But this is not the normal Christian experience. Paul is giving us in this epistle some of these experiences. And one is this one. For me, for to me to live is Christ.

He doesn't say that Christ is our life, which is true of every believer. But he says for me to live is Christ, not for us. It is not something that is true of every believer. But it is something where we must challenge our hearts if we really could say this, that in our life, everything centers around Christ.

Paul could say that faithfully for me to live is Christ. [00:12:04] In chapter 2, and we have been dealing with chapter 2 a little bit today when we spoke about the valley gate. In chapter 2, Christ is our example.

In verse 5, he says, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. And that is Christ as man here on earth. How he walked here on earth, he is our example. Not in what he did, but in the way he did it. As his mind, as one of the hymn writers says, Let the mind of Christ my savior live in me from day to day. In chapter 3, when we come to chapter 3 of Philippians, we find that Christ is our aim.

He is at the end of, in heaven. We are going there, and the apostle Paul could say, I, in verse 14, I press toward the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. [00:13:06] There was this person in glory that drew him there and gave him the energy to press on. And now in chapter 4, we will find that Christ is our strength.

The apostle says in verse 13, I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me.

He is the strength for all the different circumstances we are in. We will deal with that a bit later. He starts this chapter in saying, Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for. The apostle in prison wrote to his Philippians, and he does not only tell them that they were his beloved Philippians, but also he longed for them. He wanted to see them. He couldn't because he was in prison, but his heart yearned for them. [00:14:01] He wanted to see them. And we may ask ourselves the question, how is it with us and the brothers and sisters we are with together in our local place? When we are separated for some reason, because we are on a journey, because business is preventing us or illness, do we long to see them again?

Do we say, well, I'm missing something because the brothers and sisters are not with me. I cannot have fellowship with them and exchange my ideas. Paul was longing for these brothers. And he says again here, My joy and crown.

That they were his joy and crown, in one sense, is something of a future reward.

That's what he says to the Thessalonians. I mentioned already he uses the same terms in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse, yeah, [00:15:04] 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 19.

For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing are not even yet in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

So that his future at his coming, they will be his joy, his crown, his reward to these faithful believers in Thessalonica. But when he calls them his joy, this also has a present application for the apostle.

For example, the apostle John says in his third letter, third John, in verse, third epistle of John, verse four, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. For him as a spiritual father, [00:16:01] to realize that his spiritual children walk in the truth, he said, it's a joy for me. And so it was a joy for the apostle to see the Philippians or the Thessalonians going on in faithfulness to the Lord. And then he says to them, If you study the epistles of the New Testament, you will find out that nearly all the writers, Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude, that all the writers of the epistles tell the brethren in one sense or another to stand fast, to be stable in their spiritual life, not being tossed to and fro from all kinds of influences around them, but to stand fast. And so that was the thing I wanted to speak about, first of all, a little bit on spiritual stability. What are the things that help us to stand fast?

[00:17:02] And have a condition of spiritual stability? And from the following verses, I would like to mention seven things that Paul speaks about. I'm not going to make too much about the number because it's not in the Bible. It's the thing I found out. And if you take other epistles, we will find more than seven. So it's not so important that it has seven, but just points to keep in mind that help us to be in a state of spiritual stability personally in our life and as a local assembly. And the first thing he mentions is the harmony or unity among the brothers and sisters at the local place. We already said there was this lack of unity which worried him a bit. And he had written about it in all these letters. But now at the last chapter, again, he takes it up and he even mentions names of two sisters who probably were a prominent case [00:18:05] in this lack of unity and harmony among them. I think this second verse in chapter four is quite a remarkable verse.

We must remember how these early Christians got to know this letter. We today, we take our Bibles,

open Philippians and read a few verses or maybe we read a chapter and then we close it again and go on reading it tomorrow, the next chapter. But these Philippians, they were sitting in the assembly and somebody, when they received this epistle of Paul, somebody was reading that epistle as a whole to the congregation. By the way, it would be a good thing for you, young people, if you study God's word and you begin with a new subject, just to read the book as a whole. Just read it through and then get back and study all the details. [00:19:01] But to get an impression of these books, when I was at university, I had to travel a lot by train and that's when I started to read books of the Bible just to, and I got impressions you never get if you just read a chapter or two. And so this was read and Paul was writing about all the lovely things he had experienced among the Philippians and what they had done. He was writing about Christ, all these things, and they all got encouraged, I'm sure, and suddenly, bang, he mentions two names and exhorts them.

