

Pressing on toward the goal – In the context of the Grace of Christ
Further Reflection and discussion in the series – Philippians 4:10-23

Living out the story of Peace

As Paul concludes his letter, he revisits the central theme of Partnership (or fellowship) in the Gospel that was stated in chapter one. (see 1:3-7).

In the sermon on this text, Drew identified three aspects of the passage for further reflection and application. (there is much more in the text but this is a good start)

- The expressed gratitude of Paul for the people of the Philippian Church
- What it means to be 'content in Christ'.
- The greeting of Grace that ends the letter.

This reflection will explore these three aspects of the text, and in the process provide some questions to help groups engage in the text a little more and look together at how the word of God might spur one another on to good works.

Looking into the text:

Gratitude for their gifts:

1. *Describe the level of response Paul had, to their show of concern for him? (vs 10)*
2. *What might be the intent of Paul's use of the past tense 'rejoiced'? (vs 10)*
3. *Something in the text leads us to conclude that Paul is not having a go at the Philippian church for not previously showing concern; what is it?*
 - a. *Not lack of but lack of!*
4. *In verse 14 -16 Paul states what he has appreciated about their actions; what is it that they have done and what has been the impact on Paul?*
5. *In verse 17, Paul says that he does not desire their 'gifts' – actually, the statement he writes is "not that I seek the 'dona' (gift) but that I seek the 'fruit' that may abound to your account". There are two things to note in the way he writes;*
 - a. *'dona' is the same word Paul used in Ephes 4:8 when he wrote that Jesus has given gifts to the church*
 - b. *The word 'fruit' is the same word used in John's gospel account to describe the result of 'abiding in Christ' (John 15)*
 - c. *Discuss with the group the significance of this connection with the present discussion on 'gifts' that the Philippians have provided.*
6. *"I have received payment in full" (vs 18). This seems to indicate that the Philippian Church 'owed' him and now they have 'paid him back'. This however is not what is being profiled in this statement; it is a commercial statement of the day, contextually appropriate and simply saying that he is now certifying that there was a gift sent and he has received it – the transaction has happened, be assured Epaphroditus has discharged his duties responsibly for the church. In this case, what does the second half of vs 18 therefore communicate or emphasise?*

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Being “content” in Christ:

1. *When Paul writes “I am not saying this because I am in need...” what is he trying to stress; what IS the basis of their friendship and partnership, if not ‘usefulness’?*
2. *The ‘stoic’ view of sufficiency is ‘self-sufficiency’ and the Christian view is ‘Christ-sufficiency’; What is Paul saying in these verses*
3. *What do you think Paul means by “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation”? (vs 12)*
4. *What is Paul saying about his past and current experience of being well fed of hungry and what is the link with ‘be content’*
5. *Given what is being said by Paul in this passage, what is the specific contextual meaning of verse 13?*

The greeting of Grace:

1. *Discuss together the significance of Pauls instruction to the leaders of the Philippian church “Greet all God’s people in Christ Jesus” (Vs 21)*
 - a. *What might it look like to obey this instruction?*
 - b. *What would it mean for the leaders of Philippian church?*
 - c. *What impact might it have on the ones who ‘are greeted’?*
 - d. *Why the qualifier – “In Christ Jesus”?*
2. *The whole letter is about the grace and mercy of God as he reconciles the world to himself through Christ.*
 - a. *We see this in 1:2 – take some time to write this verse out in full.*
 - b. *Take a look at 2 Cor 8:9 and 12:9 and then write down what is being expressed in these verses from Corinthians about Grace.*
 - c. *Miroslav Volf writes “To forgive is to name and condemn the misdeed. The same is true of God. God doesn’t just condemn and then forgive. God also condemns in the very act of forgiving.” That is what makes accepting God’s forgiveness and grace so difficult at times.*
 - i. *What has been your personal experience of God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness?*
 - ii. *As you think about your neighbours and family, how might they better ‘hear’ of the grace of God, through your witness and testimony?*

Summary:

Spend some time as a group, talking about what it might look like for you to help others receive God’s forgiveness.

1. *What needs to be put in place?*
2. *What would help you connect with your friends and family better?*
3. *What things might be making it difficult for the people you connect with, to better appreciate God’s grace?*