



PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9 GG QUESTIONS

I can do all things through a verse taken out of context!

It's easy to take verses out of context in the Bible, and Philippians 4:13 has become one in our age that so often is! Perhaps it's because we are, at heart, an individualized culture, and we have simply added a Christian tagline to the Disney idea that we have the power within us to do whatever we wish, and be successful at it.

Yet what if we became highly successful at being content with having very little? For in fact that's the context of this verse. Paul is sitting in prison looking at a life as a follower of Jesus in which he's had times of plenty and times of need, and he's "learned" how to be content with both.

Read Philippians 4:13 in context of verses 10-13

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Q. What situations has Paul learned to be content in?

Q: Why does Paul say that he has learned "the secret"? What is a secret, and how does it become something revealed and open?

Discuss: How do we learn hard lessons? How do we learn to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves in? Paul says he knows what it means to "be brought low" and in this way he is mirroring the example of Jesus. Do we look to the example of Jesus when we are going through experiences that challenge our contentment?

Read Philippians 4:14-16

14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 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.

Discuss: As at the start of the letter, Paul brings up the issue of partnership in the gospel with the Philippians church. He is rejoicing in it and encouraged by it. But there's also a bit of a sting in the tail. The Philippian church is the *only* church in that region that has partnered in "giving and receiving". Paul must have been stung by that a little, that no one else did.

But he leaves that aside to rejoice in the fact that they have.

Q: What does it mean for all us to partner in the gospel at NCC in terms of "giving and receiving"?

Q: Why might partnering in this manner fall away? What could make us forget to be involved this way?

Read Philippians 4:17-19

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Q. What does Paul mean by "the fruit that increases to your credit?" If the fruit of the gospel is that which springs from the grace of the Lord Jesus in our lives, what sort of fruit do you think giving to Paul (or to anyone for the sake of the gospel) will grow in our lives?

Q. We get uncomfortable thinking that we give to the gospel for some sort of gain. But Paul seems to be saying something like that in v18 – that somehow God is pleased with the giving by the Philippians. How does this align with a passage such as Romans 12:1-2? Is there a common feature which shows us what gospel sacrifice looks like?

Q: V19 is another verse often taken out of context. In light of what Paul has said about learning to have plenty and learning to have little, what might be the biggest need that we have?

Q: When Paul says that God will supply their needs according to the riches of Christ, he is echoing what Jesus himself said about "your heavenly Father knows that you need these things" (see Matthew 6:25-34). What might it mean for us in Perth to trust our needs to God? What ways have we looked elsewhere for our perceived needs to be met, and how can that trip us up?

Prayer

So much of what we need we don't get because we don't ask, or we don't ask with the right motivations (that's in James 4!)

We have much need as a church, and things to consider and ask God about (and to thank him for!) in the coming weeks. And here are some things for you to pray for in your groups.

1. Prayer for wisdom and God's will to be done in our Lead Pastor recruitment process. the recruitment has moved into the next stage
2. Prayer for the staff in the often tricky transition period between Steve leaving and any new appointment being made. Thank God for the gifts of the team (pray for them by name) and the wider generosity of the church across Perth and Australia, who are helping us.
3. Praise God for the Baptisms coming up at Easter. Ask God to lay it on the hearts of those who have not been baptised, to consider this.
4. Hwinnie's commissioning service is on Sunday 3rd April. Praise God that her needs for mission have been generously supplied and that we are partnering with her in the work of the gospel beyond our shores.
5. Praise God for the 12-15 people currently doing the Essentials course
6. Pray for the team putting the Magnify end of term praise and prayer time together. Ask God to encourage us and lift our hearts to him for all his goodness to us in Jesus (we meet for that on Thurs 7th April @7p.m in the NCC auditorium) - Pray that we will be a praying and rejoicing church.