

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR A MIND OF MANY VIRTUES

The fourth chapter contains several paragraphs not directly related to one another, but all reflecting the good mind of Paul and the Philippians. They seem to be fruits growing on the tree of a good Christian mind.

1. *Virtue of standing fast*; 4:1.
 2. *Virtue of harmony (being of the same mind)*; 4:2-4.
 3. *Virtue of joy and prayer*; 4:4-7.
 4. *Virtue of right thinking*; 4:8-9.
 5. *Thanks for the Philippians' gift*; 4:10-20.
 - a. Paul's feelings—joy and contentment; 4:10-13.
 - b. The Philippians' fellowship with Paul; 4:14-16.
 - At the present; 4:14
 - In the past; 4:15-16
 - c. Paul's feelings (resumed); 4:17-20.
 - He sought fruit from them; 4:17
 - He was now well-supplied; 4:18
 - God would supply their needs; 4:19-20
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Salutations and Benediction; 4:21-23.

Outline of 4:1-23

- G. Final exhortations and thanks: 4:1-23.
1. Exhortation to stand fast; 4:1.
 2. Exhortation to two women to be in harmony; 4:2-3.
 3. Exhortation to joy (4:4), forbearance (4:5), and prayer (4:6-7).
 4. Exhortation to right thinking; 4:8-9.
 5. Thanks for the Philippian's gift; 4:10-20.
 - a. Paul's feelings; 4:10-13
 - (1) He rejoiced in their act; 4:10
 - (2) He did not speak because of want; 4:11-13
 - (a) He could be content in any state; 4:11-12
 - (b) He could do all things in Christ; 4:13
 - b. The Philippians' fellowship with Paul; 4:14-16
 - (1) They did well in their present act of fellowship; 4:14
 - (2) In the past also they had fellowship with Paul; 4:15-16
 - c. Paul's feelings (resumed); 4:17-20.
 - (1) He did not seek their gift; 4:17
 - (2) He sought fruit for them;
 - (3) Because of their gift he now had sufficiency; 4:18
 - (4) God would supply all their need; 4:19
 - (5) Glory be to God; 4:20

Salutations and Benediction; 4:21-23

4:1. Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved.

Translation and Paraphrase

4:1. So then, (in view of the glorious future that we look forward to,) my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and (my) crown (of glory), stand firm thus in the Lord, (my) beloved.

Notes

1. "Stand fast in the Lord." This is the main message of 4:1. Christians all need to stand firm, and not be swept away into sin or into accepting doctrines not plainly taught in the

scriptures. Compare II Thess. 2:15; I Thess. 3:8; I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:12-14; Col. 4:12; I Peter 5:12.

2. The "Wherefore" at the beginning of 4:1 refers back to things stated in the preceding verses, that give us reasons for standing fast. We stand fast because Christ is powerful (3:21), and because he will transform our lowly bodies when the dead are raised, and because our citizenship is in heaven (3:20).
3. "My brethren." We should look upon our fellow Christians as brothers, for they truly are just that. Also we should call one another "Brother." This practice appears a bit queer to worldly people (who after all do not have much brotherliness between one another!); but the very fact that we call one another "Brother" serves to emphasize the relationship and to assist us to practice brotherliness.
4. "Beloved". Notice the two occurrences of this word in 4:1.
5. "Longed for" suggests the pain felt by Paul because of his separation from the Philippians.
6. "My joy". Christians should find a basic joy in fellowship with other Christians, as Paul did. I Thess. 2:19.
7. "My crown". There are two Greek words translated *crown*: (1) *Diadem*; a king's royal crown. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the book of Revelation. (2) *Stephanos*; This is the word used here. It refers to a woven crown such as was awarded to victors at races, and was made of such materials as olive branches, laurel, parsley, pine, myrtle, etc. This type of crown was also sometimes placed upon the heads of banqueters at feasts. Compare I Thess. 2:19; Prov. 12:4.

The fact that the Philippians were Christians at all, and especially the fact that they were such good Christians was an adornment to Paul's reputation. On the day of judgment our converts will cause us to "shine . . . as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3. Thus they will be our crown.

