

Sharing Is Caring

Philippians 4:10-14

Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. Concerned v. 10

a. Oh Yes

- i. It indicates that something has just occurred to the writer that, if let go any longer, might be forgotten altogether. Yet very likely Paul used it for rhetorical effect. It may have been the coming of Epaphroditus with the gift from Philippi that occasioned this rejoicing. Paul could never really forget what the Philippians had done for him, nor could he even come close to sending his letter off without these important remarks.

b. I Rejoiced- Immense Joy

- i. nowhere else in the NT, and its very uniqueness intensifies what he is saying about the depth of his feelings at this point.
- ii. In the Lord
 1. He never thanks them directly for anything they gave him. Yet by saying that his joy is “in the Lord” he is saying that it is thoroughly Christian, flowing out of his union with Christ and therefore totally free from ingratitude or resentment

c. At Last

- i. You Revived - **to be in a state identical with a previous state, *grow up again***
 1. to cause to blossom once again,” is a highly metaphorical word, filled with poetic boldness and colorful in its idea. It was chosen no doubt to convey affectionate understanding. This is its only occurrence in the NT, but it is used elsewhere to describe trees and flowers “bursting into bloom again” in the springtime, or plants “sprouting afresh” from the ground (cf. BDAG) To translate it as “renew,” “revive,” or “show”
 2. You caused your thought for me to sprout and bloom afresh, like a tree putting out fresh shoots after the winter
- ii. Your Concern - **to have an opinion with regard** thoughtful care
 1. But φρονεῖν means more than merely “thinking” about someone; it also describes an active interest in that person’s affairs—“thinking leading to action.”
 2. It was rather what that gift pointed to, namely, the care and concern (φρονεῖν) of the Philippians for him and their determination to see to his welfare and, more particularly, to see

his ministry flourish. What gave him joy was not goods, however necessary for his work, but people and how they behaved. If a gift of money troubled him because it was against his principle to take such a gift for himself from any of his churches,

d. Lacked Opportunity

i. *you had no opportunity* to show your love to me **Phil 4:10**

1. Paul had come to realize that the Philippians were not to blame for the slow arrival of help, but rather the circumstances were beyond their control (for the various reasons for the delay, see the helpful summary in Fee [1995], 422 n. 3). The verb ἀκαιρεῖσθαι, “to be without opportunity,” a late and rare word found only here in the NT, means that the Philippians were “without opportunity” (α-privative with καιρός) to exhibit their willingness and readiness to send aid. It alludes to those unfavorable circumstances—whether the lack of the right person to send on the long and difficult journey to the place of Paul’s detention (which is true of Rome, but less so of Ephesus and Caesarea), or the lack of funds (cf. 2 Cor 8:2–4; Caird, 153), or the lack of suitable weather for travel—that robbed the Philippians of doing for Paul what they wished to do. Or, as Bruce (124) suggests, it may allude to Paul not being willing to accept the Philippians’ gift.
2. He explained that they were mindful of him all along (the same verb occurs, *phroneō*), but they lacked opportunity. The lack was probably that Paul did not have need, but some interpret it as the church’s inability to provide what they desired. Since when they were motivated to give, they created the opportunity by sending Epaphroditus as their minister, Paul’s situation best explains the reference.

II. Learned vs. 11-13

a. Not from Want

i. Want- **the condition of lacking that which is essential, *need, lack, poverty***

1. He does not deny the want itself, but the want as the motive and measure of his joy.
2. Thus, Paul is making very clear that his joy at the gift from the Philippians was not on account of his being in dire straits at the time it arrived (apparently he either did not need or did not want their money), but because he saw in this act of generosity a truly Christian deed of sacrificial self-giving love (cf. 2 Cor 8:5). He says in effect, “I am glad that you assisted me, yes, but I do not say this because I lacked anything or needed your help.”

b. Learned Contentment

i. Any Circumstances

ii. Learned Get Along

1. Learned-

- a. The aorist tense ἔμαθον, “have learned,” is constative, used here for linear actions that, having been completed, are regarded as a whole. It implies that Paul’s whole experience up to the present, especially as a Christian, has been a schooling whose lessons he has not failed to master.
- b. ‘for I have learned.’ The aorist for the perfect. See on ἔλαβον, 3:12. The tuition has extended over his whole experience up to the present.
- c. Content –

- i. was used to describe the person who through discipline had become independent of external circumstances and who had discovered personal resources that were more than adequate for any situation that might arise.
- ii. appears also to have borrowed αὐτάρκης, “self-sufficient,” from them (this is the only place it appears in the NT) to declare that he too has acquired the virtue of a spirit free from worry, untroubled by the vicissitudes of external events, independent of people and things.
- iii. The self-sufficiency of the Christian is relative: an independence of the world through dependence upon God.
- iv. Only here in N.T.; LXX Sir. 40:18; αὐτάρκεια, 2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6. Αὐτάρκεια is an inward self-sufficing, as opposed to the lack or the desire of outward things.

2. Humble

- a. I know,” to mean either (1) that he knows how “to discipline himself,” “to humble himself” (middle voice)
 - b. It denotes a going down into deprivation, whether self-imposed or imposed by external forces, and Paul is saying “I know how to cope with this; I am able for this.” There is also in this choice of ταπεινοῦσθαι, “to humble oneself” or “to be humbled
3. Prosperity - *have an abundance, abound, be rich we have more* (divine approval) **1 Cor 8:8. 12b** *I have received full payment, and have more than enough vs. have ample means for every enterprise*
4. it means “to abound, to overflow, to have more than enough, to be extremely rich

- iii. Secret “I have learned the secret” [perfect tense]
 - 1. Hungry
 - 2. Abundance
 - 3. Suffering Need
 - a. It is as if Paul were saying: “I have been initiated into all the mysteries of life. I know the secrets of everyday reality. God has taught me through good times and bad how to cope not only with hunger and privation, but with plenty to eat and an abundance of wealth.”
 - b. Paul displayed spiritual equilibrium. He was equally unaffected by poverty and riches. This knowledge is learned by walking with Christ, who is the sufficient one, and by developing a solid theology of material things. Things ultimately do not matter.
- c. I Can Do All things 2 Cor 12:9–10
 - i. Through Christ
 - 1. Who Strengthens Me - more literally, ‘infuses strength into me. Not ‘through,’ but ‘in’; for he is *in* Christ (3:9). Ἐνδυναμοῦν, mostly in Paul. (See Rom. 4:20; Eph. 6:10; 1 Tim. 1:12.) With the thought here, comp. 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1, 4:17;
 - 2. The will of God limited the application of the strength he knew. Many who misapply this verse step out of God’s will for their lives. They hope to cover their actions by a blanket promise of power, but power comes in the will of God. Thus, Paul expressed a crucial paradox. He was strong when he was weak! He was independent (self-sufficient) only when he was dependent! Although Paul realized the necessity of living in a Christian community, he also knew what it meant to face life’s problems alone and still triumph through them.
 - 3. The secret of Paul’s independence was his dependence upon Christ. His self-sufficiency came from being in vital union with the One who is all-sufficient. Who is this Other, this all-sufficient One? Paul does not say. He simply identifies the source of his confidence by means of a present active participle used as a noun: τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντι, “the One who continually infuses with strength.” The verb ἐνδυναμοῦν, “to infuse with strength,” however, is used elsewhere to denote the powerful activity of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 6:10; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:1; 4:17).
 - 4. He whose life was seized by Christ, who gladly gave up all for Christ, who paradoxically gained all by losing all for Christ, who longed to know Christ and the *power* of his resurrection (3:7–10), could only envision Christ as his true source of inner strength. So although Paul had carefully disciplined himself and had discovered within himself untapped resources of power that, when drawn

upon, made him independent of outward circumstances, he could never bring himself to deny his need of Christ and his reliance upon the strength that Christ supplied. The truth of the matter is that in himself Paul did not perceive a strong, independent life. But united with Christ, the source of ultimate power, he was able to face life bravely.

III. Shared v. 14

- a. Done Well
 - i. refers exclusively to this most recent gesture of love and is used circumstantially to denote manner: “you did the right thing *in that* you became partners with me.”
 - ii. Positive and generous praise: not a mere acknowledgment that they had simply done their duty. It was a beautiful deed, true to the gospel ideal
 - iii. ‘Nevertheless, do not think that, because I am thus independent of earthly contingencies, I lightly prize your gift.’
- b. Share - **to be associated w. someone in some activity, *be connected***
 - i. Share - First, they participated with him. The Greek *sygkoinoneō* emphasizes that participation. The basic translation, “fellowship,” means *a deep partnership of two going the same direction.*
 - ii. In the Affliction -Col 1:24
 - 1. This expression contains the first hint of the significance of Christian giving. It also explains something of Paul’s hesitancy in expressing his own needs to them. The Philippians recognized Paul’s strategic place in the spread of the gospel, the mystery revealed to him (Eph 3:1–13). Others, particularly the Jewish Christians, had difficulty accepting Paul’s ministry. The gifts from Philippi meant that the church eagerly participated in the work of God and that their gifts were, in reality, contributions to the spread of the gospel to other Gentiles. Paul knew he would suffer because of his distinctive apostolic calling. He accepted this suffering joyfully and learned the secret of triumph over any circumstance.