He says, I beseech you, Odias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

There were these two sisters who were not of the same mind in the Lord and Paul speaks to them and he speaks to them both individually. He does not say, well, the one sister here is wrong [00:20:03] and the other is right. And he does not speak to them collectively. There are two sisters I would like to exhort, but he approaches one and the other individually, which in most situations like that, the pastor will do.

Speaking to both individually and approaching both in this matter. And he said, they are not of the same mind in the Lord. And this was such an important subject for him because spiritual stability will be gone in a local meeting if that is not there, this unity. And probably Paul, he knew the Philippians, and probably Paul knew these two sisters quite well. And he got the impression, the situation is so complicated, I don't think that these two sisters [00:21:01] will ever come together on their own. And therefore, he publicly asks somebody else to help them.

He says, I entreat thee also to your fellow, help those women, which labored with me in the gospel. He entreats a brother to your fellow. He doesn't mention a name. We don't know 100% who it was, but I think it was Epaphroditus. Obviously, it was somebody who knew that he was meant because there is no name mentioned. And there is somebody whom he approaches, probably this man who brought the letter had told Paul about the situation. And now he says, if you go back and bring this letter to the Philippians, and then they will read that, and you need to help them. I entreat you to your fellow, help those women, which labored with me in the gospel. Paul did not forget what these two sisters had done for the Lord's work. [00:22:05] It's very easy for us, when a problem comes up that has to be addressed in a local meeting, that we forget what the brothers or sisters have done for the Lord. And we're so occupied with the problem that we could no longer see what they had done. And Paul says, the Lord has not forgotten what they have done, and I have not forgotten it. They have worked or labored with me in the gospel. And he says, that this your fellow should help them or assist them who have contended along with me in the glad tidings. And this word assist them is the same Greek word that is used for the Holy Spirit, the parakletos. Of course, it's a verb here, but it means to come to the side of somebody, stand next to him and help him in this problem because it was so important. He wanted him to help them. [00:23:01] Those sisters that had worked together with Paul, not only with Paul, but also with others whose names are in the book of life. They were all believers. Their name was in the book of life. And so they couldn't be careless about this matter.

They should go into it and try to find a way to help them so that spiritual stability could come back to that local place and to these two sisters and maybe others. The next point is in verse four, the joy of

the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. Joy is also one of the key words in Philippians. Paul writes about joy in Philippians more than once. And there is a development in this. First, he speaks about in the first two chapters, he speaks about joy when there was a reason for that joy among the saints. [00:24:03] He said, I'm praying for your Philippians with joy because they were in such a good state. And he mentions this fellow worker whom he sends back and says they should receive such a man, such a laborer with joy because he was such a faithful worker. In that case, there was a reason for that joy. And of course, the Lord sends us situations or persons into our life that may be a joy for us as the Philippians were for Paul. But in chapter three, verse one, he says, finally, my brethren rejoice in the Lord. This is a joy that does not depend on the circumstances, on people that may be a reason for that joy.

If we could only have joy because the situation is joyful or people are encouraging us, that's not very special. Even an unbeliever can rejoice if the situation is very positive [00:25:02] and things are encouraging him. But how is it when this situation changes and when the situation is a problem?

Paul said, rejoice in the Lord. He was not writing this from a holiday resort, but from a prison. Rejoice in the Lord always. And prisons in those days were not very joyful places. But he said, my joy has its source in the Lord.

And here in chapter 40 says, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice always, not only in some situations. He is in principle saying, let the enemy not rob you your joy in the Lord. That's what he wants to do, of course. And we know from the book we had before us this afternoon, from Nehemiah, we know that the joy in the Lord is our strength. And if he can take that away out of our lives, we will get unstable and we will not go on for the Lord in the way we should. [00:26:03] Of course, when there is sin in our life as believers, the joy cannot be there. That's what David says in the Psalms, that he asked the Lord to restore to him the joy of salvation. He had not lost his salvation through his sin, but the joy of it.

And so things have to be cleared and then the joy may come back.