8. We stand fast in the Lord. (Phil. 4:1). We are of the same mind in the Lord. (Phil. 4:2). We rejoice in the Lord. (Phil. 4:4).

In this world with its cruelties, conflicting interests, and conflicting ideas, we either stand *in the Lord*, or we probably do not stand at all, but rather are like the waters that are blown about by shifting winds. Eph. 4:14.

2, I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. I urge (our sister) Euodia and (our sister) Syntyche to be in agreement (as Christians) in the Lord (all the time).

3. Yes, and I request you (also, my) sincere (and genuine) brother who bears the yoke (of Christ) with me, (take hold of this problem, and) help these women, who have labored with danger and suffering in the (work of the) gospel with me, and (with) Clement, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Notes

1. 4:2-3 is an exhortation to two women at Philippi, named Euodia and Syntyche, to stop their quarrelling and to agree together in the Lord. Paul further calls on the preacher (?) at Philippi to help these women get along better with one another. (The KJV spelling *Euodias*, a masculine form of the name, is incorrect.)
2. Paul urged Euodia and Syntyche separately to be of the same mind. This indicates emphasis.
3. "Be of the same mind," that is, be harmonious. Compare Phil. 2:2; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; II Cor. 13:11.
4. It is a bit tantalizing to realize that we know almost nothing about Euodia and Syntyche except that they were having a disagreement. Besides this we know only that they had previously labored in the gospel with Paul and certain others.

So very often the Bible tells only a few facts about people. Yet strangely these few facts often give us vivid impressions about the character of these people. We wonder what might be written about us if an inspired writer were to write a one-sentence summary of our lives. It might not be flattering!

5. The reference to Euodia and Syntyche reminds us that women played a prominent part in the activities of many local churches in New Testament times. We read about the womenfolk in Macedonia in Acts 16:13-14; 17:4, 12. There is no real reason to believe, however, that the women in Macedonian and Greek

churches took a more prominent part in the church life than the women did elsewhere.

6. Paul's true (that is, sincere, natural-born) *yokefellow* was called upon to help Euodia and Syntyche to come to agreement. Paul mobilized the whole church to help mend a quarrel.

The term *yokefellow* means one joined with another under a yoke. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you." (Matt. 11:29). All who take His yoke are yokefellows.

Some scholars have suggested that the Greek word for yokefellow (*suzugos*, or *sunzugos*) is a proper name, Synzygus. This is a possibility, although the word is not known as a proper name elsewhere in contemporary literature. Some have speculated that he may have been the husband of Euodia or Syntyche. Others have thought that he might be Timothy or Epaphroditus. No one knows.

It seems to us that most likely the "true yokefellow" was simply the local preacher or evangelist at Philippi. The church at Philippi had more than one elder and more than one deacon (Phil. 1:1), so obviously the particular yokefellow in mind was not one of these officers.

7. Euodia and Syntyche had labored (Gr. *sunathleo*) with Paul in the gospel. This verb indicates activity attended with danger and suffering. It is used only here and in Phil. 1:27. The related verb *athleo* is used elsewhere, and refers to contending in athletic games (II Tim. 2:5), and also to contending in battle.
8. A little contention can cause so much distress in a local church that it outweighs a lot of good service. Compare Eccl. 10:1. Thus the good work that Euodia and Syntyche had done was being clouded over by their later disagreement.
9. The Clement to whom Paul refers was some familiar Philippian Christian, judging by the familiar way he is referred to. We know nothing else about him besides the incidental reference here. He is not the famous Clement of Rome, who lived much later (about 95 A.D.), and certainly not the great Clement of Alexandria, who lived about 190 A.D.
10. The names of Paul's fellow laborers ARE (not might be) in the book of life.

The book of life, elsewhere called the Lamb's (Jesus') book of life) is the book which contains the names of all saved

people. It is elsewhere referred to or alluded to in Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; Luke 10:20; Ex. 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Ezek. 13:9 (?); Isa. 4:3 (?).

11. Life in an early church:

- (1) Involved toil; (4:3)
- (2) Gave a prominent place to women;
- (3) Centered about personalities;
- (4) Was not always harmonious.

