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Giving is a Fragrant Offering

4: 15-19

Giving is a fragrant offering DIG: What may have happened that changed Paul's ability to provide for his own needs so that he needed others to help him? What three statements summarize Paul's joy and gratitude? How was the Philippians' gift a fragrant offering? What are the five principles of contentment?

REFLECT: Why do you think prosperity has done more damage to believers than adversity? How can Paul's attitude towards giving and receiving enable you to be a better giver? Receiver? Which of these five principles of contentment are you doing really well at? What principle do you need to work on this week?

Service to the Lord is like the animal sacrifices of the Torah, a fragrant offering.

Five principles of contentment flow from this seemingly mundane conclusion of Paul's letter. A **contented** person is confident in **God's** providence, satisfied with little, independent from circumstances, strengthened by divine power and preoccupied with the well-being of others. **(1)** A **contented** person is confident in God's providence **(4:10)**; **(2)** A **contented** person is satisfied with little **(4:11)**; **(3)** A **contented** person is independent of circumstances **(4:12)**; **(4)** A **contented** person is strengthened by divine power **(4:13)**; and **(5)** A **contented** person is preoccupied with the well-being of others **(4:14-19)**.



(5) A contented person is preoccupied with the well-being of others: As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on *Philippians*, the final strand in the tapestry of **contentment** woven by **Paul** is concern for others. Those who live only for themselves will never be **content**, because **contentment** for them can come only when their circumstances are exactly as they want them to be. And that will never happen. Only those who unselfishly put others' well-being above their own will find **contentment**. One of the qualities of true biblical **love** is unselfishness: **Love is not rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of wrongs (First Corinthians 13:5). The apostle** encouraged the Philippians to **do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility or mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (2:3-4).** That is also the same attitude as **Messiah (to see link click [Av](#) - Obedient to Death).**

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction (4:14 Greek). Nevertheless initiates an important transition in **Paul's** thought. What **he** had written in **4:10-13** could have easily been misinterpreted by **the Philippians**. Despite **their poverty (Second Corinthians 8:1-2), they** had sent a sacrificial gift to **Paul** through **Epaphroditus (4:18)**. After staying in Rome for a while and ministering to **the apostle, Epaphroditus** had returned to **Philippi**, bringing this letter from **Paul** with **him**. In it, the church would read: **Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and**

suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (4:11-13). If the letter had ended there, **the Philippians** could have concluded that **Paul** neither needed or appreciated **their** sacrificial **gift** to **him**.

To make sure that **the Philippians** didn't get the wrong impression, **Paul** hastened to reassure **them** that **they** had **done well** (Greek: *kalos*, meaning *something noble or beautiful in character*) **to share with him in his affliction**. But, **he** needed to explain to **them** how **their gift** could have been a noble act if **he** didn't need **it**.

Paul began by taking **his** readers back ten years. **As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Gospel**. During that time, and even **after he left Macedonia** for the Achaian cities of Athens and Corinth, **no other church shared with him in the matter of giving and receiving (4:15 Greek)**. That phrase points to business terminology. The word translated **matter** is sometimes translated *accounts* (**Matthew 18:23 and 25:19**) or *accounting* (**Luke 16:2**), and the terms **giving and receiving** can mean *credit* and *debit*. Evidently **Paul** was a careful steward of **his** resources and kept an account of **his** receipts and expenditures. Even before **he left Macedonia, the Philippians** supported **him**. During **his** ministry in **Thessalonica** **they sent a gift more than once for his needs (4:16 Greek)**. **Their** generosity, along with **Paul's** own hard work, allowed **him** to minister free of charge in **Thessalonica (First Thessalonians 2:9 and Second Thessalonians 3:8)** and **Corinth (Acts 18:5 and Second Corinthians 11:8)**.

Paul could rejoice over **their gift** yet still be **content** in **ADONAI's** sovereign protection for **him** because **he** was selfless. That selflessness led **him** to write: **I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness (4:17 NLT)**. **Their gift** brought **Paul joy**, not because of **its** personal material benefit to **him**, but because of its spiritual benefit to **them**. The principle that those who **give** generously will be **blessed** is taught repeatedly in the Bible. **Solomon** wrote: **If you are gracious to the poor, it's as if you lent (whatever you gave them) to ADONAI, and He will repay you for your good deed (Proverbs 19:17)**. Later **he** wrote: **He who is generous is blessed (Proverbs 22:9a; cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6 and Acts 20:35)**.