Background

For some unknown reason the Philippians were cut off from Paul for an extended period of time, and he from them. As a consequence, doubts may have arisen, as would only be natural, about the genuineness of their concern for him. Hence it was with a great sense of relief that this silence of uncertainty was broken with the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi (4:18).

4:10 Apparently some time elapsed between gifts from the Philippian church. It may have been years between the gifts mentioned in 2 Cor 8 and the one delivered by Epaphroditus. Perhaps Paul had despaired of their love for him since so much time elapsed and since they were the ones who remembered him financially and a financial gift uniquely expressed love. Their gift was a cause of joy in the Lord. Perhaps they expected Paul to be joyful because of the gift but, as the context clearly reveals, his joy was in the Lord. Spiritual relationships brought the most satisfaction: their love for him because of Christ's love and his love for the Lord. Thus it was natural for a material gift to become an occasion for Christian joy. The Christian nature of this relationship is supported by the word Paul used for "concern." It is the key verb of the epistle, *phroneō*. Paul used it consistently to point out proper Christian attitudes in following the mind of Christ. He must have consciously alluded to that in his choice of the word.

Word Studies

Revived - to be in a state identical with a previous state, *grow up again, bloom again*¹

Concern - to have an opinion with regard²

Lacked Opportunity - *you had no opportunity* to show your love to me Phil 4:10.³

Want- the condition of lacking that which is essential, *need, lack, poverty*⁴

Content- *content, self-sufficient* - 2 Cor 9:8; 1 Tim 6:6, 8; Heb 13:5⁵

Humility - to subject to strict discipline, *constrain, mortify*⁶

Prosperity - *have an abundance, abound, be rich*⁷ *we have more* (divine approval) 1 Cor 8:8. ζητεῖτε ἵνα περισσεύητε *strive to excel* 14:12. Cp. Phil 4:12a (opp⁸. ταπεινοῦσθαι), vs. 12b (opp⁹. ὑστερεῖσθαι). ἀπέχω πάντα καὶ περισσεύω *I have received full payment, and have more than enough* vs. 18. π. εἰς πᾶν ἔργον *have ample means for every enterprise*¹⁰

Share - to be associated w¹¹. someone in some activity, *be connected* τινί¹²

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 63.

² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1065.

³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 34.

⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1044.

⁵ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 990.

⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 805.

⁸ opp. **opp.** = opposed to, opposite

⁹ opp. **opp.** = opposed to, opposite

¹⁰ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 805.

¹¹ **w. w.** = with

¹² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 952.

Commentary Notes

10 ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως, “O yes, and I rejoice in the Lord greatly.” Once again Paul strikes the keynote of the epistle, ἐχάρην, “I rejoice” (an epistolary aorist). The particle δέ, translated here “O yes, and,” is often ignored and passed over by the translators but is an important word here (*contr*¹³ O’Brien, 516 ¹⁴n. 7; Fee [1995], 428, rightly describes δέ as “contrastive,” to mark a transition to a new section). As we saw, it “arrests a subject which is in danger of escaping” (Lightfoot, 163). It indicates that something has just occurred to the writer that, if let go any longer, might be forgotten altogether. Yet very likely Paul used it for rhetorical effect. It may have been the coming of Epaphroditus with the gift from Philippi that occasioned this rejoicing. Paul could never really forget what the Philippians had done for him, nor could he even come close to sending his letter off without these important remarks. But he approaches the whole matter of thanking them for their gift as if it were possible for him not to do so. The assistance provided him by the Philippians and the supposed problems it created for him were subjects very much in his mind, even matters he could not possibly forget, but he waits until the last moment to broach them, and then he does so in what appears to be an offhand way. The δέ might be paraphrased “O yes, and I must not forget” (cf. 1 Cor 16:1; Gal 4:20). In light of allusions to the Philippians’ generosity earlier in the letter (Phil 1:3–5; 2:25–30), however, some would interpret δέ as simply a connective—“and” or “but.”

Paul says that his joy is immense. Although the idea of “great joy” is consonant with the Christian gospel and often associated with it (Matt 2:10; Luke 2:10; 24:52; Acts 8:8; 15:3), this is the only place where the apostle quantifies his own experience of joy. The adverb he uses, μεγάλως, “greatly, immensely,” is found nowhere else in the NT, and its very uniqueness intensifies what he is saying about the depth of his feelings at this point.

Furthermore, Paul says that his joy is ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord.” If one expected him to say instead that his joy was in the generosity of the Philippians, this is not the case. Paul never says this. He never thanks them directly for anything they gave him. Yet by saying that his joy is “in the Lord” he is saying that it is thoroughly Christian, flowing out of his union with Christ and therefore totally free from ingratitude or resentment (cf. Michael). It is an expression of joy that has marked the entire letter, some sixteen times.

ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἑμοῦ φρονεῖν, “because now at last you caused your thoughtful care of me to blossom once again.” Even though for Paul the final, the ultimate, cause of his joy was “the Lord,” there was also a more immediate cause as well. This is stated now by the apostle in a clause introduced by ὅτι, “because.” But again it is remarkable that Paul does not say that this immediate cause of his joy was the Philippians’ gift. It was rather what that gift pointed to, namely, the care and concern (φρονεῖν) of the Philippians for him and their determination to see to his welfare and, more particularly, to see his ministry flourish. What gave him joy was not goods, however necessary for his work, but people and how they behaved. If a gift of money troubled him because it was against his principle to take such a gift

¹³*contra* in contrast to

¹⁴n note

for himself from any of his churches, the loving thoughtfulness that prompted his friends to override his wishes and give sacrificially (cf. 2 Cor 8:1–3) pleased him greatly since these offerings were an act of “liturgy,” a worshipful response to God’s mission through his servant.

The verb φρονεῖν is used by Paul to express his “thoughtful care”—the key verb of this letter (Phil 1:7; 2:2, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 10). Fundamental to its meaning is the idea of “thinking.” Paul, therefore, was never out of the thoughts of the Philippians. But φρονεῖν means more than merely “thinking” about someone; it also describes an active interest in that person’s affairs—“thinking leading to action.” Thus, because φρονεῖν, “thoughtful care,” characterized the relationship of the Philippian Christians to Paul, it meant that they of necessity would be personally involved in promoting the welfare of the apostle by whatever means they had at their disposal.

For some unknown reason the Philippians were cut off from Paul for an extended period of time, and he from them. As a consequence, doubts may have arisen, as would only be natural, about the genuineness of their concern for him. Hence it was with a great sense of relief that this silence of uncertainty was broken with the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi (4:18). ἤδη ποτέ, “now at last” (cf. BDA¹⁵G), Paul writes his friends, ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, “you caused your thoughtful care of me to blossom once again.” (Manson, *BJR*¹⁶L 23 [1939] 182–200, considered this a sarcastic rebuke if the letter was written from Rome, since there had been many opportunities, including Paul’s second visit to Macedonia [Acts 20:1–6; see further in Introduction, Place and Date of Writing]. This remark is sometimes taken as an ironic one, as by Capper, *T¹⁷Z* 49 [1993] 207, who thinks that Paul faults them for going back on their promise to support him.) The verb ἀναθάλλειν, “to cause to blossom once again,” is a highly metaphorical word, filled with poetic boldness and colorful in its idea. It was chosen no doubt to convey affectionate understanding. This is its only occurrence in the NT, but it is used elsewhere to describe trees and flowers “bursting into bloom again” in the springtime, or plants “sprouting afresh” from the ground (cf. BDA¹⁸G). To translate it as “renew,” “revive,” or “show” (RS¹⁹V, PHILLIPS, GN²⁰B, J²¹B, NI²²V) is almost to mistranslate it. Paul here is not complaining but marveling. Like a person rejoicing over the signs of spring after a hard winter, so Paul rejoices to see again the signs of personal concern from Philippi after a long interval of silence. (Just how long is, of course, a relative term, depending on the place of origin of the epistle.) His carefully chosen word expresses his delight: “Your care for me has now blossomed afresh!” (NE²³B). Whether this verb is considered intransitive, “you blossomed once again” (Haupt; Gnika;

¹⁵BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

¹⁶*BJRL Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*

¹⁷*TZ Theologische Zeitschrift* (ThZ)

¹⁸BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

¹⁹RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

²⁰GNB Good News Bible = Today’s English Version

²¹JB A. Jones (ed.), *Jerusalem Bible*

²²NIV The New International Version (1978)

²³NEB The New English Bible

Baumert, *B²⁴Z* 13 [1969] 256–62; cf. LX^{25}X Ps 27:7; Wis 4:4), or transitive, “you caused [something] to blossom once again” (Dibelius, Bonnard, Scott, Beare; RS^{26}V , GN^{27}B , J^{28}B , NI^{29}V ; cf. LX^{30}X Sir 1:18; 11:22; 50:10), makes little difference. Paul is most happy because of this “blossoming.”

ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαιρεῖσθε δέ, “indeed, you have always cared about me, but you have not always had the opportunity to show it.” By giving powerful expression to a fresh reason for joy, Paul makes clear that the words “now at last you caused your thoughtful care of me to blossom once again” were not in the least intended as a criticism. It is introduced by the phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ, “because, for” (cf. BD^{31}F §235[2]; Rom 5:12; 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:12; but see Baumert, *B³²Z* 13 [1969] 256–62), followed by a balanced chiasmic (crisscross) sentence that begins with the conjunction καί, “indeed,” and ends in an unusual fashion with the conjunction δέ, “but.” The conjunctions at the beginning and end bracketing these words; the short, abrupt, precise clauses; the imperfect tenses highlighting the continuous, uninterrupted flow of the thought and action described here; the chiasmic structure of the sentence—all combine to state afresh and with force this new reason for joy. It was this: Paul had come to realize that the Philippians were not to blame for the slow arrival of help, but rather the circumstances were beyond their control (for the various reasons for the delay, see the helpful summary in Fee [1995], 422 n. 3). The verb ἀκαιρεῖσθαι, “to be without opportunity,” a late and rare word found only here in the NT, means that the Philippians were “without opportunity” (α-privative with καιρός) to exhibit their willingness and readiness to send aid. It alludes to those unfavorable circumstances—whether the lack of the right person to send on the long and difficult journey to the place of Paul’s detention (which is true of Rome, but less so of Ephesus and Caesarea), or the lack of funds (cf. 2 Cor 8:2–4; Caird, 153), or the lack of suitable weather for travel—that robbed the Philippians of doing for Paul what they wished to do. Or, as Bruce (124) suggests, it may allude to Paul not being willing to accept the Philippians’ gift.

11 οὐχ ὅτι καθ’ ὑστέρησιν λέγω, “I am not saying this because of any need I had.” But having praised the Philippians to this extent, Paul immediately begins a disclaimer. As Beet (*Expositor*, 3d ser., 10 [1889] 174–89) translates: “my gratitude is not a beggar’s thanks for charity” (cited by Jones, 72). οὐχ ὅτι, “not that,” with which this sentence begins, is a distinctively NT expression. It usually appears without a verb of “saying,” which must be supplied by the reader (cf. John 6:46; 7:22; 2 Cor 1:24; 3:5; 2 Thess 3:9), but Paul chooses to include it

²⁴*BZ Biblische Zeitschrift*

²⁵ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

²⁶ RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

²⁷ GNB Good News Bible = Today’s English Version

²⁸ JB A. Jones (ed.), *Jerusalem Bible*

²⁹ NIV The New International Version (1978)

³⁰ LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

³¹ BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

³²*BZ Biblische Zeitschrift*

here (λέγω, “I am saying”; cf. BD³³F §480[5]). The prepositional phrase καθ’ ὑστέρησιν, lit³⁴. “in accordance with need,” merges the idea of norm or standard with that of reason (cf. Rom 2:7; 8:28; 11:5; 16:26; cf. Eph 1:11; 3:3; 1 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:3), and thus is more properly to be translated “because of any need I had” (BDA³⁵G, κατά, II.5δ). The noun ὑστέρησις is another of those rare words that show up regularly in this carefully phrased section. Used only here and in Mark 12:44, it denotes “need, lack, or poverty.” Thus, Paul is making very clear that his joy at the gift from the Philippians was not on account of his being in dire straits at the time it arrived (apparently he either did not need or did not want their money), but because he saw in this act of generosity a truly Christian deed of sacrificial self-giving love (cf. 2 Cor 8:5). He says in effect, “I am glad that you assisted me, yes, but I do not say this because I lacked anything or needed your help.” How is it that Paul was able to say this? Was it because he had become heir to family property that enabled him to pay all his expenses, including those involved in a costly appeal to Caesar, and thus had no need for outside assistance (cf. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, 310–13)? Possibly, but that is not the answer that he himself gives.

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι, “for I have learned to be self-sufficient in every situation in which I find myself.” Paul’s denial that he needed anything is based on what he had learned. The pronoun ἐγὼ, “I,” is used emphatically: “whether or not others have learned, I have.” The aorist tense ἔμαθον, “have learned,” is constative, used here for linear actions that, having been completed, are regarded as a whole (BD³⁶F §332[1]). It implies that Paul’s whole experience up to the present, especially as a Christian, has been a schooling whose lessons he has not failed to master (K. H. Rengstorf, *TDN*³⁷T 4:410).

The primary lesson Paul learned from the school of experience (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–29) was to be αὐτάρκης, “self-sufficient,” in all the circumstances of the moment (ἐν οἷς εἰμι, “in every situation in which I find myself”). The adjective αὐτάρκης, usually translated “content” or “satisfied” (KJ³⁸V, MOFFAT³⁹T, GOODSPEE⁴⁰D, RS⁴¹V, KNO⁴²X, PHILLIPS, GN⁴³B, NI⁴⁴V), along with its corresponding noun αὐτάρκεια, “self-sufficiency” (cf. 2 Cor 9:8), was used to describe the

³³BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

³⁴lit. literally

³⁵BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

³⁶BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

³⁷TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

³⁸KJV King James Version (1611) = AV

³⁹MOFFATT J. Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible* (NT 1913; Reprint London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926)

⁴⁰GOODSPEED *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, E. J. Goodspeed

⁴¹RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

⁴²KNOX R. A. Knox, *The Holy Bible: A Translation from the Latin Vulgate in the Light of the Hebrew and Greek Originals* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945–49)

⁴³GNB Good News Bible = Today’s English Version

⁴⁴NIV The New International Version (1978)

person who through discipline had become independent of external circumstances and who had discovered personal resources that were more than adequate for any situation that might arise. It was a favorite word in the vocabularies of the Stoic and Cynic philosophers to refer to that independent spirit and free outlook on life (ἀταραξία, “tranquillity”) that characterized the wise man (cf. Malherbe, *Cynic Epistles*, 124.25 [Diogenes, *To the So-Called Greeks*]; 176.12 [Diogenes, *To Plat⁴⁵o, the Sage*]; 244.4 [Antisthenesto Aristippus]). It expressed the doctrine “that man should be sufficient unto himself for all things, and able, by the power of his own will, to resist the force of circumstances” (Vincent, 143; cf. Plat⁴⁶o, *Tim⁴⁷*. 33d). Paul, familiar with the vocabulary of the Stoics and himself in harmony with many of their ideals (see *Comment* on Phil 4:8), appears also to have borrowed αὐτάρκης, “self-sufficient,” from them (this is the only place it appears in the NT) to declare that he too has acquired the virtue of a spirit free from worry, untroubled by the vicissitudes of external events, independent of people and things. And Paul cherishes this self-sufficiency. But the difference between Paul, the self-sufficient Christian, and the self-sufficient Stoic, is vast. Findlay makes the following comparison (*Christian Doctrine*, cited by Jones, 73):

The self-sufficiency of the Christian is relative: an independence of the world through dependence upon God. The Stoic self-sufficiency pretends to be absolute. One is the contentment of faith, the other of pride. Cato and Paul both stand erect and fearless before a persecuting world: one with a look of rigid, defiant scorn, the other with a face now lighted up with unutterable joy in God.... The Christian martyr and the Stoic suicide are the final examples of these two memorable and contemporaneous protests against the evils of the world.

The Stoic saw suicide as the highest form of human freedom, independence, and moral dignity, leading to an escape from slavery (Senec⁴⁸a, *Ep⁴⁹*., 77.15: *nam vita, si moriendi virtus abest, servitus est*, “For life is slavery if the courage to die is lost”). Senec⁵⁰a, a contemporary of Paul, rejected suicide, however, for trivial reasons (*ex frivolis causa* [*Ep⁵¹*., 4.4]) or if part of a *libido moriendi*, “passion for dying” (*Ep⁵²*., 24, 25), yet in certain circumstances suicide was justified as part of *necessitates ultimae*, “extreme necessities” (*Ep⁵³*., 17.9). (Cf. 2 Cor 9:8; 1 Tim 6:6; see also Bonhöffer, *Epiktet*, 109–10, 291, 335–36; G. Kittel, *TDN⁵⁴T* 1:466–67; Sevenster,

⁴⁵*Plato Apology of Socrates*

⁴⁶*Plato Apology of Socrates*

⁴⁷*Tim. Plato, Timaeus*

⁴⁸*Seneca Epistulae morales*

⁴⁹*Ep. Epistulae*

⁵⁰*Seneca Epistulae morales*

⁵¹*Ep. Epistulae*

⁵²*Ep. Epistulae*

⁵³*Ep. Epistulae*

⁵⁴*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

Paul and Seneca, 113–14; Glombitza, *Nov⁵⁵T* 7 [1964–65] 135–41; Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency.”)