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. 5. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Translation and Paraphrase

4. Be rejoicing in the Lord (Jesus) always. Again (after considering all the possibilities of sorrow in this world,) I (still) say, Be rejoicing.

5. (By kind deeds) let your gentle, reasonable nature be known to all men. The Lord is near (unto us always; yea, his visible coming is always near too).

Notes

1. Wm. Barclay describes these verses as "Marks of the Christian Life." The two marks are joy and moderation.
2. *Rejoice* is present tense: Be rejoicing!
3. We rejoice in the Lord. Only in the Lord is constant joy possible. Paul could rejoice in the Lord even in chains in the dungeon at Philippi. Acts 16:23-25.
4. Paul repeats the command to rejoice. It seems as if he said, "After considering all the possibilities for sorrow in this world, I repeat with emphasis, REJOICE." Compare Phil. 2:17, 28; 3:1; 4:10.
5. Let your forbearance (KJV, *moderation*) be known. This word means reasonableness. It implies a quality of gentleness and mildness; a nature not unduly rigorous, not overly strict, not judging people severely. Some related forms of this word are translated *gentle*. (It is thus rendered in I Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; I Pet. 2:18; James 3:17).
6. Forbearance must be shown to all men, not just to church members.

7. "The Lord is at hand." This can either mean that the Lord is always near, always close at hand (which is true; Matt. 28:20); or it has also been interpreted to mean that the Lord's second coming was thought to be near. (James 5:8). Either meaning is a good reason to cultivate the quality of forbearance, as the Lord desires.

To the Christian the second coming of the Lord is always looked upon as near. I Thess. 5:2-6; Matt. 24:42-44. In this sense the Lord is always near.

However, to allege that Paul was under a delusion common in the first century that Christ was definitely going to return in that generation is a serious accusation against an inspired apostle of God. The simple statement that the Lord is near does not necessarily imply such a far-reaching conclusion.

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- 6. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.**

Translation and Paraphrase

6. Do not be anxious (and worried) about a thing; instead (of worrying) let your requests be made known to God in everything (you do) by prayer (of devotion) and supplication (for your needs), with thanksgiving.

7. And (if you will do this) the peace of God which exceeds all (human) understanding will keep guard over your hearts and thoughts (protecting both your emotions and your mind, and keep them safe) in Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. These verses tell of the peace that comes through thankful prayer.
2. "Be careful for nothing" means "Be anxious (or worried) about nothing." "Be full of cares over nothing."
3. These verses sound like an echo of the sermon on the mount. See Matt. 6:25-34. Compare Psalm 145:18-19.
4. The remedy for anxiety is prayer (this word give prominence to the element of devotion) and supplication (gives prominence to the expression of personal needs). Compare Luke 18:1; I Peter 5:8.

In prayer, however, we must not forget to let our requests be made known with *thanksgiving*.

5. God likes us to offer specific requests in prayers. Vague generalities are usually meaningless formalism.
6. The peace of God here promised is that inward peace of soul which comes from God, and is based on God's presence and promises. Compare Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:9.
7. "Peace which passeth all understanding" is peace that transcends the power of the human mind to understand it. It can also mean that the peace that God gives surpasses all human understanding as a means of bringing tranquility to the heart. (We prefer the first meaning.)
8. God's peace guards our hearts and thoughts. The Biblical *heart* includes such inward qualities as the intellect, the will, the conscience, and the emotions.

By *thoughts* Paul refers to the mental perceptions, the things that proceed from the heart.

When the heart and the thoughts are protected, a man's whole being—even to a great degree his physical being—is safe. Prov. 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

Christians should be able to live above emotional tension, nervous breakdowns, mental illness, and anxiety symptoms. The reason that many do not is simply that they do not pray. They seem to feel, "Why pray when you can worry?"

9. Notice that the protection is in Christ Jesus. This promise is not extended to everyone, but only to those in Christ.

8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, 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.

9. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Translation and Paraphrase

8. (And now) finally, (my) brothers (as for what remains on my mind, I urge you to set your minds on the good things)—whatever things are true, whatever things are worthy of reverence, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are truly pleasing, whatever things are well-spoken of—if there is

any virtue (in life), and if there is any praise (that is due to anything, then) think about these (good) things.

