

EVEN PAUL NEEDED A TEAM

By Todd Core

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 4:10-20

[10] I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. [11] I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. [12] I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. [13] I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me. [14] Still, you did well by sharing with me in my hardship.

[15] And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. [16] For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. [17] Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. [18] But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided — a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. [19] And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [20] Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

OBSERVATION

Often my image of Paul is that of a Lone Ranger Evangelist who is blunt, fearless, and seemingly looking to rile up entire cities. However, a closer examination of the Scriptures reveals one of the keys to his success in ministry. Paul valued, appreciated, and needed biblical community. You almost always see him acknowledging friends and co-laborers in his writings. In this particular passage, we see Paul commend his friends in the church at Philippi for their ministry on his behalf. Let's take a moment to point out a few observations regarding Paul's regard for faith relationships below:

- In vv. 10-14, Paul shares how much it encouraged him that this church had “renewed their concern” for him. The Christ community at Philippi had provided a financial gift to help Paul in his ministry. He rejoices in having a team surround him in ministry. He admits that there had been some tough days but that Christ had been his strength (v. 13). Notice in v. 14 that Paul states that the Philippians partnered with Paul in ministry. Even Paul needs a team.
- Side note: These verses and particularly v. 13 have often been misused and taken out of context. Paul shares that he has learned contentment in life whether he had plenty or nothing. In both of those circumstances, Paul acknowledges that he was

able to thrive in any circumstance because Christ was his strength not material possessions. What a powerful word this is today!

- In verses 15-20, we note three important principles of living in community.
 - In v. 15, Paul shares that the Philippians were the only church to participate as givers and receivers. What Paul meant is that many churches were willing to receive the gospel but only the Philippians were moved to give as well. Living in biblical community is built on not only receiving from others but also giving of ourselves. An obedient Life Group cannot just receive teaching each week from a leader. They must also give care, prayer, time, energy to each other to encourage them in ministry pursuits.
 - In v. 18, Paul explains that by sending Epaphroditus with the gift, the believers had offered a fragrant offering to God. Two things here... First, let us recognize that the presence of Epaphroditus was even more encouraging than the financial gift (See chapter 2 for evidence). Sometimes just showing up for people in our Life Groups in difficult times is more meaningful than the food we bring to their door. Second, serving each other is an act of worship that is like a pleasing aroma before the Father. To put it bluntly, we smell good to God when we serve each other.
 - In v. 19, Paul encourages the Philippians that God will supply their needs according to the riches of Christ. When we sacrificially serve others, God is trustworthy to meet our spiritual needs as well. The beauty of a Life Group is that some weeks you may need to share something that will help another person in their walk with Christ, and then other weeks they may share something that from the riches of Christ's coffers restores your soul to walk with Him another day.

OBEDIENCE

I love this passage of Scripture because it reminds me that I was not meant to walk this faith journey alone. Christ is sufficient in plenty or in want, but it is extra wind in our sails to have others who love us and support us on the journey. Here are a few steps of obedience based on the truth revealed in this text.

- Write two letters this week. Write one to someone who has encouraged you in your faith journey through biblical community. Write the other one to someone you feel like might need some encouragement.
- Who is someone in your Life Group for whom you need to “show up” this week and be an Epaphroditus?
- If you have been negligent to be part of your Life Group, would you “renew your concern” for them by attending the next meeting?

- Do you have a need either physical, spiritual, familial, or emotional that you need to ask your biblical community to pray with you about? Would you send them a text now asking for prayer?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving us Your Son to be our strength. Thank You for providing a faith community to be part of on a weekly basis. Help me to not only receive from my group but to be a giver as well. Increase my group's fellowship and concern for one another. Help us to be Your agent of mercy, encouragement, and truth in each other's lives. Amen.