

1. **Introduction:** As seen last lesson, verse 4.8 lists 8 “categories of virtues:” Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. The virtue categories listed are not specifically Christian. In fact, they are all pagan virtues that are found especially in the writings of Greek philosophers.
  - Paul, as a Christian, says in 1 Corinthians 6, all things are permitted for me, but not all things are beneficial or expedient. Paul recommends these virtues commended by the Greek philosopher as virtues Christians should practice.
  - The criteria for deciding whether something is permitted for a believer is simply, will God approve?
  - A person must decide if what they propose to do or believe is compatible with God’s moral character. The answer will at times depend on circumstances.
  - Something OK for me to do as far as its effect on me is concerned, may not be OK for me to do if there is someone present who will be harmed by the act.
  - God’s grace permits Christians to partake of “good” things from the pagan world, but all things permitted may not be expedient or beneficial. The pagan virtues he lists are not only permitted, but they are “good things” for Christians to meditate on and make permanent parts of their lives.
  - Scripture spells out certain “do’s” and “don’ts,” but if something is not specifically labeled “do or don’t,” the category it belongs to may not be obvious.
  - Circumstances often determine whether a specific action is OK. If a seemingly “OK” action will cause another person to sin, it is not OK for you to do it in the presence of others. Paul gives the example of eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. To some it was OK but not to others.
  - If the rightness of an action is doubtful (like should a Christian drink alcohol, smoke, watch a specific movie), your choice is to be based on whether what is being considered is consistent with God’s character and moral principles.
  - When believers seek that (whether spiritual or secular) which is consistent with God’s nature, then the God of peace will be with us for each step of the way (4:9).
2. **A Church’s Heritage:** Churches are remembered in Scripture for different reasons, some good, some bad. Here are some examples.
  - Rome: The church was conspicuous for its faith. (**Rm. 1:8**: *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.*)
  - Ephesus: The church was known for its hard work (**Rev. 2:2:3**: *I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.* <sup>3</sup> *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*)

- Corinth: As seen in 1 and 2 Corinthians, the church at Corinth had repeated problems with division, moral laxity, and theological confusion.
  - Laodicea: From Revelation 3:14-22, the church at Laodicea was known as being lukewarm, self-sufficient, and spiritually blind. It receives no commendation from Jesus and is rebuked for being neither hot nor cold.
  - Thessalonica: From the two letters Paul wrote to them, the church was a vibrant, influential congregation in a port city of Macedonia. The church was known for its rapid growth and strong faith, but it suffered from a doctrinal dispute centered on Christ's second coming.
  - Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11 praises the church for perseverance through persecution and poverty and promised them a crown of life.
  - Philippi: Revelation 3:7-13. The church in Philadelphia is commended for its faithfulness, endurance, for not denying Christ's name, and receives the promise to be kept from the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole world. Jesus states, he has placed before them an open door, which no one can shut, signifying opportunity for ministry and evangelism.
3. **Paul and Philippi**: Paul's first visit to Philippi (Acts 16:11-40) was 10 years before writing this letter. When the letter was written, he was a prisoner in Rome. Epaphroditus from Philippi was with Paul and would carry the letter to the church.
- Paul loved the congregation at Philippi. From the beginning of Paul's work with them, they grasped the gospel and its importance. They also were concerned for his welfare and helped him financially, in his evangelization work, and physically when he was sick. They always seemed to be there when he needed them.
  - When word reached the Philippians that Paul was under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar's court, they sent Epaphroditus to help along with a financial gift to help with Paul's expenses. This was an unexpected, unrequested benevolent act by the Philippians.
  - That tangible action caused Paul to rejoice at the church's self-sacrificial love. It expressed both their concern for him and their willingness to continue supporting his ministry with people and financially. Concern for his welfare was continuous but there was not always opportunity to help.
4. **Philippians 4:10-13**: *I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.*<sup>11</sup> *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.*<sup>12</sup> *I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.*<sup>13</sup> *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*
- Lest he give the impression that he was asking for more money, Paul assures them that he has learned to be content in every kind of situation, whether abounding or brought low.

- Paul did not imply that “self-sufficiency” was to be sought, but rather to rely on “Christ-sufficiency.” Paul was content to rest in Christ’s provision and timing. He knew that his own ability to control his circumstances, even to feed himself, was insufficient.
  - He faced times of plenty and times of hunger. He knew first-hand abundance and need. He was beaten, imprisoned, and ship-wrecked, but Christ sustained him, and he did his job, he planted and nurtured many churches.
  - Verse 4:13 is often quoted and almost always misinterpreted. The verse is, ***“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”***
  - The usual misinterpretation is to assume it means, because I am in Christ, whatever I need to do to succeed, I can accomplish because I can do all things through He who strengthens me.
  - The “all things” in this verse refers to surviving the extremes of life. Chuck Swindoll paraphrases the verse as, “Whatever ups and downs life sends my way, I can handle whatever comes, not through my own strength, but by the power of Christ.”
  - Christ alone provides the strength we need to endure all life brings. Nothing else is sufficient for all life’s “ups and downs.”
  - Everything else – education, money, political power, etc. – has the potential to be either good or bad. Only Christ is consistently good in Himself and is good for us.
5. ***Philippians 4:14-19: Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.***
- Since Paul has said that, through their relationship with Christ believers can be content in all circumstances, does that mean believers don’t need help from other people? No!
  - Helping one another is beneficial to both the one helped and the one who helps.
  - In these verses, Paul shows how God uses help from others to meet needs.
  - All things come from God the Father, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, but our triune God delights in using believers to accomplish His purposes.
  - Paul begins with commending the Philippians for sharing in his trouble (4:14). They did so by never forgetting about him even at low points after he left Philippi.
  - They generously contributed to his ministry needs as he continue to other cities.
  - Paul recalls a time when only Philippi in all Macedonia had contributed financially to the cause of spreading the gospel (4:15).

- The Philippians demonstrated with continuing gifts their commitment to Paul and his preaching of the gospel. Even when he was in Thessalonica (4:16), they sent gifts several times. That is significant because he went directly from Philippi to Thessalonica.
  - Thus, the Philippians began immediately to support his evangelization efforts. Their partnership with Paul was both early and enduring.
  - Paul recognized and delighted in the fact that their giving and concern would be a blessing to them, not just to himself and those to whom he was ministering (4:17). They were demonstrating Christ-like love for Paul and those to whom he ministered.
  - Thanks to their compassion and generosity, Paul had all he needed and more (4:18). Epaphroditus had delivered in Rome what they sent to him.
  - In His thanks to them, Paul uses language often used about Temple sacrifices to draw attention to their holy nature. They sent ***“a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”***
  - Their attitude toward Paul and his ministry caused him to be confident that the Lord would continue to bless them: ***“my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*** (4:19)
6. ***Philippians 4:20-23: To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*** <sup>21</sup> ***Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.*** <sup>22</sup> ***All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.*** <sup>23</sup> ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.***
- As Paul began his letter with prayer, he now ends it with a doxology: ***“To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”***
  - Though many (like Luke, Timothy, Epaphroditus) have worked with Paul in God’s mission, it is God alone who enables all things and deserves all praise and glory.
  - Paul offers his own personal greeting to the ***“every saint in Christ Jesus.”*** Without mentioning each one by name, he encourages them by reminding them that as “saints” they are set apart for the service and worship of God.
  - He sends greetings from the “brothers” who are with him (including Timothy, Epaphroditus, and maybe others. Then, a greeting from other saints including some from Caesar’s household staff.
  - He concludes with a benediction. ***“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”***

**7. May God bless our study of Philippians with understanding!**