9. (The things I want you to think about are those things) which you learned and received, and heard, and saw in me (in my life); do these things and the God (who is the creator) of peace will be with you.

Notes

1. We could entitle the paragraph made up of these two verses "The Homeland of the Christian Mind."

Every human mind sets itself upon something. When the mind has dwelt long enough in any line of thinking, it can (almost) never get out of it. Therefore it is important that the Christian keep his mind in the true homeland of the godly mind, upon those things that are true, honorable, just, pure, etc.

2. Be careful of thoughts; they have a way of popping out in words and deeds.

What you are thinking writes lines on your face.

Actions, places, reading materials, and ways of thinking that excite evil thoughts should be shunned, if for no other reason than that they do this.

Evil thoughts defile a man. Mark 7:21.

Let the meditations of my heart be acceptable; Psalm 19:14.

Bring every thought and imagination into captivity to the obedience of Christ; II Cor. 10:5.

Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts; Isa. 55:7.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind; Romans 12:2.

3. "Finally" does not mean "In conclusion," but "In consideration of another remaining matter." See notes on 3:1.
4. Note the six descriptions of the things we are to think about: (1) true; (2) honorable (Gr. *semnos*, worthy of respect and reverence, revered, worshipped); (3) just (Gr. *dikaios*, upright, righteous, agreeable to justice and law); (4) pure (Gr. *hagnos*, pure sacred, free from fault); (5) lovely (Gr. *prospbiles*, acceptable, pleasing, exhibiting love toward all); (6) of good report (Gr. *euphemos*, sounding well uttering words of good omen).
5. Paul appeals to the Philippians to think on good things by saying, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Everyone of us has some things in our memory and acquaintance that are dear to us, some things that are inspiring, that call us to a more virtuous way of life, that are worthy of praise. If there are such things, then we ourselves ought to direct our minds to good thinking, such as will lead us become like that which is praiseworthy in others.

6. 4:9 gives four methods of exposure to the truth:

(1) Learning; True teaching is learned. It does not develop in us naturally.

(2) Receiving; True teaching is received. This implies a fixed body of beliefs that are to be handed down from generation to generation. It implies also that part of our education is the response of the will as well as the response of the intellect.

(3) Hearing; (4) Seeing; The truth may be heard (Rom. 10:14) and seen exemplified in a person's life and actions.

7. "The God of peace shall be with you." God is only with us when we do what he commands us. "The Lord is with you while you are with him." (II Chron. 15:2; Isa. 55:6; 59:1-2; James 4:8). Peace comes to those who are in a right relationship to God.

8. Regarding the expression "God of peace," see Rom. 15:33; II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:23. God's nature is peace-loving. He is the creator of peace (Isaiah 57:19), and the giver of peace.

10. But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity.

Translation and Paraphrase

10. But I rejoice in the Lord (very) greatly, because now at length your thought for me has blossomed anew. (I realize, of course, that) you have indeed been thinking of me, but you lacked opportunity (to show it).

Notes

1. 4:10 begins a new paragraph in the outline, "Thanks for the Philippians' gift (4:10-20). In spite of the fact that the paragraph is obviously a section expressing thanks, the word *thanks* is not in it. Paul expressed this thanks without being fawning, or condescending, or conventional. His thanks are

all the more meaningful because they do not contain a trace of such superficiality as "I just don't know what I'd have done without your wonderful gift."

2. How did Paul feel when the Philippians sent money to him? He *rejoiced* in the Lord greatly. (The Greek verb is actually a past tense form; but this was frequently used as a literary device wherein the writer placed himself in the reader's position, and expressed his feelings as past, even though the action may have still been in progress when the reader read of it. Thus Paul *rejoiced*, but he doubtless was still rejoicing.)
3. How long had it been since the Philippians had sent help to Paul? It had been a long time: at length.
4. "Ye have revived your thought for me." *Revive* (Gr. *anathello*) means "shoot up again, sprout again, grow green again." The New English Bible translates this well: "Your care for me has now blossomed afresh."
5. Had the Philippians temporarily forgotten Paul? By no means: "Ye did indeed take thought (a Gr. imperfect tense form, indicating continuous past action), but ye lacked opportunity" to show it. Paul had been in several prisons in Judea, and on a long ship trip, and marooned on the island of Malta, etc. Mail was slow where it existed at all in those times. For a long time the Philippians could hardly even have known whereabouts of Paul.

11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. 12. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. 13. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

Translation and Paraphrase

11. (It is) not because of want (and need) that I speak. For (personally) I have learned to be content in (any) circumstances (wherever) I am.

12. I know both (how) to be lowly, and I know (how) to have abundance. In everything (individually) and in all things (collectively) I am fully instructed (by my experiences) both (how) to be full and (how) to be hungry, (how) to have abundance, and (how) to suffer need.

13. I can do all things through (Christ) who (always) empowers me.

Notes

1. In 4:11-13 Paul declares that he does not write about his joy over their gift because he had been in want (although as a matter of fact he was in real affliction). Paul knew how to endure all things, both abundance and poverty, through Christ Jesus.
2. Paul's expression of joy was not uttered because his personal needs had been met, but because of something else. That "something else" is identified in 4:17.
3. Paul had learned to be content in all situations wherein he found himself. *Content (autarkes)* means "sufficient for one-self; independent of external circumstances; contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest." (Thayer). This word was a favorite of the Greek Stoics. The Stoics sought to be content by eliminating all desires, all emotions, and feelings by a deliberate practiced act of the will. Paul was not self-sufficient in this way, but self-sufficient because he was in Christ, and Christ was in him. This is the grand secret of true contentment.
4. In 4:12 Paul itemized some respects in which he had learned to be content:
 - (1) He knew how to be made low (economically and socially).
 - (2) He knew how to have abundance, more than he needed, without becoming proud or overconfident.
 - (3) He knew how to be full (well fed).
 - (4) He knew how to be hungry.He asserts that in everything individually and in all things collectively he had been initiated into a knowledge of how to bear up. (He belonged to the Order of Contented Saints! The Greek verb *mueo* used here is mostly used in classical Greek to refer to initiation into the Greek mystery religions.)
5. Christ strengthened Paul. The verb *strengthen* is in a present tense form, indicating continuous action. II Tim. 4:17.
6. Notice that Paul makes no formal expression of thanks beyond his recognition and commendation of the moral and spiritual significance of their act, in which he acknowledges a benefit to

himself. He was far from being unthankful, but he chose this means to express his feelings.

14. **Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction.**
 15. **And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; 16. for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.**

Translation and Paraphrase

14. Yet, you (Philippians) did well (in your act of) sharing with me in my affliction, (in sending your offering to me here at Rome, which Epaphroditus delivered).

15. Now you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, (that is, when you first heard the gospel and accepted it,) when I departed from (you folks in Macedonia, that) no church had a part with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone.

16. (How very greatly you have participated in giving is very plain) because even in Thessalonica, (the first place I preached after leaving Philippi,) you sent (assistance) for my need once, and (then) again.

Notes

1. 4:14-16 contains a commendation of the Philippians' giving, both at the present (to Paul in Rome), and in the past for their giving to Paul right after he left Philippi and went to Thessalonica.
2. The "Notwithstanding" or "Howbeit" in 4:14 makes a contrast between Paul's state of self-sufficiency (described in 4:11-13), and the fact that the generosity of the Philippians was truly beneficial both to Paul and to them.
3. *Communicate* in KJV 4:14 is a suitable translation, if it be understood in the old meaning of *share*, or have in common. See Romans 12:13. The Philippians had made common cause with Paul's affliction by sending help to him, and by sending Epaphroditus to assist him. In doing these things they had done well. See Heb. 10:33.
4. The reference to *affliction* in 4:14 indicates that Paul was in dire need before the gifts from the Philippians came.

