

# Philippians (4:14-23)

## *Paul's Expressions of Thanks (4:10-20)*

Chapter 4 includes the following themes: Like-mindedness, rejoicing, selflessness, pray instead of being anxious, think holy thoughts, be content. This final passage concludes with Christian gratitude and courtesy.

### I. Gratitude Expressed (4:14-20)

#### A. *Gratitude for Their Partnership*

1. Paul is thankful to the Philippians, not only for the material gift brought to him from Epaphroditus (cf., 2:25), but for their partnership for “sharing in his troubles.” The Philippians participate in Paul’s troubles in the following ways:
  - a) By actively spreading the Gospel with him (1:5; 4:3)
  - b) By participating in God’s grace (1:7)
  - c) By meeting Paul’s material needs (4:14)
2. The gift sent to Paul was tangible evidence that the Philippians had fully identified with Paul in the cause of the Gospel. Although the Philippians did not need a reminder of their own activity, Paul was quick to show his deep gratitude to them for their support in the furtherance of the Gospel.
3. Paul recalls the Philippians’ tireless, sacrificial devotion some ten years earlier when he stayed in Corinth for an extended period of time (cf., 2 Cor. 8:1-5).
  - a) It’s significant to note that the support sent to Paul was sufficient to care for his needs and he refused to take support from Corinth (see, 2 Cor. 11:8-9). Paul devoted his entire time to preaching and teaching while in Corinth (Acts 18:5). Yet, he worked part-time to sustain himself when at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). “Macedonia” in Acts and 2 Cor. 8 refers to the Philippian church exclusively as Philip. 4:15-16 make clear.
4. Paul seeks not the relief that the support brings, but the blessing bestowed on those who give (4:17; see, Acts 20:35). Paul was more focused on the giver than the gift. Without saying so, Paul surely believed that it was God who gave the increase (see, 1 Cor. 3:7).
5. To describe the gift delivered by the hands of Epaphroditus as a “fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” is to give it the highest place in God’s sight. The expression “fragrant offering” is used of Noah’s sacrifice (Gen. 8:21), Levitical offerings directed by the Lord (Ex. 29:18), and the death of Christ (Eph. 5:2).

#### B. *Assurance of God’s Provision (4:19)*

1. “And my God will meet all your needs” is not some carte blanche guarantee that we will always have our needs met, much less our desires. This verse must be kept in its context, which has to do with the advancement of the Gospel. In other words, in so far as we are seeking to advance the Gospel by sacrificial giving will our needs met.
2. Moreover, the needs are not limited to financial/material. They could very well be spiritual, just as Paul indicated that he had learned the secret of contentment while suffering for the Gospel (4:12). There were times when Paul’s material needs were not met (2 Cor. 11:27), yet God always met Paul’s spiritual needs. In addition, Paul has already shown that he is primarily concerned about what God will do *in* them rather than *for* them (1:9-11; 2:1-5; 2:13; 3:15-16; 4:17).
3. “According to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” is the great caveat in this verse. It is out of God’s limitless wealth that he provides for our every need as he determines for his maximal glory. Put differently, God’s glory is the *raison d’etre* for all that he supplies.
4. In thanking God openly for what he has done in the Philippians, Paul expresses profound pastoral skill in motivating his converts to growth and Christlike character.

### II. Final Greetings and Benediction (4:21-23)

#### A. *Lessons in Christian Courtesy*

1. Paul offers a series of greetings that demonstrate his desire to keep believers connected with one another.
2. By referencing “spirit” in 4:23, Paul is no more suggesting a trichotomist view of human nature than he is a monistic view of one substance (spirit). He is simply expressing his desire for them to experience grace.