But he says, let no one rob you of this joy in the Lord in every circumstances and always, because it has its origin in the Lord and what he has given us, which nobody can rob us and it's independent from circumstances. And the next point he mentions is in verse five, let your moderation be known unto all men.

The Lord is at hand. Or in the new translation, let your gentleness be known to all men. And there's a note in the margin, [00:27:04] not insisting on your rights. This humility is also necessary as a matter you need for spiritual stability.

In the world, people would say, if you insist on your rights and nobody's going to rob you your rights, then you are strong. If you do not do that, it might be considered as a sign of weakness, but that is not so in the spiritual realm. It is an attitude, a sign of strength that you can be gentle to other people, not insisting on your rights, but just giving them a gentle or a moderate response.

And he said, let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. When he comes, he will judge everything correctly. You don't have to fight for your own rights, but be gentle to other

people.

[00:28:01] And that is a sign of your stability. If we try to fight for our own rights, this is a sign of weakness for a believer. At the same thing, we find, and that is the next point then, faith, a faith that trusts in God and leaves everything to him. Verse 6, be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

There is somebody who is not overwhelmed by all the problems he has, by all the questions there are, but he leaves things to the Lord and says he is going to take care of it. Everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God. Our gentleness, our moderation should be made known unto all men, but our requests should be made known unto God, [00:29:05] not the other way around. Maybe we tell people all the problems we have and make them known to everybody. That's not what he wants us to do, but make them known unto God. In everything, in prayer, supplication, yes, it may be an earnest kind of prayer, not just mention it once. We may be praying on a special thing for more than one or two days, supplication.

We may let our requests be made known unto God. And the next point is in the same verse with thanksgiving. Gratitude, thanksgiving is also a sign of spiritual stability, that we are thankful for what the Lord has given us. Even if there are things that burden us, if there are things that do not go the way we want them to go, but if we think about it, what we can thank the Lord for, we will realize how many things there are [00:30:02] to thank the Lord for. And it was so typical of the apostle Paul, except in his epistle to the Galatians, in all the other epistles, when he writes to an assembly, he thanked God for what he could thank him for in that particular meeting before addressing things that were some problem in that particular meeting.

Thanksgiving should be a part of our prayers when we let our requests be made known unto God to thank him. I think we all know situations where we are so burdened by our sorrows that we just rush into prayer and tell everything to God. We may do that, but we forget to thank him for things we could thank him for, in the first place, for what he has done on the cross of Calvary, that he saved us, and that he has taken our place in the judgment of God, and all the blessings we have through that. [00:31:03] This is different here, this prayer, from what we find, I think, in John 14. In John 14, John 14, verse 13, the Lord said, And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

There is a kind of prayer the Lord speaks about, a prayer in his name, where we would, so to say, pray representatively for him. He could ask the same thing. We are in accordance with his will and ideas. And he says, Well, then you get the promise that your prayer will be heard. Not all our prayers, strictly speaking, are prayers in the Lord's name, just because we mention this. [00:32:01] But nevertheless, this passage in Philippians makes it quite clear we can put everything before him. And every request we have, we bring to our God and Father with thanksgiving. But the promise then is not that he will do it and that he will do what we ask him for. But the promise is, And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. The peace of God will fill our hearts, even if he does not ask our prayers in the way we might have expected him to do. There is this inner peace we have that he knows about it. We've told him he knows about it. He's going to take care of it. And we leave it with him. And he can give us this peace of God into our hearts. I'm thinking about one or two examples in the Bible. We have this well-known situation in 1 Samuel, [00:33:03] where you get 1 Samuel 1, where you have Samuel's mother, Hannah, going into the presence of the Lord to pray before him.

And it says about her in 1 Samuel 1, verse 10, And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And in verse 15, she says to Eli, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. That's what Philippians 4 is. She has poured out her soul before the Lord. And then it says in verse 18, in the middle, So the woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. Her personal situation hadn't changed a bit at that moment. But she had poured her heart out to the Lord. [00:34:02] And when she went, there was this peace of God in her heart. Something had changed in her heart, even if the situation did not change. And I'm thinking about David as he says in Psalm 3. We find a similar thing. Psalm 3, verse 4.

Psalm 3, verse 4. It was David when he fled from Absalom his son. And he says in verse 4, I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept.

