

BROKEN CHAINS
The Philippians Series # 15
(This commentary corresponds with Sermon #17 that was preached on July 30th)

(ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY)

THE JOY OF GIVING

My wife, Becky, dislikes watching television with me. Undoubtedly part of that can be explained by my male tendencies with the remote. Why watch just one show when, with the proper technique and timing, you can watch five or six shows simultaneously? I know there is another reason I'm no fun to be with when it comes to watching television. I HATE the commercials and I have been known to complain about them. My complaint about commercials is not that they are disruptive (although they are that), but that they play upon the assumed stupidity of the viewer.

Have you ever noticed how often car commercials tell absolutely nothing about the car? People should require meaningful information before making a \$40,000 purchase. But the commercials by-pass the intellect and simply try to manipulate the emotions. How? By making the viewer feel as though he or she **needs** that car. I admit the marketing technique is effective. People often show little discernment in identifying the difference between a genuine need and a mere want. I guess that statistically it is more likely that people will make a purchase quicker if they feel they need something, thus by-passing the process by which they analytically think about the possibility that they have a want but not a true need. Millions of Americans have dug themselves deep financial holes because they purchased, on credit, things they wanted but did not truly need. By the way, I can kick myself for some of the boneheaded purchases I have made out of impulse.

Contentment, or lack thereof, is often connected to money and material things. This is a mistake and a trap. Paul wrote Philippians as a thank-you note to the Philippian Christians. They had sent him a financial gift to help him during his imprisonment in Rome. Philippi was in a region where Christians tended to be poor, yet they gave generously and sacrificially (see II Corinthians 8:1-5). While he was very thankful, Paul wanted his friends to understand that he had learned how to be content even if he was financially destitute (Philippians 4:11-13). I think Paul took this as an opportunity to reinforce what he had been teaching them about joy, peace and contentment.

It is in Philippians 4:19 that we see yet another one of the great promises of this wonderful letter:

*And my God will meet all your needs
according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Paul understood the difference between needs and wants. Sometimes when we think that God has not met our needs, we have made the mistake of confusing needs with wants. Wants are not necessarily wrong, and if we are careful not to be shallow and petty it is perfectly fine to pray about wants. Sometimes God gives us what we want, and sometimes He doesn't. However, He always gives us what we need, and in a time and in a manner of His choosing. Here is where we need to remember that our wise and loving God knows all things with a perfect and exhaustive knowledge. He knows the beginning from the end and knows with complete perfection what it is that we need. Learning to rest in this places us on the path to **BROKEN CHAINS**.

In 4:17 Paul said that he was looking for what could be credited to their account. By this he meant that he knew they would be blessed for having given. I believe this blessing contains at least three aspects. First of all, there is a joy that accrues to the heart of a joyful giver. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). When we give financially with a cheerful heart to support the gospel ministry we become partners with that ministry (Philippians 1:3-6). I can personally attest to the joy Becky and I have received over the years through giving to ministries and missionaries around the world. Our own church comes first in our giving, but God has given us the privilege of also partnering with others.

The second aspect of the blessing of giving is that God rewards and multiplies the gifts of the giver:

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
And God is able to make all grace abound to you,
so that in all things at all times, having all that you need,
you will abound in every good work.*

As it is written:

*"He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever."*

*Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food
will also supply and increase your store of seed
and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.*

*You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion,
and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

II Corinthians 9:6-11

Sadly, this great biblical truth is twisted and abused by the "health and wealth" and "prosperity" teachers who seem to dominate Christian television. Looking beyond their false teaching there is still a fundamental truth that we cannot out-give God. Certainly we should not treat Him as an investment banker, but God will meet the needs created by giving that is truly sacrificial in nature.

This brings us to the third aspect of blessing. In 4:18 Paul told the Philippians that their gifts were “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”. Paul was using terminology from the Old Testament sacrificial system. In other words, when we give cheerfully unto the Lord it is an act of worship which glorifies God and pleases Him. Knowing that we can give to that end is another step toward true joy.

This brings us to the end of our commentary on Philippians. My prayer is that you have found it to be helpful. At the beginning of this commentary I mentioned the danger of quoting the promises of Philippians 4 to other believers who are in need of encouragement. They are wonderful promises and they can bring great comfort, but they often seem to fail. Why is that? Because we overlook the foundation found in chapters 1-3. God’s Word cannot fail, and that certainly includes the chapter 4 promises. However, we can fail to study the context and short-circuit the necessary process of growing in joy. Here then is a final checklist, a spiritual inventory to find our way to **BROKEN CHAINS**:

THIRTEEN KEYS TO BROKEN CHAINS

1. Remember my true identity in Christ, both as a slave and a saint (1:1)
2. There is power in a thankful heart. When I learn to be truly thankful everything takes on a new appearance (1:3-4).
3. All circumstances in my life are by Divine appointment. I can see the faithful hand of a good God when I learn to think biblically (1:12-13).
4. My trials can be a blessing to others; I must look beyond myself (1:14).
5. To exalt and glorify Christ through my trials is worth far more than personal ease (1:18, 20).
6. View all things with an eternal perspective. This life is short and this world is not my home. I am a citizen of heaven (1:23; 3:20).
7. Live in obedience to God’s Word, it opens the door to peace and blessing (1:27-30). Disobedience robs me of joy.
8. I must strive, in a true humility, to be in right relationship with fellow believers (2:1-5; 4:2-3).
9. Biblical joy is a choice of the will because it is a perspective, a way I can choose to view things. It can generate wonderful emotions, but joy goes beyond feelings (3:1; 4:4).
10. Contentment need not be held captive by my circumstances. The work that God does in a yielded heart is able to give peace, contentment and joy (4:5-13).
11. God is a full-time teacher and desires to use all that happens in my life to help me learn (4:11). This is a process that takes time; it is not usually an on/off switch.
12. God is too wise to give me all that I want, and God is too loving to not give me all that I need (4:19).
13. God will never leave or forsake me, even when I fail (1:6, 4:5b).

**Here are some questions to ask yourself
in order to apply the truths of Philipians to your life.**

1. Of the 13 keys, with **which 3** am I most successful? _____

2. Which of the 3 keys are most lacking in my thinking? _____

3. Why is “thinking biblically” essential to experiencing God’s promises? _____

4. What are some outside influences in my life that make it difficult for me to think biblically?

5. Do I take quality time each day for prayer and Bible study? _____

6. My plan for Bible study this week is: _____

7. Identify 3 important verses in Philipians and commit them to memory. The 3 verses I will memorize are:
