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A Walk Through Philippians

Part 5: I’m Alright! Really?

Text: Philippians 4:10-19

1. **I have longed-** to see you Philippians demonstrate your care for me. (10)
2. **I have learned-**
3. to be content (11-12). Contentment is not natural for any of us. We are, by nature, *acquisitive*. We want to *acquire* more and more of that which is tangible and intangible. Haven’t you discovered this to be so? If we have a sunny day, we want more sunny days. If we buy a car with several features, we want more add-ons. If we manage to save $10.000, we want to add more to our account and have a higher balance. More. More. Paul says that he didn’t wake up one morning and he was contentment. No, he *learned* contentment (v. 11). In Greek culture, to be *autarkes* (ŏw-tar´-kace) was to be a person who possessed all things and needed nothing. It was to be independent and self-sufficient. Paul is not pushing that definition or line of reasoning. Paul says that, ultimately, he has learned to be dependent on God. True contentment is not natural. It is *super*natural. Paul has not *studied* or *analyzed* contentment. Paul has *learned* it. Paul is grateful for people, like the Philippians, who care for him. However, Paul is not seeing his sufficiency as coming from self or others. Sufficiency is from God!

**Illus**.

Wealthy industrialist John D. Rockefeller was asked, “How much money is enough money?” Rockefeller’s answer: “just a little bit more”.

1. That in Christ I have capabilities (13)
2. That you genuinely care for me and show it (15-18). Beloved, we are very blessed if this is our testimony.

Paul has written of how his every need has been met. Now, he gives the Philippians a promise in v. 19. Neither vs. 13 nor v. 19 are as absolute as they seem. Both are quoted extensively in the context of discussions about material blessing. Note, however, that the things that are accomplished are accomplished *through Christ.* In verse. 19, the supply promised is of *all your need*, not *all your want.*

Paul is, in this text, giving a report on his well-being. “I’m alight” he seems to be saying. How is this so? He’s under house arrest. He has been forsaken by many. Yet he gives this testimony. It is because of two realities.

Paul is alright because he has:

1. People who care deeply about him. Don't miss this. One of the benefits of being in relationship with other people is so that you don't navigate life alone. We are not created to live in isolation. We are created to live in community. Don’t brag that you don't need anybody or that you're self-sufficient or that you are a loner and don't want/need anybody around you in order to “make it”. That’s not alright and we won’t be alright if we cut ourselves off from a nurturing community.
2. He has a growing, vital faith; a relationship with the risen Christ. Remember 3:7-10 of this epistle? What is most important to Paul is that we *know* Christ.

When we make our self-assessment statements, we must caution ourselves not to boast of ourselves or our achievements (3:4-7). If we are stable, it isn't because of our skills. If we are content, it is not due to our education or our resolve or our ingenuity or our tenacity. If we want to say of ourselves the same thing Paul said of himself, it will be because we know the same God, the same Christ.

A paraphrase of verse 11 is, “I’m alright! I’ve learned how to be content. I’ve learned not to be anxious. I’m alright!”. In fact, Paul says he is full (v.18). When we move from the acquisitive mode into contentment and can say we’re full, a whole new world opens. The skeptic says, to Paul, “Really? How is this possible? Given what you've been through, you can’t possibly be content.” This sense of well-being comes from a seriously considered faith. Recall with me that in 3:4 of Philippians, Paul writes about those things of which he *could* boast if boasting were appropriate. He then says that those things which were once bragging points have been counted as dung that he may know Christ. In 2 Corinthians 11:16-33, this same Paul lists the terrible experiences he had and, in the context of boasting, says that if he were to boast at all, it would be of his infirmities(2 Corinthians 11:30-31; 12:2-5,10).

What a journey:

From acquisition to contentment

From persecution to peace

From dissatisfaction to satisfaction

From antagonism to engagement

From empty to full

From needy to no need

By the end of this letter, Paul is espousing a principle:

The generous soul will be rewarded (Proverbs 11:25; 19:17)

Paul began this section by talking about how generous the Philippians had been, in caring for Paul’s needs. Now, as Paul closes, he promises them that as they have met *Paul’s* need, God will supply *theirs*! (v.19).

**Closing**

Psalm 73:25-26

I recently read a story about a Jewish man in Hungary who went to his rabbi and complained, “Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?” The rabbi answered, “Take your goat into the room with you.” The man was incredulous, but the rabbi insisted, “Do as I say and come back in a week.”

A week later the man returned looking more distraught than before. “We can’t stand it,” he told the rabbi. “The goat is filthy.” The rabbi said, “Go home and let the goat out, and come back in a week.” A week later the man returned, radiant, exclaiming, “Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there’s no goat--only the nine of us.” (Reader’s Digest [12/81].)

Ah, contentment!!

Amen