He was in a really difficult situation. His son was persecuting him. And he says, I cried unto the Lord. I told everything to him, and then he laid down and slept. Obviously, there was this peace of God in his heart that he could sleep. We all know probably about sleepless nights when we toss about in our beds and couldn't sleep and things go through our heads [00:35:02] and we worry about things. But here was a man in a very difficult situation. He told it to the Lord and he laid down and slept.

Maybe we could also mention Mary of Bethany.

The two sisters went to the Lord and told him that their brother, the one whom the Lord loved, was ill. And in the rest of the story, we find that Mary sat at home.

She didn't run to meet the Lord like Martha did. She obviously was in a state of peace just to wait what was going to happen. She stayed at her place and waited for the Lord to happen. I think we all realize how often we are far away from such a situation, but that is what will help us to be spiritually stable if we put things to the Lord with thanksgiving, leave it to him and the peace of God may fill our hearts. [00:36:01] But there's another thing then. The next one in verse eight, we find another thing. We may call it, which is necessary for spiritual stability, we may call it godly thinking. Our thought life influences us more than we may think. And Paul says, finally, brethren, what are you thinking about? What is occupying your thoughts? And he says, this should be on a positive line.

He said, whatsoever things are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and good report and a virtue and praise, think on these things. That are the things you should be occupied with. There's so much around us, which is not true.

Which is a lie or which is error. But he says, be occupied with the two things. There is no, it doesn't help you to be spiritually stable [00:37:03] if you go on and study all the errors and false teachings that are around in the world. But he says, be occupied with things that are true and the things that are honest and just.

All these things, which are the opposite just of what we find in the world around us, that should occupy our thoughts. Whatsoever things are pure. We are living in an immoral world and everything around us is characterized by impurity. And it's so easy that these things occupy us to be occupied with them. He said, no, think about those things which are pure. I think brothers who had the responsibility to be occupied with things in an assembly or in believer's life that had to do dealing [00:38:02] with matters of immoral behavior know what a burden that is. And that it is not something you would like to do. But as far as we find, he said, be occupied with the things that are pure and with

the things that are lovely. And if there is a virtue and praise, think on these things. Generally speaking, we may be occupied with things that are strengthening us and not with all the things that we find around in the world around us. This will influence our stability if we are really occupied with these things. And the last point is, in verse nine, that then we have to be obedient. That then we have to do what we find out when we are occupied with the word of God. Paul says, those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do.

[00:39:04] Here we find in this short description of Paul, we find that Paul was teaching in doctrine and practice and he was an example in word and deed for the believers. He said, there are things you have learned. He says to Timothy, what you have learned and are fully convinced of. And I think most of us have learned a lot of biblical truth.

The question now is, are we living according to that? He says, do these things. You have learned and received. Probably he is now thinking especially on those revelations he had given on to them, to the Galatians. He says, if anybody comes and brings you another gospel than that which you have received from me, he is accursed. On in other scriptures, he speaks about things the believers had received from him. He had them from the Lord had given them [00:40:02] over to the saints and heard.

Maybe he thinks about what he told them and they had heard it or it may also mean what they heard about Paul, about his way of life. And he said, you have seen it in me. It's not only a secondhand report you heard. You have also seen it in me. I've left these things in your midst and now you shall do these things.

This is a very challenging word for all of us who minister the word that the Lord expects us to be examples to those we teach. It's not enough simply to teach the truth, but Paul could say, I have shown you. The believers should be able to see in our lives what we teach them, first in our own family, in our local assembly and further on how the Lord leads. But it is so important.

[00:41:02] We all know that we are all failing in this and that we are weak, but this is the challenge we have and we couldn't escape it that God says, what you teach, you should also do. Paul could say to Timothy, you know my doctrine, my behavior.

And this was both the same with him. There was no contradiction between his doctrine and his behavior. He was not saying one thing and doing another. But here he says, what you've seen in me, what you've learned from me, this do. And the God of peace shall be with you. Before he said in verse seven, the peace of God shall fill your hearts. But when you now in practical obedience to the word of God, you fulfill the biblical principles you've learned, then the God of peace shall be with you. And that is so to round up this subject of spiritual stability. If the God of peace is at your site, then you are really stable. [00:42:01] Then you are not shaken by all kinds of things because you have done things that helped you to be, to stand fast in the Lord. From verse 10, Paul now speaks on a subject which has to do with the matter of contentment, of being content in the situations we are in. We find verses on that in other scriptures. For example, Paul writes to Timothy in first Timothy six, verse six, but godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be there with content.