5. Paul did not often address his churches by name as he does here. (4:15; Compare II Cor. 6:11). The times when he did so express special earnestness, or affectionate remembrance. Paul usually preferred to refer to provinces, rather than to individual cities. (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:15; II Cor. 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2).
6. "The beginning of the gospel" in 4:15 obviously refers to Paul's first preaching tour in Macedonia and Philippi.
7. There are many ways that we as Christians can have fellowship with one another. See notes on Phil. 1:5. The Philippians had fellowship (a participation) with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving.
8. We should here recall the list of places visited by Paul during his second missionary trip right after leaving Philippi. (They are narrated in Acts 17-18). Philippi, Amphipolis, Appolonia, Thessalonica, Beroea (all of these were in Macedonia); Athens, Corinth (these last two were in Achaia). Thessalonica is about a hundred miles from Philippi, in a generally southwest direction.
9. "No church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only." In that period of time right after he left Philippi for the first time, Paul did not receive nor request offerings for his personal needs from any church except that at Philippi. (Compare II Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13—very important verses.) Paul does not say that he had never previously accepted offerings from other churches, or that in later times other churches had not helped him. But at that particular time none except the Philippians did help. The church at Antioch had previously helped him. Acts 15:3, 40.

We do not know all of Paul's reasons for refusing to take money from other churches at that time. But in the case of the Corinthians Paul felt that there was a need of cutting off any opportunity for the pretended apostles to say that Paul was just like them in preaching for money. Therefore Paul would take no money from the Corinthians for himself. He did later request money from them to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

As a general rule the more the leaders can be led to give, the better it will be with that church. "Where your treasure is there will your heart also." Matt. 6:21. By giving, fruit increases to your account. Phil. 4:17. Paul himself wrote to the Corinthians about how he had taken no money from them,

and then adds, "Forgive me this wrong." (II Cor. 12:13). We recognize that these words might have been spoken in sarcasm, but then again they may have been at least partly serious.

10. "Fellowship in the *matter* of giving and receiving." *Matter* here (Gr. *logos*) means an account, a reckoning, a score. The word *logos* has the same meaning in 4:17. Paul here by a charming figure of speech refers to the gifts of money which the Philippians gave him as being entered into their book-keeping records as expenses, while he himself enters them in the account of receipts.
11. The Philippians sent offerings to Paul in Thessalonica at least twice. These cared for his need, which was apparently then quite acute. We know from II Cor. 11:9 that while Paul was at Corinth (during his second missionary trip) that brethren from Macedonia (presumably Philippi) came down to Corinth and supplied the measure of his want. In these actions the Philippian church was unique at that time.

Besides the gifts to Paul personally, they also contributed "beyond their power" and "out of their deep poverty" for the poor saints in Judea. II Cor. 8:1-4.

12. All of this giving had been done by the Philippians in the face of grinding poverty.

The district of Macedonia had suffered three civil wars, and had been reduced to such poverty that Tiberius Caesar, hearkening to their petition, had lightened their taxes. But in addition to this general poverty, the churches had been made poor by persecution.¹

17. Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. (I do) not (write this) because I am seeking (or have ever sought) the gift; on the contrary I am seeking (for YOU) the fruit that will overflow to your account (as a result of your sacrificial giving).

1. J. W. McGarvey, and P. Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans*, (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co. 1916, p. 210.)

Notes

1. Paul denied in 4:11 that he wrote about the Philippians gift because he had been in want. So here in 4:17 he denies that he writes about it because of covetousness, because he sought the gift.
2. Instead of seeking the Philippians' gift for himself, Paul encouraged their giving because it would bring fruit to their account. (Compare note 10 under 4:14-16.)
3. The fruit Paul refers to is the recompense which the gift would bring to the givers. Compare II Cor. 9:6. Generous giving brings us the fruit of sufficiency (II Cor. 9:8); and the means to give more (II Cor. 9:8-10); and the fruit of thanksgiving from others (II Cor. 9:12ff); and of hearts set in the right place (Matt. 6:21).
4. This fruit "increaseth," or is abounding. This is a present tense form, indicating continuous action. Every act of Christian ministering develops and enriches him who performs it.
5. The generosity of a good church:
 - (1) Sympathetic generosity; 4:14.
 - (2) Repeated generosity; 4:16.
 - (3) Fruit-bearing generosity; 4:17.

18. **But I have all things and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.**

Translation and Paraphrase

18. Nonetheless (as a result of your gift) I (now) have all things (which I need) and (indeed) I have more than enough. I (who have at times been hungry am (now) filled, because I received the (gift) from you (which was delivered) by Epaphroditus. (Your gift is) an odor of a sweet smell (like the Old Testament sacrifices), a sacrifice acceptable (and) well-pleasing to God.