12 οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν, “hence I know how to be humbled, and I know how to abound.” Paul now begins to explain in detail what he means when he says “I have learned to be self-sufficient in every situation.” Some interpreters claim that this explanation, which extends through v 13, is stated in a poetic fashion that makes use of two three-lined strophes (Lohmeyer, Friedrich, Gnllka, Martin [1976]). Although the passage is indeed rhythmical in form, a poetic verse structure is not obvious (Collange). Hence the passage can best be interpreted by taking the first three finite verbs—οἶδα, “I know,” οἶδα, “I know,” μεμύημαι, “I have learned the secret”—as exactly parallel to each other, developing the idea already expressed by ἔμαθον, “I have learned” (v11), and the last verb—ἰσχύω, “I have the power”—as a summary statement, qualifying what Paul means by his idea of self-sufficiency. With rhetorical repetitiveness Paul twice uses the verb οἶδα, “I know,” giving it here the meaning of “I know how” or “I am able” (BDA⁵⁶G) and showing by its use what it was he had learned: “I have learned; therefore I know: I know how to cope.” The things he learned to cope with are expressed by infinitives, the one either middle or passive in voice (ταπεινοῦσθαι, “to humble myself” or “to be humbled”), the other active in voice (περισσεύειν, “to abound”).

The verb ταπεινοῦν literally means “to lower,” as one would lower the level of water behind a dam or the height of a mountain or hill (cf. Luke 3:5; see BDA⁵⁷G). Figuratively it means “to humble,” both in a good sense and in a bad sense (cf. Matt 18:4; 2 Cor 12:21). Here Paul uses the infinitive ταπεινοῦσθαι with οἶδα, “I know,” to mean either (1) that he knows how “to discipline himself,” “to humble himself” (middle voice), e.g., by fasting (cf. Isa 58:5; see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 419), or (2) that he knows how “to be humbled, to be brought low” (passive voice) by want or poverty. It denotes a going down into deprivation, whether self-imposed or imposed by external forces, and Paul is saying “I know how to cope with this; I am able for this.” There is also in this choice of ταπεινοῦσθαι, “to humble oneself” or “to be humbled,” an echo of the self-humbling of Christ (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, “he humbled himself” [Phil 2:8]), already so poignantly described by the apostle and with which he associates himself (cf. Rolland, *AsSeig⁵⁸n* 59 [1974] 10–15; on the meaning of the whole word see W. Grundmann, *TDN⁵⁹T* 9:16–18; Schweizer, *Lordship*).

The very antithesis of this deprivation is expressed now by περισσεύειν, although one might have expected ὑψοῦν, “to exalt.” By contrast to ταπεινοῦσθαι, “to humble oneself” or “to be humbled,” it means “to abound, to overflow, to have more than enough, to be extremely rich.” By linking this infinitive with οἶδα, “I know,” Paul says “I also know how to cope with abundance.” Not all of Paul’s life was marked by a cramping and oppressive want of resources.

⁵⁵*NovT Novum Testamentum*

⁵⁶BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

⁵⁷BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

⁵⁸*AsSeign Assemblées du Seigneur*

⁵⁹*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

He also experienced great prosperity. But in the same way that privations could do him no harm, so “he was equally immune from harm when fortune smiled” (Michael, 215). He knew that grace was needed to handle prosperity, as well as penury, properly. But there is no indication that he favored the one state over the other. In the use of περισσεύειν, “to abound,” there is also an echo of the overflowing abundance that Paul envisions as characteristic of the new age, inaugurated by Christ’s coming (Phil 1:9, 26). It is a distinctively Pauline word (sometimes with special reference to suffering, as in 2 Cor 1:3–8), used by the apostle twenty-six of the thirty-nine times it appears in the NT. The business metaphors in these verbs are less important than the terminology of the messianic age when there is to be “abundance” (e.g., Amos 9; see Silva, 62, 238).

ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν μεμύημαι, “in every and all circumstances I have learned the secret.” A third thing that Paul knew as a result of his learning experience is expressed now by a verb found nowhere else in the NT. It is μυεῖν, “to initiate,” a technical term referring to those initiatory rites required of any person who wished to enter into the secrets and privileges of the mystery religions (BDA⁶⁰G). Once again Paul appears to borrow just the right word from the vocabulary of his pagan environment that would be readily understood by his readers to express the precise idea he wished to impart. He does not mean to say that he automatically knew the secret of a contented life; rather he makes clear that he came to know this secret through a difficult process that could be described as an initiation (μεμύημαι, “I have learned the secret” [perfect tense]): “I have been very thoroughly initiated into the human lot with all of its ups and downs” (NE⁶¹B). Thus, ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν, “in every and all circumstances,” with which this new sentence begins should be connected adverbially with μεμύημαι, “I have learned the secret.” In a different genre of literature we find τὸ τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως, “the course of human existence” (Jas 3:6), which echoes the κύκλος τῆς γενέσεως, “circle of becoming,” or “wheel of nature”—a term found in the mystery religion of the Orphics (cf. Proclus, *In Plato, nif Timaeum Commentarii* 5, 330a).

καὶ χορτάζεσθαι καὶ πεινᾶν καὶ περισσεύειν καὶ ὑστερεῖσθαι, “of being well fed and of going hungry, of having more than enough and of having too little.” Now these inclusive and varied circumstances are described in part by two sets of paired infinitives, the first two of which are also linked in Matt 5:6. χορτάζεσθαι, “to be well fed,” was used of force-feeding animals for the purpose of fattening them, of birds gorging themselves on their prey (Rev 19:21), and of satisfying the needs of a hungry crowd (Matt 14:20). Above all, it denotes amplitude, and Paul uses it to refer to his having plenty to eat without any overtones of brutishness (cf. Plummer). πεινᾶν, “to go hungry,” is the direct opposite of this first verb. Instead of portraying plenty of food, it pictures the absence of food and the hunger that results (cf. Matt 4:2; 12:1). More than once Paul experienced the grim, literal reality of this word as he engaged himself in the work of carrying out the Christian mission (1 Cor 4:11–13; 2 Cor 4:8–12; 6:4–5; 11:23–29). To drive home further his point on the alternating nature of human life, Paul repeats himself in the next pair of infinitives. He had earlier written ὑστέρησις, “need” (Phil 4:11), and περισσεύειν, “to abound” (4:12); now he writes περισσεύειν, “to have more than

⁶⁰BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999.

⁶¹NEB The New English Bible

enough,” “to abound,” and ὑστερεῖσθαι, “to have too little,” “to be in need.” It is as if Paul were saying: “I have been initiated into all the mysteries of life. I know the secrets of everyday reality. God has taught me through good times and bad how to cope not only with hunger and privation, but with plenty to eat and an abundance of wealth.” It is as if he were saying that “the vicissitudes of his life were the rites of admission to a secret society” (Beare, 153).

13 πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με, “I have the power to face all such situations in union with the One who continually infuses me with strength.” Paul now both reaffirms his self-sufficiency and qualifies it in these famous words, often misunderstood as a type of triumphalism (O’Brien, 526; Fee [1995], 434). Those translations that give the impression that Paul meant he could do anything and that nothing was beyond his powers (KJ⁶²V, AS⁶³V, MOFFAT⁶⁴T, GOODSPEED⁶⁵D, RS⁶⁶V, KNOX⁶⁷X, NE⁶⁸B, NAS⁶⁹B, NIV⁷⁰V) are misleading to the point of being false. πάντα does literally mean “all things.” But the real meaning of this or any word is determined by its context. Thus, irrespective of whether Paul wrote πάντα, “all things,” or τὰ πάντα, “all these things,” the context does not permit one to say that he has moved without warning from the particular to the general, from “all *these* things” to “all things” (but cf. Alford, Vincent). πάντα as used here can only refer to “all these situations,” both good and bad, that have just been described, “all the prosperous and adverse circumstances” that one must encounter in the course of everyday living.

Paul says that he has the power to cope with, or is competent and able to handle, all these things. The verb ἰσχύω, “I have the power,” is not a favorite of the apostle and is used by him only two of the twenty-eight times it occurs in the NT (here and in Gal 5:6). Nevertheless, by using this word Paul reaffirms his own sufficiency: “I have the power to face all conditions of life [cf. GN⁷¹B], humiliation or exaltation, plenty to eat or not enough, wealth or poverty, as well as all other external circumstances like these. I can endure all these things [cf. Gnilka]. I have the resources in myself to master them. I am strong to face them down. I can prevail over and be absolute master of all the vicissitudes of life.” This indeed is the force of the active voice of the verb ἰσχύω, “I have the power.” And if this were all Paul had in mind, the charge of triumphalism would be in order.

