

Content and Generous

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[0 : 00] How are y'all doing today? All right, all right, good to see you. If you have your Bibles in hand or on your phone, go ahead and flip over or swipe over to Philippians 4.

If you don't know where he's going to be on the screens as well, like Lisa said, it is the last sermon in our Philippians series. And, you know, Philippians is one of those books you read, and at the end of the day, you're just like, man, it is amazing what, one, the truths that Paul brings forth in this and the care and the affection that is going between both Paul and these Philippian believers.

And it's very real and it's tangible, and it's the kind of relationship that, like, man, I would love to see. And I think us as a church, we would want to see really, really manifest, both now and in the years to come.

It's like one of those churches I'm like, man, if at the end of the day, somebody said, like, man, you know what? That City Grace Church, they're a lot like that Philippian church. We'd be like, man, praise be to God. What kind of grace is at work in us that we could be, like, likened to them in any way, shape, or form?

And I would say this, again, as you're turning, I remember years ago, I was, it was probably 2001. It was a long, long, long time ago.

[1 : 17] And I was, you know, visiting a church. I had just moved back into the area. I was looking for an apartment, and my buddy, that me and him, were going to be roommates, he said, hey, come to my church.

We'll meet up. We'll go apartment shopping after that. And I was like, cool. And by that time, I was about, I was about 23, and had really, you know, grew up as a pastor's kid, gone to church, knew all the things, but really was just living life on my own terms, kind of call it my season of my sin world tour.

And I was, I was doing it, right? I was doing all that. And then I showed up at that church, really didn't have any intention of ever coming back. But by the time I left, I know a few things.

I knew that like, man, that worship was like, that worship was good. And it seemed like everybody was really passionate about worshipping God. Sermon was good. Don't remember what it was to this day.

Couldn't remember, couldn't tell you what that, that preacher talked about. But I do remember every single person that stopped and said hello. I do remember Katrine and Chuck Allen saying, getting to know me and know my name and who I was and where I was at in just life, period, and what was going on, and inviting me to lunch with them.

[2 : 33] And finding out that I was apartment hunting and then giving me some ideas and some options and saying like, oh, you should check this place out and that place out, and how can we help you? And that wasn't just one couple.

It was like multiple people. And I walked out of that church feeling like, man, I feel like these people really, really cared that I showed up. And they really, really cared about me and what was going on. And they really, really seemed to love God. And I just kept coming back. And eight years later, it was an eight-year journey, eight-year time with them of discipleship, of deep community, of building lasting friendships and relationships.

And that was before I was kind of released and sent out to be a part of One Harbor Church back in 2009. It's where I actually met Haley as well.

And we got married and started having kids and all that stuff. So it was a memorable time, right?

But that church, that experience, man, I walked away from it that first time.

[3 : 33] And I was like, my goodness, that was, it had an impression on me. And I think as we read the verses we're going to get into today, that's the question. What will we be remembered for?

And what will we be known for? And the answer to that question really matters. And so let's dig in. We're going to be in verses 10 to 20. It says this. Paul is saying to the Philippian church, 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. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. And I can do all things through him who strengthens me. And yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

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.

[4 : 43] Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. This is God's word. And so we see in these passages, Paul is saying something about his life, but Paul is saying something about the Philippians as well.

And it kind of pulls us into this understanding that our lives demonstrate and proclaim what we believe to be true. And also what we believe to be necessary.

[5 : 52] We can live life in a couple of ways. Is it about me? Is it about my wants and my needs? Think about for yourself, how you live your life. Is it about you? Is it about your wants and your needs?

Or is it about something else? To say it another way, what are your expectations? As you live life, what are your expectations? Because we all live with expectations.

A wise couple early on in our marriage, a wise couple sat with us and told me and Haley, you know, that gap between your expectations and your reality is going to be filled with frustration.

Right? But when reality meets expectation, something beautiful happens. You have joy. You have what Paul, I think, calls contentment. So there are a couple of choices we have.

You can live life requiring people to meet your expectations. You can keep your expectations really high and you will live with lots of frustration and lots of disappointment. Or you can get a better set of expectations.