Three statements summarize **Paul's joy** and gratitude. The Greek verb in the phrase **I have received everything in full** was commonly used in a commercial sense in extra-biblical Greek to denote payment **in full**. **And have an abundance**

translates to a Greek verb that means *to overflow, to have excess or to have more than enough*. The Greek verb in Paul's final statement: **I am amply supplied** speaks of being filled up completely (**4:18a Greek**). Taken together those three phrases show that **Paul, having been generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus (4:18b Greek)**, was overwhelmed by the **Philippians** generosity.

Using **sacrificial** language of the Torah (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ah - The Offerings from the People's Perspective**), **Paul** described the **Philippians' gift as a fragrant offering that is acceptable and pleasing to God (4:18c Greek; cf. Psalm 51:19)**. The apostle saw the **Philippians' gift** as a **sacrificial** act of worship to **ADONAI**. Such spiritual **sacrifices** are required of believers in the B'rit Chadashah instead of the animal **sacrifices** of the Torah. In **Romans 12:1**, **Paul** commands us to **Present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship**.

The writer to the **Hebrews** urges: **Through Him, therefore, "let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise" continually, for this is the fruit of the lips that acknowledge His name (Hebrews 13:15 quoting Leviticus 7:12, 22:29; Psalm 50:14, 23; 107:22, 116:17; Second Chronicles 29:31)**. The believer's **sacrifice** of praise is to be offered **continually**. It is not to be a fair-weather **offering**, but an **offering** in every **circumstance**. **Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Messiah Yeshua (First Thessalonians 5:18)**.

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for God is well pleased with such "sacrifices" (13:16). **Yochanan** warns us that **the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen (First John 4:20)**. In other words, if our praise of **ADONAI** in word is not accompanied by **doing good and sharing with others**, it is not acceptable to **Him**. **Praise of God** in word and deed are inseparable. **The religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted with the world (James 1:27)**.

Paul knew that the **Philippians** would not only receive spiritual **blessings** in heaven for **their** generosity, but also that **God** would **supply all their physical needs** in this life. But **ADONAI** would not be in **their** debt. Because **He** is the ultimate **Creator** and owns everything, we cannot **give Him** anything that **He**

doesn't already possess. **The Philippians** had sacrificially **given** of **their** earthly possessions to support **God's servant, Paul** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bn - A Biblical Model for Giving**). In return, **ADONAI** would amply **supply their** physical **needs**; **the Philippians** would discover that it is impossible to **outgive God**. Having **sown bountifully**, **they** would **reap bountifully** (**Second Corinthians 9:6**); having **honored the Lord** from **the first of all their produce . . . their barns would be filled with plenty and their vats would overflow with new wine** (**Proverbs 3:9-10**).

The phrase, according to **His riches in glory in Messiah Yeshua (4:19 Greek)**, reveals the extent to which **ADONAI** would **supply the Philippians'** needs. **He** would do so **according to His riches**. **His giving to them** would be relative to **His** immense eternal wealth; that is, as generously as is consistent with **His riches in glory in Messiah Yeshua**. The B'rit Chadashah continually presents **Messiah Yeshua** as the source of all of **God's riches**. **In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3)**. To the **Colossians** **Paul** wrote: **For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him . . . for in Him all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form (Colossians 1:19 and 2:9)**. The **God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah . . . has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah (Ephesians 1:3)**. And **He** reminded the **Corinthians** of the **grace of God which is given them in Messiah Yeshua, that in everything they were enriched in Him (First Corinthians 1:4-5)**. Echoing that thought, **Peter** wrote: **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (Second Peter 1:3)**.

The crucial lessons in **contentment** illustrated here in the life of **Paul** may be summarized in five words: **faith, humility, submission, dependence, and unselfishness**. These **five principles of contentment** characterize all who have learned to be **content** (also see **Bp - I Have Learned to be Content**).¹⁸²

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise and thank **You** for being the best **Giver** there ever could be. No one can out **give You**. **You** gave your very best, **Your** only **Son**, knowing the pain and shame that **He** would have to go through. The love that **You** show is absolutely unbelievably wonderful, overwhelming gracious and generous beyond what words can express! Offering **Messiah** as **the atoning sacrifice** is gracious beyond what man can grasp! The cost to ransom mankind was so very great in physical pain, in emotional pain and in shame, yet **Messiah** went through*

with the painful suffering of the cross even when **He** asked: **My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me! Yet not as I will, but as You will (Matthew 29:40).** Thank **You** for the joy of being able to offer the **gift** of obedience back to **You**. It is not as large as **Your** magnanimous gift, but it comes to **You** from a heart filled to overflowing with great love! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen