

[by invitation only]

:: philippians 4.19-23 ::

We've come to the end of our studies through Philippians. For me, it's been so encouraging to see how much Paul expected God to do within us and through our lives as we walk the road of faith in Christ.

All in all, what I've taken away from this book is that God is just waiting to fill me up to do an abundant work in my life. He's got all these great and incredible things He wants to do in my heart, but it requires that I actually sign on, suit up and do what I'm asked to do. I have to actually engage and participate in the work that God wants to do, otherwise I shut myself off from the fullness of God.

I've seen these great commandments and great examples of how we surrender our lives to the Lord so that we can trade our own sufficiency for God's sufficiency. And now, in a few short words, Paul says it all again as he invites us to embrace the Lord, embrace those around us and receive that grace of God in a total, permeating way.

Philippians 4.19-23 - And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

This passage makes me feel good grammatically because I start a lot of sentences with the word 'and' like Paul does in verse 19. And if it's good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me!

But here we're at the culmination. The final thoughts that Paul wants to communicate before sealing the letter and sending it off to the Believers in Philippi. And as he closes up all these thoughts and teachings about our spiritual submission to Christ, unity within the Church, giving to God, living the Gospel, the fullness of Christ, he sews it all up by saying: When you embrace God, then He is going to supply all your need. Of course, this teaching gets perverted by some who would limit God's blessing to material things. Their idea is that if you're a Christian, God is obligated to supply you with a Lexus.

That, of course, is not only in contradiction to the teachings of Scripture, but in complete contradiction to the examples of Paul and the Lord Jesus Himself.

No, instead it is a sure reminder that when we relinquish control of our lives to the Lord, He will supply all that we need. With Him at the helm, the destination is always good and full. Sometimes He will navigate us through a storm to reach our port, sometimes the place He's taking us is across a long and barren sea, but in the end, God's goal is completion, not desolation. His desire is to supply us richly with spiritual fruit and transformation, not leave us to stay in the same state throughout life.

And there in verse 19 we can see this incredible invitation that God has given us. This incredible life, heaped with God's richness and fullness, but it's by invitation only. You can't achieve it by other means and you can't achieve it without accepting the call the Master has given.

Sometimes we make the same spiritual decision that the Israelites made when God invited them into Canaan. He said to them, "Come in here. There's blessing in here. There's work in here. I am with you to do and accomplish so much in here! I have plans for you and vineyards for you and inheritances for you." And God's people said, "...no. We're not feeling it. We're content on *this* side of the Jordan, where we're fine at the level we're at. We're comfortable and we don't need any of that other stuff You're offering."

This same invitation has been delivered to us. The same God has plans and purposes and power for us if we're willing to follow after Him and submit ourselves to His governance. Rich and marvelous things.

Paul is saying God **WILL** do this. And we're invited to partake in that will of God.

Verse 20 says:

Philippians 4.20 - Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Since we walk by faith and not by sight, we often find ourselves trying to understand God's will and seek it out. We're trying to navigate life and we want what God's offering, but honestly, sometimes we don't feel like we're getting it.

Paul would encourage us to focus, focus, focus. To dedicate our lives as an offering to truly glorify God. Sometimes we talk about how our whole lives are worship and how we're created to glorify God, and we understand that, but we need in this moment to stop and think within ourselves about how we're glorifying the Lord in our actions. In our relationships. In the time and place that God has set us. Really, truly, could someone look at my life and glorify God in response to what they see?

Peter got into some hot water there in the beginning of Acts. Remember, he healed the crippled man at the Temple Gate called Beautiful. The religious leaders wanted to punish them for preaching about Jesus, but the text says they didn't know how to punish them...for everyone was praising God.

Since God has determined to use men to be His representatives on earth, He's chosen us to carry His word and His Gospel around, then the outpouring of our lives and our lips and our behavior is **so** important. We're called to focus on glorifying our God and Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, who equips us to do the work of Jesus Christ here on the earth.

Philippians 4.21 - Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.

The word there for 'greet' means 'enfold in the arms.' As Christians, we're to unify with other believers in the Church and embrace one another spiritually. God has determined to do a work through and also strengthen individuals as we gather together in the Church. It's important and needful for us to be a working part of the Body of Christ. Coming together to worship and to study and to pray and to serve one another. And if we find ourselves being detached in some way, it's time to enfold ourselves into the Church so that the specific work God wants to do in us through His Body can happen.

Philippians 4.22 - All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

Commentators point out that the term 'Caesar's household' refers to the Imperial Guard.

And it's so exciting to think about what the Lord is capable of doing. We look at the Bible and we see that the power of God can save a man like Nebuchadnezzar. The Gospel can transform thieves and killers and those possessed by demons. Even Caesar's Imperial Guards. Men who had probably done unspeakable things to others. Yet, God's love is poured out for them and God has chosen to use people like you and me to impact people like that. God still reaches out to Ninevites and has given us the privilege of carrying His message of mercy.

Paul's life and preaching revealed God to these men, and their lives were changed for time and eternity.

The same work has been set before me. People have been set before me by God and my assignment is to reveal Jesus Christ to them, through preaching and through living. Some will be harder and some will be more ready for the Gospel. But I am called to shine the light by demonstrating what Christ has done for me. And when we start feeling discouraged about unbelievers around us, if we start losing hope in a specific family member or coworker, we should be encouraged by this verse, showing that the Gospel can penetrate even the hardest and cruelest person.

Philippians 4.23 - The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Here's part of the writeup on the word 'grace' from Strongs' Concordance:

Graciousness...especially the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.

A life surrendered to God is a life filled by God. That filling and that intimacy with God will be unmistakable to others. The grace that saved you and I will be seeping out of our mouths and our actions and our attitudes and everything else about us.

But, again, you see that we're commanded to receive the grace of God. Meaning that we have the ability to stop up that influence and power that God desires for us. It's our choice.

And so, with all these words we find the very simple truth of the Christian life. God's filling is dynamic, it's awe-inspiring. It's almost indescribable in its incredible abundance. Yet, we, through our choices are able to distance ourselves from the flow of God's power. We are given the option to submit to God or to demand control of our own situations. We are given the option to choose where we will go for sufficiency and what we will pursue in this life.

See what God wants for you and then embrace it. You are invited to the life we see in Paul. It's waiting for you. But it cannot be attained half-heartedly. It must be taken hold of by letting go of all other things and pressing into Jesus.

Follow the Lord today, receive the richness He wants for you. Embrace His Spirit and the Church and see God's work go out into you and through you for His glory and His pleasure.

Be filled.