But then Paul adds a most important qualifying phrase ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με, “in union with the One who continually infuses me with strength.” And thus is established a grand paradox. The secret of Paul’s independence was his dependence upon Christ. His self-sufficiency came from being in vital union with the One who is all-sufficient. Who is this Other, this

⁶²KJV King James Version (1611) = AV

⁶³ASV American Standard Version, American Revised Version (1901)

⁶⁴MOFFATT J. Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible* (NT 1913; Reprint London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926)

⁶⁵GOODSPEED *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, E. J. Goodspeed

⁶⁶RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

⁶⁷KNOX R. A. Knox, *The Holy Bible: A Translation from the Latin Vulgate in the Light of the Hebrew and Greek Originals* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945–49)

⁶⁸NEB The New English Bible

⁶⁹NASB New American Standard Bible

⁷⁰NIV The New International Version (1978)

⁷¹GNB Good News Bible = Today’s English Version

all-sufficient One? Paul does not say. He simply identifies the source of his confidence by means of a present active participle used as a noun: τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντι, “the One who continually infuses with strength.” The verb ἐνδυναμοῦν, “to infuse with strength,” however, is used elsewhere to denote the powerful activity of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 6:10; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:1; 4:17). Thus, those later scribes who added Χριστῷ, “Christ,” to the text properly understood Paul’s intent (see *Note* ⁷²b). He whose life was seized by Christ, who gladly gave up all for Christ, who paradoxically gained all by losing all for Christ, who longed to know Christ and the *power* of his resurrection (3:7–10), could only envision Christ as his true source of inner strength. So although Paul had carefully disciplined himself and had discovered within himself untapped resources of power that, when drawn upon, made him independent of outward circumstances, he could never bring himself to deny his need of Christ and his reliance upon the strength that Christ supplied. The truth of the matter is that in himself Paul did not perceive a strong, independent life. But united with Christ, the source of ultimate power, he was able to face life bravely. In 2 Cor 12:9–10 Paul speaks of his weaknesses as advantages because they made him all the more receptive of Christ’s strength, which is made perfect in weakness (see Black, *Paul, Apostle of Weakness*; cf. Beare): “Most gladly, then, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses ... and hardships for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong” (Hawthorne’s paraphrase). Paul, thus, never allowed his weaknesses or perceived weaknesses to be an excuse for inactivity or for a failure to attempt the impossible task. They, in a sense, became his greatest assets, and in surrendering them to Christ he discovered that they were transformed for his own enrichment and for the enrichment of others. As Bousset observes, “The work is great, but help is equal to the task. God, who calls you, even though he is so high, lends you his hand. His son, his equal, comes down to carry you” (cited by Plummer, 102; author’s trans⁷³).

14 πλὴν καλῶς ἐποιήσατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει, “and yet it was good of you to become partners with me in my hardships.” With the word πλὴν, “but,” “yet,” “even so,” “nevertheless,” “all the same,” “notwithstanding,” Paul does two things: (1) he underscores for the Philippians that he could just as well have done without their contributions, and (2) he returns to the task of affirming them for the personal care and concern they showed him by these contributions. Paul sees it as very important that his desire for and insistence upon independence should not be interpreted by the Philippians as indifference to the love they displayed for him in their giving. And so he says in effect, “Although I did not need what you sent, yet you did the right, even the beautifully right [καλῶς], thing in sharing with me in my troubles.” Thus, in the idiomatic expression καλῶς ἐποιήσατε, “it was good of you” (cf. Acts 10:33; 2 Pet 1:19; 3 John 6), Paul comes as close to saying “thank you” as he ever does in this letter (Martin [1976]; Bruce, 154).

⁷²b ²⋈ D² and the Majority Text add Χριστῷ, “Christ,” to make clear who it is who strengthens Paul. If “Christ” had been part of the original text, however, there would have been no reason to omit it, except by accident or possible haplography, i.e., unintentional omission, given the similarity of sounds in the case endings.

⁷³trans. translation/transitive

The aorist participle συγκαινωνήσαντες, “having become partners with” (recalling Phil 1:5–7, 3:10), refers exclusively to this most recent gesture of love and is used circumstantially to denote manner: “you did the right thing *in that* you became partners with me.” In this instance they became his partners τῇ θλίψει, “in [my] hardships.” The word θλίψις, “hardship,” although on occasion used of the disaster that is to come on the world at the end of the age (Matt 24:29; Mark 13:19; 2 Thess 1:6), is used here in the nontechnical sense of severe hardships, afflictions, and burdens, which is the sense in which Paul most frequently uses this word (cf. Phil 1:17; 2 Cor 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; 1 Thess 1:6). Thus, it seems strained (so also Fee [1995], 438 ⁷⁴n. 9) to argue that the apostle, in praising the Philippians, may have chosen this word in order to commend them for their support of him “as ‘eschatological apostle,’ destined to promote God’s purposes in the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles and so prepare the way for the dénouement of history” (Martin [1976], 164, following Fridrichsen, *Apostle*, and Munck, *Paul*, 36–68). Rather, by the practical sympathy of the Philippians in providing material help for Paul and in sending Epaphroditus to him, they had indeed become partners with him in his imprisonment and sufferings, although they were many miles removed from him. They had taken some of his burden upon themselves in their genuine and deep sense of concern that expressed itself in constructive action on behalf of the apostle and therefore on behalf of the gospel (Phil 1:12–17; see Seesemann, *Begriff KOINΩNIA*, 33–34; Glombitza, *Nov⁷⁵T 7* [1964–65] 135–41; Collange, 151). And it was exactly this sympathy and companionship that the apostle valued far more than any financial relief that came to him as a result (cf. Lightfoot). On the grammatical point of the dative τῇ θλίψει, “in [my] hardships,” Fee ([1995], 439) comments: “Paul puts θλίψις in the dative as his way of emphasizing the ‘togetherness’ inherent in the σύν [‘with’ in συγκαινωνήσαντες, ‘having become partners with’].” Note too how μου, “my,” is brought into prominence to stress the close relationship of Paul: “to become partners with *me* in *my* hardships.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴n note

⁷⁵*NovT Novum Testamentum*

⁷⁶ Gerald F. Hawthorne, [Philippians](#), vol. 43, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2004), 260–268.

10. ἐχάρην δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ: ‘but I rejoice in the Lord.’ Again the keynote of the epistle is struck. (See 1:18, 2:17, 18, 28, 3:1, 4:4; comp⁷⁷. Polyc⁷⁸. *ad Phil.* i.) Ἐχάρ.: epistolary aorist.

ἐν κυρίῳ: The gift, its motive, and the apostle’s joy in it, were all within the sphere of life in Christ. The gift has its distinctive and choicest character for him as proceeding from their mutual fellowship in Christ. Thus Chr⁷⁹., οὐ κοσμικῶς ἐχάρην, φησὶν, οὐδὲ βιωτικῶς: “I rejoice, he says, not in a worldly fashion, nor as over a matter of common life.”

μέγालως: ‘greatly.’ Only here in N.T. (See LX⁸⁰X; 1 Chron. 29:9; Neh. 12:43.) Notice the emphatic position.

ἤδη ποτὲ: ‘now at length.’ Only here and Rom. 1:10. Ἦδη marks a present as related to a past during which something has been in process of completion which is now completed, or something has been expected which is now realised. Ποτὲ indicates indefinitely the interval of delay. With ἤδη the writer puts himself at the point where the interval indicated by ποτὲ terminates.

Others, as Weiss, render ‘already once’; which would be a mere reference to something past and now repeated. This is precluded by the connection, and especially by the latter part of vs. 10.

ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἑμοῦ φρονεῖν: ‘ye have revived your thought for me.’ Ἀνεθ. is transitive, and τὸ ὑπ. ἑμ. φρ. is accusative of the object. You caused your thought for me to sprout and bloom afresh, like a tree putting out fresh shoots after the winter. So Weiss, Lips⁸¹., Lightf⁸²., De W⁸³.

Others, as Mey⁸⁴., Kl⁸⁵., Ellic⁸⁶., Alf⁸⁷., Beet, regard the verb as intransitive. In that case either τὸ ὑπ. ἑμ. must be taken as accus. of the obj. after φρον., ‘ye revived to think of that

⁷⁷comp. Compare.

⁷⁸Polyc. Polycarp.

⁷⁹Chr. Chrysostom.

⁸⁰LXX Septuagint Version.

⁸¹Lips. Lipsius.

⁸²Lightf. Lightfoot.

⁸³De W. De Wette.

⁸⁴Mey. Meyer.

⁸⁵Kl. Klöpper.

⁸⁶Ellic. Ellicott.

⁸⁷Alf. Alford.

which concerned me,' which is awkward and improbable; or τὸ φρ. ὑπ. ἐμ. must be taken as the accus. of reference, 'ye revived as regarded the thinking concerning me.' According to this the following clause would mean, 'ye took thought concerning the taking thought for me.' The only serious objection urged against the transitive sense of ἀνεθ. is that it seems to make the revival of interest dependent on the will of the Philippians, and thus implies a reproach. But this is straining a point. Paul simply says: 'I rejoice that, when the opportunity permitted, you directed your thought towards me and sent me a gift which circumstances had prevented your doing before.' That no reproach is implied is evident from the following words. Ἀναθάλλειν only here in N.T. In LX⁸⁸X, transitively, Ezek. 17:24; Sir. 1:18, 11:22, 50:10.

