

Last words tell us so much about a person. As Paul is closing out his highly heartfelt letter to this little church that owned a special place in his heart, we find him moved by the Holy Spirit to express his gratitude for who they are and what they have done for him. Paul's life reveals to us the truth that power and anointing never elevate above the level of our humility and gratitude. As Paul calls the Philipians to remain true to the end of their race, we are helped by his words to know for ourselves what it means to live lives of contentment, generosity and partnerships in the Kingdom.

I. What A Spiritually Mature Heart Looks Like (10-12)

A. It will be conscious of others (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."

Paul valued clear relational communication. Though he was the foremost Apostle of his day, he did not position himself above others in some arrogant superiority. He remained grateful for all those with whom he shared life and Kingdom ministry. In this verse, Paul expresses his awareness and gratitude for how the Philipians had remained engaged in the work which God had given Paul. He knew that they always wanted to help him with his needs, even when they were not resourced enough to do so. When they resumed their investment in him, he let them know that it meant a great deal to him.

B. It will be content (11) - "Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content."

Here, he also let them know they did not need to feel any guilt for being unable to help him earlier. He let them know that he was always taken care of by the Lord. Paul was no immature rookie in the Kingdom. He understood through his experiences that there would be times when he would be enjoying plenty, and that there would be other times when he only had enough to survive (see verse 12 below). The secret that Paul mentions in verse 12 is the intentional contentment that he cultivated in verse 11. He did not allow his outward circumstances to determine his inward heart posture.

C. It will be trusting (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."

We should not rush pass these words too quickly. Have we also learned how to be brought low? Sometimes circumstances force this lesson upon us. At other times, God himself will bring us low so that He can exalt us at a more appropriate time of His choosing. Also, have we learned how to cooperate with those times when God elevates us, causing us to abound? Paul is speaking of favorable circumstances and prosperous substance here. Many people know how to be humbled by God, but do we anticipate those times when He intentionally pours favor upon us? Can God entrust us with high levels of blessing? Paul testifies that he had learned how to honor God in both of these types of seasons.

D. It will be confident (13) - "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Here is the most famous verse in Philippians. Usually, we quote this verse without being aware that the context is how believers press forward through both blessing and deprivation. Ultimately, Paul declares here that it is Jesus who empowers Paul to do whatever is required of him, no matter whether he has plenty or is experiencing need. Jesus is the stabilizer, not money. Jesus is the anchor, not having every external need met. Jesus is the source of the Christian's strength, joy and safety. Paul had learned to look to Jesus as His center. He wants all believers to do the same.

III. What Relationally Healthy Partnerships Looks Like (14-16)

A. They were concerned for their leader (14) - "Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble."

It is a frequent occurrence in our day for people to assume that Kingdom leaders sit atop a mountain of provision and ease. Sometimes the strength of a leader gives the false impression that all their needs are met. Additionally, leaders are often reluctant to share their needs or troubles with those who follow them, so there is an assumption that they are living with every need met. Paul was bold in his humble communication that he had trouble, and he welcomed others to know it and to help with it. Healthy ministry partnerships should never be exploited for material gain, but when real needs arise with leaders that are either personal or ministerial, there should be a freedom to share those needs with others. When those needs can be met by others, there should be a willingness to enter into a Kingdom partnership. Leaders must never presume that others are there to be utilized to meet needs. Presumption kills Kingdom generosity. When God appoints some to help leaders and ministries, it

should be treasured by those on the receiving end. Paul was so thankful for the Philippians participation in his hours of need.

B. They sacrificed toward Kingdom advance (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.”

There is no bitterness in Paul's words that communicate the fact that it was only the Philippians who helped to meet his needs during one particular season. He is not focused so much on who did not help him but, rather, he is expressing deep gratitude that the Philippians stepped up when Paul had nowhere else to turn. He had not forgotten how God used them in his life and ministry. A mature leader will not take people for granted when they are used by God to advance the ministry assigned to that leader.

C. They lived in a pattern of contributing (16) - “Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.”

We are never to keep a record of the wrongs done to us. Yet, it is a virtue to keep a record of those who blessed us, how they blessed and the frequency with which they blessed. If you are going to keep a file on others' interactions with you, keep a file on the ones who have done you good!

D. They were remembered and rewarded (17) - “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.”

Hebrews 6:10 - “For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”

Paul could honestly declare that he did not operate with an opportunistic spirit. He was not out sniffing around for love offerings. He had already declared that he knew how to trust God with little or much. His words of gratitude were intended to highlight the rightful expectation that the Philippians should look for God to reward them. May we all remember that we each have "accounts in Heaven" wherein we are storing up reward. Paul puts an eternal perspective on a temporary release on earth.

III. What A Firmly Anchored Gratitude Looks Like (17-23)

A. He commended their sacrifice (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."

Imagine the deep sense of value that the Philippians could now attach to their investments in Paul and his work. It was more than mailing some money. It was more than paying a bill or writing a check. Paul spoke of the fullness of what they sent. He told them that it resulted in him being well-supplied by their gifts. He is letting them know that he did not take it for granted. Beyond his appreciation, Paul reminded them that, ultimately, their release was an offering to the Lord himself. God found their sacrifice pleasing, like a fragrant offering released to Him. He had accepted what they gave and they could feel very fulfilled that both God and Paul had noted what they had done.

B. He reminded them of God's faithfulness (19) - "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

The beauty of this promise finds us! For those who are sacrificial, intentional, proactive and consistent in sowing into the Kingdom, there should be an absolute confidence that God will meet their needs. While rejoicing in this verse, let us be careful to note that it is not a blanket promise to everyone. This promise is given to those who faithfully invest their resources into the Kingdom of God. When we do this, we can sleep well at night, knowing that the Lord will meet every single one of our true needs.

C. He elevated their focus (20-23) - "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. 21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

It may strike some as being overly simplistic, but it seems clear in the bible that, at the end of the age, what matters most is how we regarded Jesus and people. In an age dominated by things, Heaven still prioritizes relationships. Success, achievement, fame, beauty and power are for this world only. None of those things hold value in the eternal age.

"Remaining True to the End" Philippians 4:10-23
Wednesday 5/1/19 – Jeff Lyle

What is on the final scorecard is how we invested all that we are in a deepening relationship with God through His Son, and how we loved others as those who are ambassadors of Jesus. Paul closes this heartfelt letter to the Christians in Philippi by reminding them of his own heart's priority: to glorify God forever. His love for other believers is made clear when he asks those who originally read this letter to make sure to tell all the other believers that Paul was thinking of them. He also made sure to mention that the Christians who were with him in Rome sent their own greetings to their brothers and sisters in Philippi. How glorious that, even in Caesar's household, there were now followers of Jesus. The Gospel had finally touched the government ruling the world at that time! As Paul writes his final words of love and leadership, he points all of them to the grace of God, the person of Jesus and the powerful Kingdom work that was impacting their spirits. What an awesome leader who has written four chapters of wisdom, correction, exhortation and confidence to a small church in the ancient world. Let us never forget that Paul penned these words while suffering as a prisoner for the Lord in a Roman jail. Treasures can be found in our tragedies. May the same Spirit who elevated the Apostle Paul to give the glory to God during hardship do the same for us as we serve Him in our own day.