

Philippians 4.10-23
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4.10-17 Gospel friendship

- What kind of letter is this? A friendship letter!
 - At the conclusion, as in the introduction, we see the very personal nature of the gospel displayed within Paul's relationship with the Philippian church. A very intimate, warm dynamic.
- A redefinition of friendship.
 - What we've seen throughout the letter is a clear articulation of the redefinition of friendship at the time.
 - Jesus' impact redefined friendship in the ancient world. Friendship was no longer about being close enough to someone to make a demand, but loving someone enough to do the opposite, to serve them.
 - That's what the cross shows us. (2.1-11). What does the cross mean? The cross is wonderful symbol of friendship.
 - All relationships then, in light of the cross for a Christian, are no longer defined *by what we can get but what we can give*.
- The gospel makes us generous.
 - Paul is saying thank you here for a financial gift the Philippian church has sent him while he is in prison.
 - This means we move beyond Christian niceness and into practical, sacrificial, servant-oriented living.

- Jesus' demonstrates generosity, he leads by example (Philippians 2.1-11).
- "Jesus didn't tithe his blood." –Tim Keller
- Deep down we have a compulsion to give. We know it's right.
- Our compulsion to help emanates from our image-bearing nature and God's Spirit in us. Jesus, after all, called the Holy Spirit "the Helper" (John 14). God's Helping Spirit lives in us, helping us to help others
- To help, to be generous is to be Godly. That's Jesus, that's the Holy Spirit, that's the Father's heart – to help!
- Everyone needs help.
 - We know we ought to help the weak and needy around us, Jesus clearly teaches that. But everyone needs help, which translates easily for many people to *encouragement*. That's what it did for Paul.
 - The ramifications of our encouragement via help are unbeknownst to us. The potential impact might be staggering.
- A special gift.
 - Paul notes the Philippian's special gift of helping. They stand out to him as friends who have a knack for generosity. "No other church did what you did." (4.15-16)
 - LWC has a gift of generosity which is also a responsibility and a blessing to our community.
 - We find joy on the other side of generosity and service.

- Real friendship is built on generosity. Do we want to have good friendships? Let's continue to be generous people.

4.11-13 – The secret to a contented life

- Christ, the bread and strength of life.
 - Though Paul is ever thankful for and encouraged by the support of his friends he by no means puts his trust in human benefaction.
 - He goes even as far as to say, “not that I was every really in great need” – he is happy with living on a little or plenty.
 - Paul's true nourishment found through Jesus. He's been enjoying a meal made for him in secret by the great Chef of the cosmos.
 - This is a deep, rich, abundant, inner source of sustenance.
 - There are those in our church, our friends here, who understand what Paul is speaking of. They have suffered, struggled, wept and crawled to Jesus' feet and have there found an inner strength enabling them to do what they shouldn't be able to do, persevere through what they shouldn't be able to persevere through.
 - These people know “the secret”, as Paul describes it.
 - Others of us are malnourished. We worry and whine about a lack of support, or money or that this or that need isn't met but neglect to seek the only company that brings true contentment – the company of the one who made us. We go everywhere else except for Jesus.

- Of course we need jobs and money and friends and support, and Paul is thankful the Philippians support of him – it's brought great encouragement to him!
- We should support people who need support, James says that – be warm and fed (James 2.16).
- *But* nothing can replace the secret. No amount of met need can replace the depth of unseen sustenance we might derive from the feast of communion with God.
- "I can do all things through the one who strengthens me."
- This statement is not about heroism; Paul isn't making himself out to be the Superman of the Christian faith. Instead he means to say that God meets us in every situation and makes us strong when we are weak.
- As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, God's power works perfectly in our weakness.
- Life Share: Harold, Raineir, Diolinda, Richard and Angela.
- Are we weak, discouraged, disheartened? Go to Jesus.

4.18-21 – Living like the one we worship

- A generous portion.
 - Paul has been generously helped by his friends. He has confidence that the God who has given him more than enough through his friends, a God who "generously supplies through glorious riches", will do the same for them.

- Notice that – what happens when we receive nourishment and *richness* from God? The natural response is to share that with others.
- The Lord’s prayer - “Forgive us our debts as we forgive those indebted against us...”
- And Paul points out that God is the Great Supplier – whatever we may share with others, God has more to share with us.
- This takes trust, doesn’t it?
- What kind of worship does God like?
 - Notice also what Paul calls this kind of generosity – worship!
 - Paul describes the Philippian gift as “sweet-smelling sacrifice”. This harkens back to Old Testament language and custom, when Israel would offer burnt offerings to God.
 - The new kind of offering is not meat or grain or water given at the temple, but practically loving people.
 - James, John, every New Testament author agrees – we love God when we love others. That is how we worship.
 - So I think we have to seriously ask ourselves sometimes, how do I worship God? And if our worship of God does not involve the helping of another, we may need to another look at how we worship!
 - Of course all of this points back to Jesus, doesn’t it? He loved the Father and us by giving of himself - by becoming our benefactor and selflessly serving us.

- The glory is God's
 - Paul's thoughts about practical love and God's generosity bring him to an almost improvised benediction.
 - He closes the main content of the letter with the only appropriate summation "all glory to God – it's all from him, it's all about him, forever!"
 - The glory is God's because God was one who went to the cross. Glory is being selfless not selfish.
 - God's glory (otherwise known as his reputation) is actually seen in the generosity and selflessness of the Philippians,
 - And so too in us! We glorify God, we share his reputation with every act of encouragement and generosity and bit of service.

4.21-23 – Grace in closing

- Note Paul's intimate and specific closing. A greeting is not just given to the general community in Philippi but to each member of the church.
- The mention of those in Caesar's household reveals the impact and reach Paul may have had in Rome. Though most likely not imprisoned the imperial palace, it seems people from all walks of life, even those in service of the Emperor, had dealings with Paul - Jesus was at work in Rome too!
- The letter ends in grace, just as it started.
- Grace makes us humble, servant hearted, generous. Grace makes us like Jesus.

Discussion Questions

- What has stood out or impacted you in Philippians.
- What has encouraged you in the letter? What has challenged you?
- Who is your best friend and why?
- How does this re-definition of friendship transform our relationships (like marriage or workplace or dorm life)?
- Why does practical encouraging?
- How do we glorify God?