And the writer of Hebrews says something similar in Hebrews 13, in verse five, [00:43:07] let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have.

For he has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

There's of course subject which is quite problematic to speak about in our Western societies where everything around us tries to convince us that we need a lot of other things that we do not have. That's how the marketing works. We should buy things and so they have to tell us we need all these things. Paul said, I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that now at the last your care for me has flourished again when you were also careful but he lacked opportunity. [00:44:04] If we find out what Paul is saying in these verses about this, then in this verse he says, I am trusting in God for my provision.

And now he is using you Philippians and I rejoice on that. They hadn't sent him something for a long time. Some say it was 10 years but it was quite a long time they hadn't sent something to him and now they did and he rejoiced. But Paul said, I'm not looking on the person to do that. I wait for the Lord. He is taking care of my provision and he may use different situations and people to do that.

And so I am rejoicing on that.

And in verse 11 onwards, he says that he was, the apostle was content with less.

He says, not that I speak in respect of want for I have learned in whatsoever state I am [00:45:01] therewith to be content.

Paul was independent of the circumstances. He could say, I have learned. Well, even Paul didn't have this from his birth. He says, I have had to learn that through experience. It's not something we could talk about theoretically but he had learned it in his life. And he said, I have learned in whatever state I am therewith be to be content.

Probably we all are still in the process of learning that. But Paul could say, I've learned that. I'm independent of circumstances. They may be positive or they may be negative.

I may have at some time I have more or I have less. I know both how to be abased and I know how to be abound.

Everywhere and in all things, I am instructed [00:46:02] both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Well, I would say most of us were not in a situation where we really had to suffer hunger.

There was something in the fridge we could go to and eat something.

I need something. But Paul, it was different. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4, something about his life. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 11.

Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. That was the situation in Paul's life, in some of his time of his life.

He really knew what that meant. And so I know how to be abased. [00:47:02] I know how to have enough to be full. I often wonder if we could have asked Paul, when was that in your life?

When you had enough and more than enough and when you were full. In the light of 1 Corinthians 4, I could hear Paul say, well, when I had three meals a day and a roof over my head, a place to stay and to sleep, I was full, I had enough.

And very often I had less than that when going on his work.

Well, probably most of us are not in such a situation than he was in, but nevertheless, it challenges us to ask ourselves, are we content with what we have? Do we really need all these new mobile phones every other month? Because they have developed so quickly or whatever it may be.

[00:48:02] What is your problem? This may be different. You know, and I know what is the thing that we find so interesting. We all need these things and our children have to learn these things to be content with what they have. And we have to learn it because it is some Christian virtue which should be something we know about. Paul says, I know about these things. I've learned this. And he also knew the divine source of his power for that.

He says in verse 13, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Very often we take this verse out of context so that it means, oh, well, we can do everything because Christ gives us the strength for that. But in the context, Paul is speaking about his being content, living through circumstances when he had enough and when he did not have enough. And he says, I can do all this, not because I'm a superman or something, but because there is a divine source of strength [00:49:03] which is outside of me. I only can do that through Christ which strengthened me.

He gives me the power for that, to go through different circumstances and trust on the Lord.

We cannot, well, this is something we have to learn in our personal lives. We cannot copy that. We cannot say, well, I have read stories about people who were living in such a situation, and I'm going to do the same thing now. This will not work. There was a brother in Germany in the last century. He lost his job because he had left the church to gather to the Lord's name, and it was very difficult in his family.

And they were sitting at a table where the children had nothing to eat. And then he thanked God for the food that he had provided for them. And after he had finished that prayer, it was a knock at the door, [00:50:01] and somebody came and brought them something to eat. But if I would do that, nobody would knock at the door. If I would just say, well, I'm doing it like that. I'm not going to buy anything anymore. I just pray and sang, and then somebody's coming, and nobody will be coming. Because it's not a matter of faith in your life.

You're just trying to copy other people. But we can learn from them and through our own life to be content in a situation in which we are, however that may be. And then when going on to write to them, in verse 14, he gives us another very important point. Notwithstanding, he's well done that he communicated with my affliction. He says, I am thinking of you, and it is something that is for your benefit.