ἐφ ᾧ: 'wherein,' or 'with reference to which'; namely, the matter of my welfare. Ὑπὲρ (ἐμοῦ) emphasises the personal interest; ἐπὶ merely marks a reference to the matter in question.

καὶ: Besides your ἀναθάλλειν at the favorable opportunity, you were 'also' concerned all the time until the opportunity occurred.

ἐφρονεῖτε: imperfect tense: 'ye were all along taking thought.' Every possible suggestion of reproach is removed by this.

ἡκαιρεῖσθε ὅδε: 'but ye were lacking (all the while you were thus taking thought) opportunity.' The verb (only here in Bib⁸⁹.) refers to the circumstances which had prevented them from sooner sending their gift; either lack of means, or want of facilities for transmitting the contribution, etc.

There is a possibility of their misunderstanding his expression of joy to mean merely satisfaction at the relief of his personal needs. He will guard this.

11. οὐχ ὅτι: 'not to say that,' or 'I do not say that.' A distinctively N.T. formula. (See Jn. 6:46, 7:22; 2 Cor. 1:24, 3:5.) In class⁹⁰. 'not only'; or, when not followed by a second clause, 'although.'

καθ' ὑστέρησιν λέγω: 'I speak according to want'; i.e. 'as if I were in a state of want.' Lightf⁹¹. aptly, 'in language dictated by want.' Comp⁹². κατ' ἐριθίαν, κατὰ κενοδοξίαν, 2:3. Ὑστέρησις, only here and Mk. 12:44. He does not deny the want itself, but the want as the motive and measure of his joy.

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον: 'for I have learned.' The aorist for the perfect. See on ἔλαβον, 3:12 (Burt⁹³. 46, 55). The tuition has extended over his whole experience up to the present. Ἐγὼ emphasises his personal relation to the matter of want. 'I, so far as my being affected by want.'

ἐν οἷς εἰμι: 'in the state in which I am.' Not as A.V⁹⁴. and R.V⁹⁵., 'in whatever state I am,' but in all the circumstances of the present. For εἶναι or γίνεσθαι ἐν, see Mk. 5:25; Lk. 22:42; 1 Cor. 15:17; 1 Thess. 2:6, 5:4.

⁸⁸LXX Septuagint Version.

⁸⁹Bib. Bible.

⁹⁰class. Classics or Classical.

⁹¹Lightf. Lightfoot.

⁹²Comp. Compare.

⁹³Burt. Burton: *N. T. Moods and Tenses*.

⁹⁴A.V. Authorized Version.

⁹⁵R.V. Revised Version of 1881.

αὐτάρκης: ‘self-sufficing.’ Only here in N.T.; LX⁹⁶X Sir. 40:18; αὐτάρκεια, 2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6. Αὐτάρκεια is an inward self-sufficing, as opposed to the lack or the desire of outward things. Comp⁹⁷. Plat. *Tim.* 33 D, ἡγήσατο γὰρ αὐτὸ ὁ ξυνθεὶς αὐταρκες ὃν ἄμεινον ἔσεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ προσδεῖς ἄλλων: “For the Creator conceived that a being which was self-sufficient would be far more excellent than one which lacked anything.” It was a favorite Stoic word. See on πολιτεύεσθε, 1:27. It expressed the doctrine of that sect that man should be sufficient unto himself for all things, and able, by the power of his own will, to resist the force of circumstances. Comp⁹⁸. Seneca, *De Vita Beata*, 6, addressed to Gallio: “Beatus est praesentibus, qualiacunque sunt, contentus.” A list of interesting parallels in Wetst⁹⁹. Paul is not self-sufficient in the Stoic sense, but through the power of a new self—the power of Christ in him. (Comp¹⁰⁰. 2 Cor. 3:5.)

He proceeds to explain ἐν οἷς ... αὐτάρκης in detail. The ἔμαθον is developed by οἶδα and μεμύημαι.

12. οἶδα: ‘I know,’ as the result of having learned. (See on 1:19, 25.)

καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι: ‘also how to be abased.’ Καὶ connects ταπ. with the preceding more general statement, ἐμ ... αὐτάρ. εἶν. Ταπεινοῦσθαι: ‘to be brought low,’ with special reference to the abasement caused by want. Not in the spiritual sense, which is all but universal in N.T. The usual antithesis of ταπεινοῦν is ὑψοῦν. (See 2 Cor. 11:7; Phil. 2:8, 9; 1 Pet. 5:6.) Here the antithesis is περισσεύειν, contrasting abundance with the want implied in ταπ.

οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν: ‘and I know how to abound.’ Οἶδα is repeated for emphasis. Περισ., ‘to be abundantly furnished.’ Not ‘to have superfluity,’ as Calv¹⁰¹. Paul says, ‘I know how to be abased and not crushed; to be in abundance and not exalted.’ (Comp¹⁰². 2 Cor. 4:8, 9.)

ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν: ‘in everything and in all things.’ In all relations and circumstances. In every particular circumstance, and in all circumstances generally. “In Allem und Jedem.” (Comp¹⁰³. 2 Cor. 11:6.) For ἐν πᾶσιν, comp¹⁰⁴. Col. 1:18, 3:11; 1 Tim. 3:11; Heb. 13:18. Paul more commonly uses ἐν παντὶ. Both adjectives are neuter, after the analogy of οἷς (vs. 11).

Such interpretations of ἐν παντὶ as ‘ubique’ (Vulg¹⁰⁵., Calv¹⁰⁶., Beza); or reference to time (Chr¹⁰⁷.); or, taking παντὶ as neuter, and πᾶσιν as masculine (Luth¹⁰⁸., Beng¹⁰⁹.), are fanciful.

⁹⁶LXX Septuagint Version.

⁹⁷Comp. Compare.

⁹⁸Comp. Compare.

⁹⁹Wetst. Wetstein.

¹⁰⁰Comp. Compare.

¹⁰¹Calv. Calvin.

¹⁰²Comp. Compare.

¹⁰³Comp. Compare.

¹⁰⁴comp. Compare.

¹⁰⁵Vulg. Vulgate.

¹⁰⁶Calv. Calvin.

¹⁰⁷Chr. Chrysostom.

¹⁰⁸Luth. Luther.

¹⁰⁹Beng. Bengel.

μεμύημαι: 'I have been initiated.' R.V.¹¹⁰, 'I have learned the secret.' In class¹¹¹, mostly in the passive, of initiation into the Greek mysteries, as the Eleusinian. (See Hdt¹¹². ii. 51; Plat. *Gorg.* 497¹¹³C; Aristoph¹¹⁴. *Plut.* 846; *Ran.* 158.) In a similar sense, LX¹¹⁵X; 3 Macc. 2:30. The kindred word μυστήριον is common in Paul of the great truths hidden from eternity in the divine counsels, and revealed to believers (Eph. 3:3, 4, 9; Col. 1:26, 2:2, etc.). Comp¹¹⁶. Ign¹¹⁷. *Eph.* xii., Παύλου συμμύσται τοῦ ἡγιασμένου: "associates in the mysteries with Paul who has been sanctified." Connect ἐν παν. κ. ἐν πᾶς. adverbially with μεμύ., while the infinitives depend on μεμύ. Thus: 'In everything and in all things I have been instructed to be full,' etc.

Others, as De W¹¹⁸., Lips¹¹⁹., Ellic¹²⁰., while connecting ἐν παν. κ. ἐν πᾶς. with μεμύ. as above, make the following infinitives simply explicative; while that in which Paul has been instructed is represented by ἐν παντί, etc. The objection urged against this is that μυεῖσθαι appears to be habitually construed, either with the accusative of the thing, the dative, or, rarely, with the infinitive; though there is one instance of its construction with a preposition, κατὰ (3 Macc. 2:30). This objection is not formidable, and is relieved by our rendering.

χορτάζεσθαι: 'to be full.' The verb, primarily, of the feeding and fattening of animals in a stall. Comp¹²¹. Apoc. 19:21, of feeding birds of prey with the flesh of God's enemies. In Synop., of satisfying the hunger of the multitude (Mt. 14:20 and paralls.). In Mt. 5:6; Lk. 6:21, of satisfying spiritual hunger.

ὑστερεῖσθαι: 'to suffer need.' From ὕστερος, 'behind.' The phrase 'to fall behind' is popularly used of one in straitened circumstances, or in debt. It is applied in N.T. to material deficiency (Lk. 15:14; Jn. 2:3); and to moral and spiritual shortcoming (Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 8:8; Heb. 12:15). The middle voice (not pass. as Thay¹²².) indicates the *feeling* of the pressure of want, as Lk. 15:14; Rom. 3:23; 2 Cor. 11:8. The mere *fact* of want is expressed by the active voice, as Mt. 19:20; Jn. 2:3. In 2 Cor. 12:11, Paul says that he was in no respect *behind* the 'extra super' apostles; οὐδὲν ὑστέρησα, expressing the *fact* of his equality, not his *sense* of it.

