

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

III. Philippians: Nurture In Living In Preoccupation With Christ

P. Gaining Inner Peace With Our Lives' Material Ups And Downs

(Philippians 4:10-14)

I. Introduction

- A. After calling Euodias and Syntyche in Philippians 4:1-4 to live peaceably with one another, and in teaching them in Philippians 4:5-9 how to diffuse the inner unrest that fueled their disharmony, Paul in Philippians 4:10-14 explained the triumph of inner peace he experienced in the material ups and downs of his own walk.
- B. We thus view Philippians 4:10-14 for insight and edification in handling our own material ups and downs:

II. Gaining Inner Peace With Our Lives' Material Ups And Downs, Philippians 4:10-14.

- A. Paul expressed great joy in the Lord that his Philippian readers had revived their initial concern to donate materially toward his pressing material needs as an afflicted prisoner of Rome, Phil. 4:10a with 1:12-13.
- B. By this statement, Paul clarified that he did **not** mean to imply the following two things, Phil. 4:10b-11a:
 1. He did **not** mean to imply that his readers had lovelessly neglected to address his needs in the past, for they had formerly in some way lacked the opportunity to minister to Paul in this realm, Philippians 4:10b.
 2. Also, Paul did **not** mean to imply that he desperately longed for material contributions, Philippians 4:11a.
- C. In Philippians 4:11b-13, Paul explained the cause for his not desperately longing for material contributions from his believing readers even though he was then a materially afflicted prisoner of Rome (as follows):
 1. Paul held he had learned that in whatever state he existed to be "self-sufficient, contented," (*autarkes*, Ibid.; Moulton & Milligan, The Voc. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 93), Phil. 4:11b. His use of *autarkes* here closely aligns with the secular Greek philosophers' use of the word to describe the virtue of being contented with the **least** of life's material things (J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, 1974, p. 163) as well as living "independent of external circumstances," Ibid. In other words, (a) there was a shift in Paul's expectations regarding material possessions so that he had come to learn to "live without," but also (b) to live in self-sufficiency through ingenuity, self-discipline and hard work.
 2. Paul further explained he knew both how to "be abased, made low" (*tapeinoo*, Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 440) in being so impoverished that he was considered a lowly slave as well as how to "be over and above; abound; have in abundance" (*perisseuo*, Ibid., p. 357) and so be viewed by onlookers as a high class citizen, Philippians 4:12a.
 3. Indeed, in "any and every" (ESV, NIV; *en panti kai en pasin*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) situation in his experience of life and ministry, Paul had once-for-all (perfect passive tense) "learned the secret" (*mueo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 530), of being well fed (*chortazo*, Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 482) and also of going hungry (*peinao*, Ibid., p. 351), of being "over and above; abounding; having abundance" (*perisseuo* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) and also of "suffering need; coming up short" (*hustereo*, Ibid., Abbott-Smith, p. 464), Philippians 4:12b.
 4. Paul's enabling power for this remarkable self-sufficiency and contentment in the up and down swings of material welfare arose from his relationship with the Lord: he claimed he "had power, was competent, able" (*ischuo*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 384) to handle all material states he faced through the One Who "strengthened" (*endunamoo*, Ibid., p. 263) him, that is, through Christ Jesus his Lord, Philippians 4:13.
- D. Nevertheless, as Paul added, regardless of his capacity to have continued to function well and contentedly were his reader's donations not to have been sent to him, he wrote that his readers had done "commendably" (*kalos*, Ibid., p. 402) in sharing in Paul's affliction by their recent material contribution to him, Phil. 4:14.

Lesson: Paul had learned from God's leading to face BOTH material impoverishment and its sociological lack of respect from others with a mindset of self-sufficient ingenuity, self-discipline and hard work with contentment, AND to deal with material abundance with its sociological respect from others, all by the enabling of the Lord. As such, he sought true fulfillment not from the amount of material goods he possessed or lacked at any given moment in time, but from his relationship with the Lord.

Application: (1) May we like Paul so rely on the Lord for blessing that we face either material impoverishment or great bounty with equal detachment from such things, finding in Christ all we need for fulfillment. (2) In times of material lack, by relying on the power of our Lord for real happiness, may we utilize ingenuity, hard work and self discipline with contentment to live and serve God with the same effectiveness we do in times of material bounty.