Paul was taking care of others.

When we are only occupied with our own situation, how we are going on, we will never be content. [00:51:03] But if we also look at others, if we have an interest in other souls and other people, thinking

about them, then the Lord can help us to be content in the situation we are in. And he says to the Philippians, notwithstanding he have well done that he did communicate with my affliction or that he took part in my affliction. You have well done. The word here translates one of the two Greek words for good.

And it is the one that speaks about something that is good as a virtue in the eyes of God, not so much something that is beneficial for others. It was beneficial for Paul, of course. But that's not the thing he's thinking about. But he's thinking about that what they did was good in the eyes of God, not only good for him. Of course it was. And he thanked them for that. But it was really something where he could say, you've well done. Now, ye Philippians.

[00:52:01] As far as I found out, if I haven't overseen something, three times Paul in his letters starts to speak to those he writes to, mentioning them by this collective name. Here, he says, now, ye Philippians. And here it is a sign of his appreciation for them for what they had done. He does the same thing, for example, in 2 Corinthians 6, in verse 11.

Oh, ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you. Our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straightened in us, but ye are straightened in your own bowels. There it is a kind of appeal to them.

Because there were some in Corinth who were saying, well, Paul is not really an open heart for us. And so, and he said, oh, ye Corinthians, if you really knew my heart is open to you, it's on your side. And then the third time is in Galatians, [00:53:03] where it is a sign of all his sorrow for them. And he also edits an adjective. Oh, foolish Galatians, he says, who has bewitched you. So if he expresses them, he expresses their name once again and says, oh, ye Philippians, you know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. He said, you Philippians, you were the ones that have supported me in the beginning of the gospel. Even if now there was a long time where they had no opportunity, he said, you were the ones that did. So he says about it, speaks about it in 2 Corinthians 8, when he writes to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 8, verse two, he speaks about the churches in Macedonia. Philippians were among them. [00:54:02] How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

He says, they were even poor, these assemblies.

They were not the rich assemblies, but out of their poverty, they had given him.

And we find similar things that he says about this assemblies. He even speaks about that he robbed them because he did not take anything from the Corinthians for obvious reasons. And he took it from them. And he called it, he robbed them. But he says, oh, you have been thinking about me. And not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. The relationship of Paul to the Philippians was really a very good one. So that he could write in such a way to them. [00:55:01] Writing about financial matters is always delicate. But Paul could write to them knowing they would not misunderstand him. Which so easily could be the case. He said, I'm not writing that because I want you to give me something more. But he says, I am doing that.

I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

That is a principle in scripture that we always find that if somebody is giving something for the Lord, it

will always have a return on the spiritual realm. There are verses, you may all know them from Proverbs, that speak about this principle in Proverbs 11, 24.

There is that scattereth and yet increase. And there is that withholdeth more than is made, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat, [00:56:02] and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. It's always a mutual thing that Paul is talking about here. And so we may now, when we have these verses before us, shortly say, what do these verses tell us? What principles are about Christian giving? The first is what we had in verse 10, that it comes from the heart. It's not some mechanical thing they did. But as Paul said, they flourished again.

Their hearts were burning for Paul. He said, well, he is there in prison and he has needs and we want to help him because we love him and we have him on our hearts. But it also is, as he says in verse 10, according to opportunity, as they had opportunity. There was a time when they had no opportunity. As God gives the opportunity. It is not very intelligent and useful [00:57:01] if you or I were sitting in our comfortable chair and thinking about what we could do for the Lord's service if we were a millionaire. But he wants us to use the opportunities we have.

And when this woman, the widow, put the two mites in the treasury, the Lord got really excited about that. And he said, she has done in more than all the others. And before that, he said that the rich Pharisees and scribes and all the rich one put much, a lot of money in it. And now the Lord says, she has done in more than all the others. Strange mathematics. But he saw what the problem was.

The others had done from all their abundance enough. But she had given all she had.

When I was talking to a group of children in Sunday school about this story, they were quite clever to realize what the problem was. [00:58:04] I showed them one coin, which was two pence, a two pence coin. I said, yeah, that's two pence. And then I showed them two one pence coins. And I said, what's that? And they said, well, two pence. Yeah, what's the difference? Well, one said, if I had two coins, I could keep one for myself and could put one into the treasury. If I had only one and I had to put it in. Yeah, certainly. And the scripture definitely says that this widow had two pieces, two coins. And she put both of them in. So she gave everything she had. And the Bible doesn't tell us anything more.

But I'm sure that this widow is not starved to death afterwards. The Lord will have cared for her in a special way. So that is one thing that we are giving according to the opportunity we have. And in verse 14, we have seen that we are giving [00:59:05] in general for the Lord's work in general.

Paul says, taking part in my affliction.

They were having fellowship. They were having communion with the Lord's work somewhere else in supporting that kind of work that was done through the apostle Paul.

Then we find in verse 16 that it was also a consistent way of giving because Paul says, well, you have sent to me in Thessalonica once and again unto my necessity.

They had this on their heart and there was a kind of consistency. It is quite easy when we read a glossy magazine about something that's going on in the Lord's work and lovely pictures and then we say, well, yeah, we have to support that. But let me forget about it as soon as we finish this article because other things come in. But the Philippians had Paul in his heart [01:00:02] and there was a kind

of consistent supporting of that work he was doing.

And in verse 17, we've seen that it was for a spiritual blessing for the giver. Paul says, there is a fruit to your account. There is something spiritually blessing you receive for that. And so this is something that we should keep in mind. It's not only a material matter. It's there is a spiritual answer for that kind of Christian virtue.

And in verse 18, we also find that they were giving generously because it says, but I have all and abound I'm full having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you. And Paul was not a man who was exaggerating just to make a nice verse. He really felt that what they had given him was a generous gift and he had more than enough and he was really full of what they had given him. [01:01:04] And we also find another point here in the same verse that it is a spiritual sacrifice. He says an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

That's what we find in Hebrews as well, where the sacrifices of praise that go up to God are connected with the sacrifice of giving.

And he says, this is something that is well-pleasing to God. We may not consider it because we may consider it a small matter and probably it is only a small amount that we have at our hand.

But God says, this is a sacrifice.

This is something that is acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

And the last thing in verse 19 is that God will be no man's debtor.

Now, there were the Philippians. [01:02:02] They had given generously to Paul, but they were also poor. They had also their own needs. And then Paul says, but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He will not let you down now because you have given something to him. You will realize that he will supply all your needs. And this again is something of Paul's Christian experience because he says in verse 19, but my God, Paul in some of his epistles gets very personal. He does not say our God, which is of course true. But he says, my God, that's the God I have experienced in my life. That's how I learned him, that he is the one who supplies all our needs. And so he will also supply all your needs and in such a way that is worthy to his name because he does not say, which would be great. [01:03:01] He does not say, my God shall supply all your needs according to your needs, which would be great if he did that. But it says according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

It is worthy of this great God that when he gives something, he does so according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. And so the apostle Paul, when speaking about this, can only close this more or less with doxology.

Now unto God and our father be glory for ever and ever, amen.

We have a great God and we can trust him for all the situations in our lives and he will reward everything that is done for him. And I'm sure when we thought a bit about these three things, about spiritual stability, contentment, and Christian giving, there's a lot of things that the Lord teaches us which we could think about and ask him to show us how our practical life [01:04:03] could be more in

accordance with his will to glorify his name.

Now unto God and our father be glory for ever and ever.

Could we sing in closing hymn 166.

Lord thou has drawn us after thee, now let us run and never tire. Thy presence shall our comfort be, thyself our hope, our soul desire. 166. Lord thou has drawn us after thee, now let us run and never tire. Thy presence shall our comfort be, thyself our hope, our soul desire. 167. [01:05:12] Our present saviour, O our loving, our saviour coming, our dear, our saviour coming, our dear.

All think I love, all stress me, [01:06:01] all thought, all soul, thine kind, all sun, my day, all spring of life, when past with drought, how kind to fear, how brave to stay, how strength of shield, our safer home, our holy forest, the home of God, [01:07:04] our holy forest, the home of God.

Unchanging love, thy gracious love, our ev'ry power, our ceaseless youth, ev'ry spirit, thy heart, good nor old, thy temper, mercy, still pursued, [01:08:06] ever with us may it ever hide, and close us in on ev'ry side, and close us in on ev'ry side.