Notes

1. The Philippians' gift must have been generous and substantial, for Paul writes that he now has all things, and even abounds (that is, he has some left over).
2. Regarding Epaphroditus and his work, see notes on Phil. 2:25-30.

3. When giving is rightly done, it can be a sacrifice much like the Old Testament sacrifices. Except that it is not a blood sacrifice, it can resemble the ancient sacrifices in nearly every way. Compare Heb. 13:16.

The expression "an odor of a sweet smell" is frequently used in the Old Testament to refer to animal sacrifices. Compare Eph. 5:2; Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; 1:9, 13, 17.

19. And my God shall supply every need of your according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

19. But (though you have given so much, you need never worry about having your needs provided, for) my God will fill all your need (just as you have filled mine; and he will do this) in a glorious way, according to his (limitless) riches (in glory, which are dispensed) in Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. Lest any of the Philippians should be fearful as to how they could now get along since they had given such a large gift to Paul, Paul assures them that God would supply ALL their needs.

The Philippians lived in a depressed, poverty-stricken area. See note 12 under Phil. 4:14-16.

2. Phil. 4:19 is one of a number of precious verses that assures us that God will always care for the physical needs of his children. Matt. 6:33; II Cor. 9:8.
3. Paul speaks of God as MY God." He is very near and real to Paul.
4. God will supply our need "according to his riches." God owns everything. (Ps. 24:1; 50:10-12). His glory fills the whole earth. (Isa. 6:3). This promise is too vast for us to comprehend even in part. But it is a promise that we can rejoice in to the very utmost of our capacity to grasp it.
5. The phrase "in glory" probably refers to the manner of God's supplying ("He will gloriously supply"), rather than to the location or nature of the riches ("riches up in glory").

20. Now unto our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Translation and Paraphrase

20. And now (may) the glory (be) unto our God and father for ever and ever. Amen (Truly!).

Notes

1. Paul's epistles are full of doxologies such as this one. When Paul reached the conclusion of some exalted line of thought, he burst forth with "Glory to God!" Here his doxology was produced by the wonderful thought that God will supply all our need. For other doxologies see Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; I Tim. 1:17.
2. The word *doxology* is derived from two Greek words, and literally means "A word of glory" or "An expression of glory." Let us not be too stiff and formalistic to burst forth into an occasional doxology.
3. "For ever and ever" is (literally translated) "unto the ages of the ages." This is an expression frequently used in the scriptures to describe eternity.

We cannot comprehend the length of eternity. We can only conceive of one age, followed by another, and yet more and more. This is the view of eternity presented in the Bible by the expression "for ever and ever." It presents eternity as a succession of ages (Gr. *aion*, or eon), going on as far as we can perceive and then farther yet.

21. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren that are with me salute you. 22. All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household.

Translation and Paraphrase

21. Greet all the saints (the holy ones) in Christ Jesus (all that you meet). The (Christian) brethren with me (my special helpers and associates) greet you.

22. (Yea) all the saints (here in Rome) greet you, in particular those from the household of Caesar (send greetings).

Notes

1. Paul closed a number of his epistles, as he does this one, with salutations or greetings. Romans 16:3; I Cor. 16:19, 21; Col. 4:10ff.

2. The Philippians were requested to greet every saint in Christ Jesus individually. ("In Christ" may go either with *salute* or with *saint*.) There is a great blessing in Christians' knowing one another well and greeting one another as brothers.
3. Except for Timothy we do not know the names of any of the brethren who were with Paul. Paul spoke about his associates back in 2:20 in a manner which (at first glance anyway) does not appear very complimentary (but see the notes on that verse).
4. All the church members (the saints) in Rome sent their greetings to the Philippians, along with Paul.
5. The reference to Christians in Caesar's household thrills us. There were a few godly people in King Ahab's court and kingdom. There were a few Christians in Caesar's (Nero's) household. Compare Phil. 1:13. There are Christians today in Communist and Mohammedan lands.
6. The expression *Caesar's household* probably refers not to the imperial family, but to employees in the house—slaves, cooks, guards, and such.
7. The "especially" in 2:22 seems to point out that the Christians in Caesar's household particularly wanted the Philippians to know of their existence in such difficult surroundings, and wanted the prayers and fellowship of the Christians elsewhere. In many places it is hard enough to be a Christian even when you have encouragement from brethren elsewhere. How much harder it is to be faithful without their fellowship and prayers.

23. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. May the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
(Amen)

Notes

1. Paul closes Philippians with his characteristic closing wish that the favor (grace) of the Lord Jesus Christ may be with our spirit. Compare Gal. 6:18; II Tim. 4:22; Philemon 25. Our spirit needs the help of Christ's favor even more than our physical nature, for we have many unseen spiritual enemies. Eph. 6:12.

2. The reading "with you all" in KJV is not as well supported by the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament as the American Standard version reading "with your spirit," which we follow.

Study and Review

Questions Over Philippians Chapter Four

1. How many times in Philippians four do such phrases as "in the Lord," or "in Christ," or "in him" occur? How many times altogether in the whole book of Philippians?
2. What descriptive terms does Paul use in 4:1 to refer to the Philippians?
3. What are the two Greek words translated *crown*? Which word is used in 4:1? What do the two words mean?
4. What small phrase is repeated three times in 4:1-4? What is the phrase applied to in each case?
5. Name two respects in which Christians should stand fast? (4:1)
6. Who were Euodia and Syntyche, and why, apparently, are they mentioned in 4:2?
7. How prominent were the womenfolk in the churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea)? Acts 16:13, 14; 17:4, 12.
8. Explain the term *yokefellow*. To whom may it refer?
9. What resources and efforts were mobilized by Paul to mend a quarrel in the church at Philippi?
10. What commendable thing had Euodia and Syntyche done?
11. Who was Clement?
12. What is the book of life?
13. How emphatic is the command to rejoice? In what respect can we always be rejoicing?
14. What is forbearance (or moderation)? To whom is our forbearance to be made known?
15. Does the statement that *the Lord is at hand*, mean that his second coming is near, or that he is always close to us?
16. What is to cause us anxiety or care?
17. What is the remedy, or alternative, to anxiety?
18. What will be the result of telling our requests to God?
19. What connection is there between godliness and sanity?
20. What is to crowd out falsehood, dishonesty, impurity, etc. from our minds? (4:8)

PHILIPPIANS

21. What appeal was used to urge us to think on things true, honest, etc?
22. From whom had the Philippians obtained a proper knowledge of godly living and thinking?
23. What deed of the Philippians had caused Paul great joy?
24. Had the Philippians previously been unconcerned with Paul's needs?
25. Why had the Philippians neglected Paul?
26. Did Paul express joy because his wants had been supplied?
27. What valuable attitude had Paul learned? (4:11-12)
28. What were some of the circumstances in which Paul had learned to be content?
29. What was the source of Paul's strength to do all things in all circumstances?
30. If Paul was relatively insensible to want, what made the Philippians' generosity so pleasing to him? (4:14, 17)
31. What does *having fellowship* (or communicating) *with my affliction* mean?
32. To what does Paul refer by the expression *the beginning of the gospel*? (4:15)
33. How many other churches had given to Paul as the Philippians had?
34. Were the Philippians a wealthy people? (See II Cor. 8:1-3)
35. What is the *fruit that increaseth to your account*? (4:17)
36. Why did Paul desire the fruit that increased to their account?
37. Where, in particular, had the Philippians sent money to Paul previously? How many times?
38. What is the action, or event, or thing alluded to in the figure of speech, an *odor of a sweet smell*?
39. Can a financial offering be like a sacrificial animal offering? If so, in what ways?
40. How will all a Christian's needs be supplied?
41. According to what measure will God supply all our need?
42. What moved Paul to utter the doxology of 4:20?
43. What does the word *doxology* mean?
44. What does *salute* mean? (4:21)
45. Who were some of the brethren with Paul? (4:21)
46. In what astounding place did some of the Roman Christians reside?
47. What is Paul's characteristic benediction in this letter?
48. Suggest, if you can, a title for this whole chapter that more fully sums up its contents than our title, "A Mind of Many Virtues."