See some good remarks of Canon T.S. Evans on 1 Cor. 1:7 (*Expositor*, 2d Ser. iii. p. 6); also Gifford, in *Speaker's Comm.*, on Rom. 3:23.

¹¹⁰R.V. Revised Version of 1881.

¹¹¹class. Classics or Classical.

¹¹²Hdt. Herodotus.

¹¹³C *Cod. Ephraem*: 5th century. Palimpsest. National Library, Paris. Very defective. Wanting from τοῦτο οὖν (Eph. 4:17) to καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι (Phil 1:22), and from μιν (Βενιαμιν) (Phil. 3:5) to the end. Correctors: C², 6th century; C³, 9th century.

¹¹⁴Aristoph. Aristophanes.

¹¹⁵LXX Septuagint Version.

¹¹⁶Comp. Compare.

¹¹⁷Ign. Ignatius.

¹¹⁸De W. De Wette.

¹¹⁹Lips. Lipsius.

¹²⁰Ellic. Ellicott.

¹²¹Comp. Compare.

¹²²Thay. Thayer: *Greek-English Lexicon of the N. T.*

13. πάντα ἰσχύω: ‘I can do all things.’ Not only all the things just mentioned, but everything.

Ἰσχύειν and the kindred words ἰσχύς, ἰσχυρὸς, are not of frequent occurrence in Paul. The meanings of ἰσχύς and δύναμις (see ἐνδυναμοῦντι) often run together, as do those of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. (See on 3:21.) The general distinction, however, is that ἰσχύς is indwelling power put forth or embodied, either aggressively, or as an obstacle to resistance; physical power organised, or working under individual direction. An army and a fortress are both ἰσχυρὸς. The power inhering in the magistrate, which is put forth in laws or judicial decisions, is ἰσχύς, and makes the edicts ἰσχυρὰ, ‘valid,’ and hard to resist. Δύναμις is rather the indwelling power or virtue which comes to manifestation in ἰσχύς. (See Schmidt, *Synon.* 148, 3, 4, 5.) For the accus. with ἰσχύειν, comp¹²³. Gal. 5:6.

ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με: ‘in him that strengtheneth me,’ or, more literally, ‘infuses strength into me.’ The ἐνδυν. appears in the ἰσχύω.

Χριστῷ is added by ¹²⁴κ^c ¹²⁵Δ¹²⁶ ¹²⁷Γ¹²⁸ ¹²⁹Κ¹³⁰ ¹³¹Π.

ἐν: Not ‘through,’ but ‘in’; for he is *in* Christ (3:9). Ἐνδυναμοῦν, mostly in Paul. (See Rom. 4:20; Eph. 6:10; 1 Tim. 1:12.) With the thought here, comp¹³¹. 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1, 4:17; and Ign¹³². *Smyr.* iv., πάντα ὑπομένω, αὐτοῦ με ἐνδυναμοῦντος τοῦ τελείου ἀνθρώπου: ‘I endure all things, seeing that he himself enableth me who is perfect man.’ Any possible misunderstanding of αὐτάρκης (vs. 11) is corrected by these words.

He guards against a possible inference from his words that he lightly esteems their gift, or thinks it superfluous. Not, as Chr¹³³., Œc¹³⁴., and Theoph¹³⁵., very strangely, that he feared lest

¹²³comp. Compare.

¹²⁴κ *Cod. Sinaiticus*: 4th century. Discovered by Tischendorf in the convent of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai, in 1859. Now at St. Petersburg. Contains both epistles complete. Correctors: κ^a, nearly contemporary; κ^b, 6th century; κ^c, beginning of 7th century, treated by two correctors,—κ^{ca} κ^{cb}.

¹²⁵Δ *Cod. Claromontanus*: 6th century. Græco-Latin. National Library, Paris. Contains both epistles entire. Corrector: Δ^b, close of 6th century.

¹²⁶Γ *Cod. Augiensis*: 9th century. Græco-Latin. Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Philippians entire; Philemon wanting in the Greek from πεποιθὼς (vs. 21) to the end.

¹²⁷Γ *Cod. Boernerianus*: 9th century. Græco-Latin. Dresden. Wanting Greek and Latin, Philem. 21–25.

¹²⁸Κ *Cod. Mosquensis*: 9th century. Moscow. Contains both epistles entire.

¹²⁹Λ *Cod. Angelicus*: 9th century. Angelican Library of Augustinian monks at Rome. Wanting from ἐξουσίαν (Heb. 13:10) to the end of Philemon.

¹³⁰Π *Cod. Porphyrianus*: beginning of 9th century. Palimpsest. St. Petersburg. Both epistles entire, but many words illegible.

¹³¹comp. Compare.

¹³²Ign. Ignatius.

¹³³Chr. Chrysostom.

¹³⁴Œc. Œcumenius.

¹³⁵Theoph. Theophylact.

his apparent contempt for the gift might dissuade them from similar acts in the future. It is characteristic that there is no formal expression of thanks beyond his recognition and commendation of the moral and spiritual significance of the act, in which he virtually acknowledges the benefit to himself. The best thanks he can give them is to recognise their fidelity to the principle of Christian love, and to see in their gift an expression of that principle. On the other hand, there is no attempt to conceal the fact that he was in real affliction (θλίψει), and that their act relieved it; and only the most perverted and shallow exegesis, such as Holsten's, can read into his words an expression of indifference to the love displayed by the church, and describe them as "thankless thanks," or see in them a contradiction of 1 Thess. 2:9.

14. πλὴν: 'nevertheless.' (See on 1:18, 3:16.) 'Nevertheless, do not think that, because I am thus independent of earthly contingencies, I lightly prize your gift.'

καλῶς ἐποιήσατε: 'ye did nobly.' Positive and generous praise: not a mere acknowledgment that they had simply done their duty. It was a beautiful deed, true to the gospel ideal of καλός. For the phrase καλῶς ποιεῖν, see Mk. 7:37; Lk. 6:27; 1 Cor. 7:37.

συνκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει: 'that ye made common cause with my affliction'; 'went shares with' (Lightf¹³⁶. on Gal. 6:6). The A.V.¹³⁷. 'communicate' is correct, if 'communicate' is understood in its older sense of 'share,' as Ben Jonson, "thousands that communicate our loss." (Comp¹³⁸. Rom. 12:13.) The verb occurs only in Eph. 5:11; Apoc. 18:4. The participle, as the complement of ἐποι., specifies the act in which the καλ. ἐποι. was exhibited. For the construction, comp¹³⁹. Acts 5:42; 2 Thess. 3:13; Win¹⁴⁰. xlv. 4. The dative θλίψει expresses that with which common cause was made.

Their gift is not the first and only one which he has received. It is a repetition of former acts of the same kind, a new outgrowth from his long and affectionate relations with them. He might justly expect and could honorably accept help from those who had been the first to minister to his necessities, and who had so often repeated their ministry. The idea of a *quasi*-apology for his reproach of the Philippians, because his former relations with them had justified his disappointment in not receiving earlier supplies (Chr¹⁴¹., Œc¹⁴²., Theoph¹⁴³.), is utterly without foundation, since no reproach had been uttered or implied. There is no specific praise of their earlier gifts, but the καλ. ἐποι. is confirmed by the fact that the last gift was a continued manifestation of the same spirit that had marked them from the beginning.

Baur's inference from 2 Cor. 11:9, that the Philippians had been accustomed to send him a regular annual contribution which had now for some time been intermitted, requires no notice.

¹³⁶Lightf. Lightfoot.

¹³⁷A.V. Authorized Version.

¹³⁸Comp. Compare.

¹³⁹comp. Compare.

¹⁴⁰Win. Winer: *Grammar of N. T. Greek*. 8th ed. of Eng. Transl. by Moulton. *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms*, 8 Aufl., von P. W. Schmiedel. 1 Theil, 1894.

¹⁴¹Chr. Chrysostom.

¹⁴²Œc. Œcumenius.

¹⁴³Theoph. Theophylact.

(1) Appreciation (4:10)

4:10 Apparently some time elapsed between gifts from the Philippian church. It may have been years between the gifts mentioned in 2 Cor 8 and the one delivered by Epaphroditus. Perhaps Paul had despaired of their love for him since so much time elapsed and since they were the ones who remembered him financially and a financial gift uniquely expressed love. Their gift was a cause of joy in the Lord. Perhaps they expected Paul to be joyful because of the gift but, as the context clearly reveals, his joy was in the Lord. Spiritual relationships brought the most satisfaction: their love for him because of Christ's love and his love for the Lord. Thus it was natural for a material gift to become an occasion for Christian joy. The Christian nature of this relationship is supported by the word Paul used for "concern." It is the key verb of the epistle, *phroneō*. Paul used it consistently to point out proper Christian attitudes in following the mind of Christ. He must have consciously alluded to that in his choice of the word.

