

Philippians 4:15-17

BEING STRENGTHENED & SHARING
IN PAUL'S MINISTRY PART #2

Philippians 4:15-17

¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

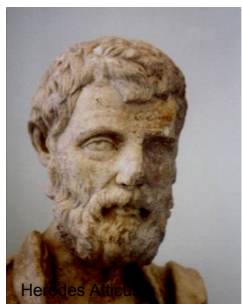
Paul wanted to be very careful about the support from the Philippians

- He wanted to make sure he gracefully acknowledged their generous gifts
- He did not want to come across as begging, pleading, threatening or badgering them for funds
- The Philippian church seems to have had a fairly unique relationship of support for Paul (per verse 4:15)
- Plus, there was another aspect to Paul's concern about his support...

A different approach...

- 2 Cor 2:17-3:1, "17 For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?"
- 2 Cor. 4:1-2, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, 2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The roaming Sophists



Herodes Atticus

- The Sophists were orators & tutors, well-known for traveling about in fine clothing & charging a large fee for teaching their pupils how to succeed in life, speak well, philosophize, etc.
- These ranged from the honorable to the swindler

The negative things of 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:1 & 4:1-2

- like many, peddling the word of God
- the things hidden because of shame
- commend ourselves again
- walking in craftiness
- as some, letters of commendation
- adulterating the word of God

These were common among the roaming Sophists of New Testament times

Here's a little "cultural surprise"

- In the Greek & Roman world of New Testament times it was not the cultural norm to say, "Thank you"
- Example: in the New Testament the only "thank you"s are a few in the gospels, speaking with thanks to God

So when Paul wanted to express his appreciation to the believers in Philippi, he had to do so in a way that would be understood

Philippians 1:3-5

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

Philippians 4:15-17

¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

"...at the first preaching of the gospel" would have been around AD 50 when the Church at Philippi was founded (Acts 16)

Keywords in Philippians 4:15

- **shared** - Greek *koinōnéō* - to share one's possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest – 'to share.'⁰
- In many contexts this is translated, "to have fellowship" & the noun form of this word has been used twice before in Philippians
- Philippians 2:1, "...if there is any fellowship of the Spirit..."
- Philippians 3:10, "...and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..."

Keywords in Philippians 4:15

- **giving and receiving** - Greek *dóseōs kai lēmpsis* - was an accounting phrase in the New Testament era
- Paul has used such terms often in writing to the Philippians
- Financially speaking, the Philippians were giving & Paul was receiving...
- So that Paul could do his giving & the ones with whom he had ministry could do the receiving

A cultural insight and some observations

- The phrase translated "giving and receiving" was not only an accounting phrase, but was used metaphorically to convey having a friendship
- By this Paul may have been simply referring to the interactions he had with them based on the friendship he had with the believers in Philippi
- Though the culture didn't accommodate a "thank you", Paul was very thankful to the Lord & to them for their support of his ministry – whether he was in prison or free to travel for a wider ministry
- Only the Philippians had been supporting Paul as he went on to other places, so their relationship was a special & unique one

A cultural insight and some observations (cont'd)

- Paul's relationship with the believers in Philippi was not just a business & funding relationship, but was a fellowship – it was personal & was a spiritual intimacy – even with distance between them
- Ephesians 4:11-16 make it clear that the relationships we have as believers are intended to be such that we are intimately connected, & that the church is more of an organism than an organization

Philippians 4:16

¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

Keywords in Philippians 4:16

- **sent a gift** - Greek pémpō - send or dispatch with a purpose
- **more than once** - Greek hápax kai dís - an idiom, literally 'once and twice'.
- Paul is using an expression that is parallel to our saying, "Time and again..."
- The Philippians supported Paul with gifts repeatedly

Keywords in Philippians 4:16

- the **need** - Greek chreias - that which is lacking and particularly needed
- Paul has mentioned his need before in Phil. 2:25 "But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need (chreias)"
- In both Philippians 2:25 & 4:16 Paul uses the same Greek word, in each case with a definite article
- Paul is saying that the need - his need - is specific & definite
- The need is real!

Philippians 4:17

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

Keywords in Philippians 4:17

- **seek** - Greek epizētéo - To seek for, inquire after
- **gift** - Greek dóma - refers to the material gifts the Philippians repeatedly sent to Paul for his needs.
- Paul's purpose in conveying his real need was not specifically to get something material out of it.
- **profit** (NKJV fruit) - Greek karpós - Fruit or produce both of trees and plants and of the earth.
- **which increases** (NKJV that abounds) Greek - pleonázō - to have more than enough.

Paul wants them to bear abundant fruit

- Literally, Paul writes: "Not because I desire the gift, but in sharp contrast, I desire the fruit that abounds to your account."
- Paul realizes that his gain from their gift – though needed - will be temporary
- But their gain is eternal – not because they are "buying heaven"
- But because this giving of theirs' results from the life of Christ in & through them

Paul is no gold-digger!

- His need is real
- He avoids even appearing like the various traveling hucksters of his day
- He makes tents for his own support, when possible (2 Corinthians 4:12)
- He never badgers people for support
- But most of all, he applies to himself what he has told them already: "...do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Philippians 2:4

Questions of perspective

- What will build up my family spiritually?
- What will build up the body of Christ?
- What will be of spiritual & eternal benefit for those with whom God has placed me?
- This is not the same as asking, "What would Jesus do?", which can easily be superficial
- These are questions that reveal a perspective & motivation which flows from the very life of Christ
- These questions are not directed at our trying to imitate Christ externally, but are from His life – not mine

Remember froneo! Remember our citizenship!

- Paul has written to them of **froneo** in every chapter
- So Paul's intent is not that we ask, "What would Jesus do? Or even, "What would Paul do?"
- He wants the believers in Philippi - & us - to have a mindedness which comes from recognizing their position in Christ in the heavenlies

Philippians 4:15 Expanded & Explained

¹⁵ You yourselves also are in fact well aware, Philippians of Rome, that at the first preaching of the gospel in Philippi, after I left Macedonia, where Philippi is located, no church shared as a fellowship with me in the friendly interactions of giving and receiving but you Philippians – your relationship with me being so special;

Philippians 4:16-17 Expanded & Explained

¹⁶ for even while we were in Thessalonica, and not even having left Macedonia yet, you sent multiple gifts that precisely met my specific and genuine need.

¹⁷ Please understand that I am not in the habit of seeking the gift that you send as an end in itself, but in sharp contrast, I habitually seek for the spiritual fruit which increases to your spiritual account, so that you may grow spiritually and be eternally rewarded for being used of the Lord by virtue of His life in you and being expressed through you.