[6 : 57] In contentment, I think what Paul is saying here is the fruit of holding godly expectations for life. Contentment says it is well in answer to whatever season you're in, whether it's in want or whether it's in abundance.

When my kids were younger, we would take them out on outings, maybe to the beach, to the park, you know, whatever. And on the way home, they'd ask, hey, that was fun. Can we go eat out? Can we go get a donut?

Can we do that? And if the answer was no, it was kind of like, oh, we never get to do anything, you know? Unmet expectation, right? Our internal operating system is coded with this just a little more principle.

And it's not a bug, it's a feature. Every win in life, right, that we experience is great for like five seconds. We're just like, that was amazing.

And then we move on to, all right, what's next? Just a little bit more. Now, I want to say this, there isn't anything wrong with kids wanting Bojangles after a day at the beach, but if they complain about not getting it, they're proclaiming something, they're demonstrating something, that they have a want that has become an entitled expectation.

[8 : 14] Or in Ed Welch's words, they have a desire that has become a demand. And see, in those moments, there's more at stake with our kids than just their hungry tummies.

There's more at stake for us, right? It's not just about whether they get chicken supremes or don't get chicken supremes. Ungodly expectations, they usually have a negative impact on people, right?

Bojangles isn't injured by our lack of patronage in that moment. They could care less. But our kids might be impacted when we say no because they had that expectation.

Or we as parents, we might feel a little bit used or frustrated or upset when our kids complain and feel ungrateful because we didn't go along with what they wanted.

When desires become demands, people are going to feel either disappointed or they're going to feel used or in extreme cases, they'll even feel abused. But God's wisdom helps set good expectations for us.

[9 : 18] Because God's wisdom helps us to discern what is a need versus what is a want. And that is important for us, right? I need to eat. I need to drink.

I need clothes. I want Taco Tuesday every week. I want to drink four flat whites a day. I want a J.Crew wardrobe.

And we kind of get that like, okay, we shouldn't be entitled to those wants, right? Taco Tuesday's great, but sulking because of spaghetti Tuesday, that's not okay, right?

Let's make it more spiritual. Let's like landed in kind of us in our walk with Jesus and discipleship. I need God. I need his love. I need his salvation.

I need community. I want mountaintop experiences with God every day. I want to see his glory in ever-increasing measure.

[10 : 22] I want to hear his voice clearly. Like if he could thunder from the heavens every morning that I wake up, that would be amazing. I want my community to understand me and to get me and to do all the things I want to do.

See, when our wants get mixed up with our needs, it confuses what relationship is meant to be built on. And your contentment, my contentment, what happens is it depends on the latest, greatest thing that people have done for you, right?

What have you done for me lately? And if that's what your contentment rests upon, then what actually is happening is we just end up caring more about what we're getting from people than what people are giving to us.

We don't see it as a gift. We see it as a demand. But here's the thing with contentment, with what we see with Paul is saying here, contentment keeps people as the greater gift. Not what they can give to you, but it keeps them as the greater gift.

It's what Paul was saying when he says in verse 17, man, thank you for that gift. That was great. But actually, it's not that I seek the gift. He's thankful.

[11 : 36] But he's saying like, man, I'm receiving this as like your favor to me that you chose to do that. It's not a demand. It's not like our relationship isn't resting on this.

He's confessing, you know what, Philippians, I care more about you and more about the relationship that we have than the gift. He sees the gift, he sees the gift from the Philippians as actually a fruit of God's grace at work in their lives.

He's thinking about their spiritual benefit, not his own material needs. He's seeing that first. He's putting them first, which is Paul's modus operandi.

He just does that all the time. And when you receive things from others and see it as a free gift of grace, it produces gratitude for them. But if you feel it's owed to you, then you are seeking the gift and not the person.

And here's the thing, grace, this idea of like not being entitled to anything, but receiving everything as a gift, that's grace and that's operating in grace. And grace elevates relationship.

[12 : 43] It does. It sweetens relationship. You know, when Haley makes dinner for our family, do we feel entitled to her service because she's the mom of the house?

And if we did, then we, if we sat down for dinner thinking that, we wouldn't say thank you. We'd say, what took so long? Right? Or man, I wish we were having tacos and not spaghetti.

The dinner table can be a place of spiritual warfare to fight for grace, to win over entitled hearts. When our kids were very little, we taught them to say thank you.

When they complained about the food, we taught them like, hey, it's not polite to do that. It's not honoring to do that. We helped them. We tried to help them to see the work and the thought that went into the meal that was in front of them.

We were trying to teach them those biblical principles, this godly wisdom of living a life that says, you know what? Don't receive things with an entitled heart. Receive things in grace as a gift, as a thank you.

[13 : 42] Entitled hearts struggle with grace. Entitled hearts don't get grace. And when you don't get grace, you become easily irritable. You become pushy.

You become demanding when people don't meet your expectations. As much as grace elevates relationships, entitlement ruins them. Imagine if the Philippians didn't come through for Paul in the way they did.

And for a while, they may not have. I mean, Paul actually says in verse 10, now at length, you revived your concern for me. So Paul's saying, hey, there was a time when I wasn't getting any gifts from you.

But he was okay with that. Paul isn't pacing around in a Roman jail, you know, like wherever he was at on house arrest, going like, man, when's the Philippians sending me that like, that pound of wheat or whatever.

I don't know what they sent him, but whatever they were sending him, you know, he wasn't, he wasn't like, that wasn't his main concern. Paul isn't complaining, he's not correcting them.

[14 : 48] Because he goes on to talk about his contentment. He says these two things, I can do all things through him, through God who strengthens me. And he goes on to say in verse 19, am I God?

He knows his God that he is in intimate relationship with, will be able to supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. And I think what Paul is saying here, he's letting us in on his trick to learn, what he's learned about contentment.

And here's, I think what it is, contentment sees God as your ultimate source and supply.

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And Paul is, man, it's obvious that he is grateful for their revived concern. But here's the thing, he also doesn't feel like he has to pay it back. When God is your ultimate, ultimate source and supply, it frees you from what is called the debtor's ethic.

And the debtor's ethic is this principle that if someone does something nice for you, then you've got to return the favor in kind. And in equal or greater proportion. Right? So, you made me dinner, I wash the dishes.

[15 : 59] I have to wash the dishes. You bought me a watch, I got to buy you earrings. Right? It can just go on and on and on like that. Right? And it's this idea of whenever someone gives you something, whether it's a gift or whether it's a compliment, like here's the question for you and me, do we feel obligated to now reciprocate that somehow?

Now, there's the reverse side of that too. If you're the one giving the compliment or doing the favor, buying the gift, do you expect something in return? See, the debtor's ethic flows both ways.

There is nothing less loving, I would say, than operating and being in relationship where that is running things, where there is constant debt obligation to one another because it's not grace.

It's going to lack contentment. And what it does, it turns relationships into a bunch of transactions. And instead of enjoying people for who they are, we spend all kinds of time and energy tallying up who's ahead.

And here's the thing. When you and I, when we understand that God is our ultimate source and supply, what dawns on you is you realize he is the only one that's always ahead.

[17 : 09] And the rest of us, we're all in the same boat. And that's a game-changing truth. When you bring that into the relationship and that is kind of the center of what is going on, it's a game-changer.

When you realize all your most important needs have been met in him, then you can live content because now your world is just a lot bigger than you and your tiny little thing of needs.

Which means that you can start seeing the needs of others, which opens you up to be a blessing to them. Generosity is like contentment in that it elevates relationship.

Generous people are others-focused. Paul is feeling that from the Philippians. They aren't focused on their own needs. They aren't concerned about their own welfare.

They're concerned about Paul and so that manifests in them giving him a bunch of stuff that helped him out. Like he said, man, at length you revived your concern for me.

[18 : 10] You were indeed concerned for me. Paul says, I know you were concerned for me. You just had no opportunity. The Philippians' generosity was their concern for Paul meeting opportunity.

And we see that in other places in the Bible. The parable of the Good Samaritan. It is the Samaritan's concern for others meeting opportunity. The parable of the lost sheep. It is the good

shepherd's concern for his sheep meeting opportunity to leave the 99 and go after the one. When a concerned heart meets opportunity to care, generosity is conceived. So the question for you and me is where has God put opportunity in your life to be generous? It could be helping with material needs like what Paul alludes to in verses 16 to 18. Or it could be just kind words or loving gestures or just thinking about people like he talks about in verses 21 to 22 where he says, man, you know, greet the saints there with the, you know, greet them. Say hello to them and like all the saints here with me send our love to you guys. So whether you're providing shelter to the homeless or giving a child a drink of water or giving a good friend a hug or giving a stranger a smile and a warm greeting, those are all opportunities that are waiting to be met by your concern.

[19 : 37] Which is why God-like generosity can be difficult because generosity requires to be others-oriented but it also requires to share in other people's troubles and Paul commends the Philippians on that.

He said, it was kind of you to share in my trouble. Christians are good at responding to needs with like, man, brother, I'm going to pray for you. And prayer's good but we're kind of encouraged to like help out in practical ways too.

Like the apostle John writes in his letter in 1 John, like man, if you got the goods and you see your brother in need but you walk away and don't help him out, it's like, it's not really love.

We've got to kind of let our concern meet the opportunity and share in people's troubles that really responds in a tangible way. Years ago, there was a marine family and the husband was deployed and the wife had just moved into town and she didn't know up from down or anything like that and one of the things that she needed was tires for her car and so the community around her pitched in to help her get new tires and take her to a mechanic that they knew she could trust in town and all of that.

It's concern meeting opportunity. There's another story. There was an elderly man who had some health issues and one of the things that he really needed and really blessed him was having just a comfortable chair to recline in and sit in and during a move from one place to another, that chair broke and so the church, his community around him pitched in and just bought him an easy chair to help him out and sit in.

[21 : 22] It was simple but it was concern meeting opportunity. It was a lady in our church who was in abusive marriage and she needed to move out safely and she had that opportunity literally I remember driving to Wilmington and she called me on the phone and she said I gotta do it now and I'm like already at Wilmington and I called up a couple of guys and they stopped what they were doing in town got her stuff and got her safe.

It was concern meeting opportunity. The people of God doing amazing things. This church personally towards me and my family Haley's mom was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago. She lives in South Africa. It's not an easy place to get to. It's very expensive and this church rallied around us and raised money for us to go out and be able to visit her.

All those are real stories of concern meeting opportunity and you know what? They cost time and they cost effort and they cost money but you know what?

Nobody complained. They did it all with joy and you just don't do that if you're not willing to share in other people's troubles. But that's who God's called us to be.

[22 : 46] That's the kind of witness and testimony that our lives can proclaim and you know what? It can give off the aroma of Christ when we do that. Generosity like that is impressive.

It is incredible even and it will get people's attention maybe even their adoration and I want to say that's where we really get tested with our generosity.

Before any act of generosity or maybe afterwards the question we need to ask ourselves is who am I doing this for? Because our generosity must glorify God and not ourselves and that's what Paul wants them to realize.

He wants us to realize. In a sense they were being generous towards him but in a greater sense what they did was an act of worship to God. Their gift glorified the Father.

Look what he says in verses 18 I have received full payment and more from you. I am well supplied. Having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent a fragrant offering a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

[23 : 59] What they did was a sweet aroma an act of worship. Then he goes on to say in verse 20 to our God and Father be glory forever and ever amen.

Who is your generosity about? Are you giving to people? Are you doing things to get recognition and social capital and praise so you can post it on social media and get all the likes you feel you need?

Because that's about you. That isn't acceptable and pleasing to God. But there is a way. There is a way that looks generous to others by all accounts but really is giving to yourself.

There's a cool little parable and the first time I heard it was from Tim Keller and he got it from somebody else but I mean this parable really kind of lands the point. So once upon a time there was a king who ruled over everything in a land and one day there was a gardener who grew an enormous carrot and he took it to his king and said my lord this is the greatest carrot I've ever grown or ever will grow therefore I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you and the king was touched and discerned the man's heart so he turned to go and the king said wait you are clearly a good steward of the earth I want to give a plot of land to you freely as a gift so you can garden it all and the gardener was amazed and delighted and went home rejoicing but there was a noble man at the king's court who overheard all this and he said my if that is what you get for a carrot what if you gave the king something better the next day the nobleman came before the king and he was leading a handsome black stallion and he bowed low and said my lord I breed horses and this is the greatest horse I've ever bred or ever will there therefore I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you but the king discerned his heart and said thank you and took the horse and simply dismissed him the nobleman was perplexed and so the king said let me explain the gardener was giving me the carrot but you were giving yourself the horse see that guy was operating in that debtor's ethic we were talking about earlier I give to you and so you must give back to me of equal or greater proportion he wasn't giving in grace he wasn't giving simply because

God is worthy why do you give do you do you give because he is worthy and that's enough do you give so that he will be glorified and not you and that is enough or is your generosity done with hopes of manipulating people or even manipulating God's generosity towards you the thing with God's generosity is just that it's his generosity which means he dispenses it how he wishes to whom he wishes and when he wishes in the measure that he wishes which means you can't buy his generosity you can't earn it and Paul gets that the Philippians seem to get it how about us today do we get that do we live in that reality do we live understanding and knowing that do we believe that God's generosity toward us has been secured in Jesus because contentment and our own generosity rests on believing this

[27 : 37] Paul says in verse 19 my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus this is one of those verses that kind of deserves its own sermon but there are kids across the street and this is a chance for concern to meet opportunities so we're not gonna go on much longer we'll wrap up very quickly here but here's the thing God gave himself up for us so that he could give himself to us and your supply and need for eternal life for adoption becoming a child of God for Christ's redemption the forgiveness of your sin the washing away of your sin being cleansed being given a new heart being brought into God's very presence to be united with him and one with him has been secured once and for all in Christ Jesus and so Paul could confidently say to the Philippians my God will supply every need of yours what kind of need is he talking about well it could be their basic material and physical needs but he goes on to say according to his riches and glory in

Christ Jesus his confidence in God's provision in any way shape or form rests on the fact that he knows God has already secured and supplied everything that he ultimately needs in Christ Jesus and he has supplied everything that the Philippians ultimately need in Christ Jesus our sins have been forgiven friends our hearts have been washed clean our conscience has been purified our guilt and our shame has been removed we are children of God our inheritance has been secured and this means for us today that we get to know God we get to know him we get to live in his presence we get to experience his love and his goodness his delight his kindness his patience toward us his peace that abides that carries us through and his joy and anything else God might give to us by comparison to all of that it's really just Bojangles chicken sure it would be nice but it's not necessary and if we live in that truth and if we live out of that truth there is a contentment and a generosity that will flow from our lives that people will smell and take notice of and give glory to God so as we look to respond as the band comes up in a moment we're going to be taking communion and I want to say to you in the room if you're not yet a follower of Jesus what we were

talking about what God has supplied in Christ Jesus eternal life forgiveness of sins being reconciled to God that is a need that is a that is not a nice to have that is a you have to have that and only Jesus can fulfill that only Jesus can meet that need you can't earn it he did it for you you have to receive it by grace by faith in him and there is no other way there is no other name there is no other means by which you can be saved and come into all those blessings so my appeal to you today if that is you come to Jesus today repent ask for your sins to be forgiven and washed away in a moment there's going to be a chance for you to respond we'll have a prayer up on the screen that you can pray and I encourage you to pray that prayer if that is you now if you're already a follower of Jesus we're going to take communion in a moment and I just want us to prepare ourselves before we come to the communion table and just to reflect and pray think about some of what we talked about today think about

Lord where where am I not being content in my life where has a desire become a demand where have I become entitled and ungenerous communion is coming and receiving the greatest gift of God's love freely you don't have to you don't have to come to the table and prove something to anybody you don't have to give your resume that you're worthy to pick up that bread in that cup every single time you just come with faith you come with gratitude you come knowing that he paid it all that it is secured in him and that is enough dwell on that right now just take a moment to dwell on that being content in what God has done through his son Jesus

Christ for us father we thank you for your goodness and your grace Jesus we thank you for your sacrifice that you paid it all that you secured it all and in you we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms so what the Bible says we have enough everything else is just Bojangles chicken as we come to the table we come with gratitude and we come with thankfulness amen