Although some time elapsed between the gifts, Paul remained in the Philippians' thoughts. He explained that they were mindful of him all along (the same verb occurs, *phroneō*), but they lacked opportunity. The lack was probably that Paul did not have need, but some interpret it as the church's inability to provide what they desired. Since when they were motivated to give, they created the opportunity by sending Epaphroditus as their minister, Paul's situation best explains the reference.

Paul may have moved between mild rebuke and sympathetic understanding in this section. On one hand, lest some misunderstand him as being too critical, he explained that they had no occasion to give.¹⁴⁴¹ On the other hand, the phrase translated "indeed you have been concerned" is introduced by a causal construction (*eph ho kai*).¹⁴⁵² That makes the meaning "you have renewed your concern for me *because* you have been concerned." Rather than a rebuke,

¹⁴⁴¹ G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: University Press, 1976), expresses the idea of many by interpreting this as, "You lacked the means" (153). M. Silva, *Philippians*, WEC (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 231–32, suggests that the awkwardness of the passage is partly cultural, in that we do not understand their ways, and partly circumstantial. The awkwardness also comes in the natural difficulty of expressing thanks without asking for more.

¹⁴⁵² The construction occurs four times in Paul's writing and each time it appears to make a correction of thought (Rom 5:12; 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:12; 4:10). See BDF, 235.2, 123.

this makes Paul's situation the reason they could not respond and implies that they wanted to respond all along. It makes good sense of the passage.

Paul's statement did not reflect his own need. He had learned to be at home with whatever God supplied to him. He stated three reasons he fared well even without their gift.

(2) Contentment (4:11)

4:11 The first reason Paul did not need the gift was his own contentment. Twice in these verses he stated that he had learned contentment. One word, *emathon*, was natural to use. It speaks to having arrived at a fact of understanding. The other word, *memorymai*, often appears in the mystery religions. It means to *learn the secret* and conveys the idea of a secret knowledge to which adherents of the mystery religions aspired.¹⁴⁶³ The word conveyed what Paul desired. Contentment is learned through experience. Paul used another rare word for "to be content." The etymology means "self-reliant,"¹⁴⁷⁴ and the context supports that meaning. It is a self-sufficiency because of Christ, however, as Paul clearly stated in 4:13. He meant that he came to grips with his circumstances and fared well in and through them because of his own relationship to Christ. He did not need help.¹⁴⁸⁵

(3) Adaptability (4:12)

4:12 Circumstances were the arena of spiritual growth, and through them Paul developed adaptability. In this verse Paul presented three contrasts that provided the occasion for learning and explained the nature of contentment. The first and last speak to physical needs in general, while the middle refers to food. In these varied experiences, Paul displayed spiritual equilibrium. He was equally unaffected by poverty and riches. This knowledge is learned by walking with Christ, who is the sufficient one, and by developing a solid theology of material things. Things ultimately do not matter. Relationships matter. Paul's attitude contrasted with the false teachers'. They were preoccupied with food and other earthly matters; Paul could rise above any set of circumstances.

(4) Dependency (4:13)

4:13 Paul depended on Christ for strength. The expression "through him who gives me strength" clearly refers to the indwelling Christ, and Paul could accomplish all that God wanted through the strength he provided. Some people abuse this verse by taking it out of context. They assume Paul was making a comprehensive statement about the spiritual abilities of a Christian. Some even act as if there were nothing they could not do. Paul did not mean that. Two factors in the text reveal why. First, the passage discussed material and physical needs. In

¹⁴⁶³ Paul may have deliberately chosen the word to explain in irony that Christians have their secrets too.

¹⁴⁷⁴ BAGD, 122. It only occurs here in the New Testament.

¹⁴⁸⁵ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), stated well that the meaning of the word ἀντάρκης is "independence of external circumstances" (163).

the day to day economic fluctuations, Paul knew a stability that enabled him to rise above them. The rule of context means that this must be applied to economic matters.¹⁴⁹⁶ Second, Paul expressed his dependence on the power of the Lord. In this, he knew that where the Lord led him, he had power. The will of God limited the application of the strength he knew. Many who misapply this verse step out of God's will for their lives. They hope to cover their actions by a blanket promise of power, but power comes in the will of God. Thus, Paul expressed a crucial paradox. He was strong when he was weak! He was independent (self-sufficient) only when he was dependent! Although Paul realized the necessity of living in a Christian community, he also knew what it meant to face life's problems alone and still triumph through them.

It may be more difficult to triumph in the good times than in the bad. A Christian's victory comes from a conscious dependence on the Lord and his power, and that is easier understood when times get hard! One mark of maturity in Christ is that the mature know how to depend on the Lord in every situation of life, not only in those for which they assume they need help. Paul modeled this lesson for them and thus even in his thankfulness taught the truths of Christian living.

(5) Blessing (4:14)

4:14 As a summary of this section, Paul reminded the readers that their share in his work was good. The NIV translates this accurately but perhaps too casually: "You share in my troubles." Two important terms indicate the significance of their contribution to Paul. First, they participated with him. The Greek *sygkoinoneō* emphasizes that participation. The basic translation, "fellowship," means *a deep partnership of two going the same direction*. This is heightened by the preposition "with" (*syn*), which has a perfective force here.¹⁵⁰⁷ Second, Paul identified their partnership specifically as with his "troubles" (*thlipsis*). The term naturally implies hardships of any kind,¹⁵¹⁸ but it had a deeper significance for Paul. In Col 1:24 he spoke of suffering the "tribulations of the Christ" (the same Greek word) so that his difficulties in spreading the gospel actually related to the Messiah.¹⁵²⁹ In reflecting on his tribulations, Paul realized the eschatological significance of his ministry and that those who supported him participated in that themselves. Their gifts evidenced their willingness to identify with the new era inaugurated by Jesus.

This expression contains the first hint of the significance of Christian giving. It also explains something of Paul's hesitancy in expressing his own needs to them. The Philippians recognized Paul's strategic place in the spread of the gospel, the mystery revealed to him (Eph 3:1–13). Others, particularly the Jewish Christians, had difficulty accepting Paul's ministry. The gifts from

¹⁴⁹⁶ This does not directly refer to his ministry, even though it was in the course of ministry that he encountered these circumstances. It certainly does not apply to spiritual powers, although in some ways the principle remains. The apostle meant he could get along well in this life because of Christ.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Such compounds may be directive, pointing to an object, or perfective, stressing the meaning of the verb. Here the perfective force comes through. It stresses a complete, deep partnership with Paul.

¹⁵¹⁸ *BAGD*, 362, says primarily "of the distress that is brought about by outward circumstances."

¹⁵²⁹ See the exegesis of that passage in the Colossians commentary.

Philippi meant that the church eagerly participated in the work of God and that their gifts were, in reality, contributions to the spread of the gospel to other Gentiles. Paul knew he would suffer because of his distinctive apostolic calling. He accepted this suffering joyfully and learned the secret of triumph over any circumstance. Paul's ministry simply provided an occasion for sharing in the gospel. He knew that he handled sacred resources when they came from the people of God (see 4:18). Their gift was good because it demonstrated that they understood God's working in the world and that they willingly supported it through God's servants.¹⁵³

1. The Lesson Of Contentment (4:10–13)

4:10–13. Paul's heart was made glad (**I rejoice greatly in the Lord**) because of the continued interest the Philippian Christians showed in him. They had not forgotten him; through them God had met his needs. Even before they sent Epaphroditus they were concerned but **had no opportunity to show it**.

Paul did not beg God's people to help him in his work. He just placed the need before them and trusted God to meet it. Too, he had learned the lesson of contentment. Changing circumstances did not affect the inner contentment he enjoyed. The word **content** (*autarkēs*) means "self-sufficient." The Stoics used this word (which occurs only here in the NT) to mean human self-reliance and fortitude, a calm acceptance of life's pressures. But Paul used it to refer to a *divinely* bestowed sufficiency, **whatever the circumstances**.

At times Paul experienced definite financial and material needs, and at other times he had an abundance (v. 12). He learned how to cope with both **need** and **plenty**. The words **I have learned the secret** translate *memyēmai* (from *myeō*), which occurs only here in the New Testament. In the mystery religions it was a technical term meaning "to initiate (into the mysteries)." Paul used it here to suggest a kind of "initiation" (by his experiences) into being content when either **well fed or hungry**, and either **in plenty or in want**.

Paul said he could **do everything**—including handling poverty and living in abundance—**through Him who gave him strength**. This was not an expression of pride in his own abilities but a declaration of the strength provided by Christ.

2. The Blessing Of Giving And Receiving (4:14–20)

4:14–16. Though Paul was content no matter what the circumstances, he was nevertheless grateful for the help the Philippians sent with Epaphroditus.

Because they gave of their means they shared with the apostle in his **troubles**; they did something about his problem.

In the very beginning of their Christian experience (Acts 16) when Paul left Macedonia they alone shared with him **in the matter of giving and receiving**. And again when Paul was in

¹⁵³ Richard R. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 152–156.

Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1) and experienced definite need, the Philippians **sent** him **aid** twice.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Robert P. Lightner, [“Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 664–665.