Philippians 10-09-24a

This is Friday, the 24th of September, 2010. We continue our study in the Book of Philippians. We're very close, by the way, to completing our study in the Book of Philippians.

It's been a wonderful encouragement to me. I have been convicted, rebuked, instructed, and corrected in various areas by it. In fact, I was just mentioning to someone earlier today how consistent the Apostle Paul is, especially in this letter, in demonstrating how any circumstance can be looked at in a positive light.

It's a great failing for some of us more than others to tend to focus on the part of the glass that's empty instead of the part that's full. You will never see a better example, not only of teaching that truth, but of exemplifying it than here in Philippians as we have seen so far. We'll pick up our study here in just a moment, but let's take a few moments here at the beginning to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, how grateful we are to look back over the past week and see how you have sustained us and protected us, provided for us and blessed us. We thank you for our fellowship. We thank you for the tremendous encouragement and edification that we receive when we spend time together in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

We thank you for the truth of your Word and the opportunity that we have to learn it together and to encourage each other to grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior, to manifest love and accomplish good works. We pray that our study tonight will contribute to all of those goals. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, you'll recall that in the first part of chapter 4, Paul has given yet another ta loipon, or another as for the rest, after encouraging Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their differences and for Epaphroditus to help them in that endeavor. In verse 8 he said, Finally, brethren, ta loipon, Adelphoi.

To the extent that it is true, to the extent that it is honorable, to the extent that there is righteousness, to the extent that there is purity, to the extent that there is beauty or something well-pleasing, to the extent that there is virtue, to the extent that there is praise, logizomai, logizeste, in this case, reason on these things. Calculate, form your plan, draw your conclusions on these things. This is not the word for meditation so much as the thought that precedes action.

When you're trying to figure out what to do, look for what measure there is of those virtues, those attributes. And this is such a helpful piece of wisdom. And it once again manifests that idea.

Paul doesn't say to the extent that there is error, and to the extent that there is mistakenness, and to the extent that there is failure, and to the extent that there is something to criticize, and to the extent that there is shortcoming, and to the extent that there is blunder, think on these things. He

could have said that. That might have been some sort of a biblical principle.

Look at the ear of corn and see if there is a single kernel that is blemished. And if there is, that's what you focus on. Well, some of us do this by nature.

And it's a fight, it's a struggle to have the new nature supersede and overcome the old. It is a function of the new nature to look for that which is good. Concentrate on what is best.

Nothing is going to be perfect. Nothing is going to be totally righteous. Nothing is going to be pure.

There will always be some sort of an admixture. And Paul says, look at the good stuff. Focus on that.

And to that extent, draw your conclusions. Make your calculations. Form your action plan.

Well, if you're anything like me, that is a huge conviction. But this is what the Bible says. And it's a great thing to have it spelled out so clearly.

And it certainly removes any future excuse for failure in that area. I mean, it doesn't get much clearer than this. If you're looking around, focus on what is good.

It doesn't mean that you can't take note or that you can't try to improve, that you can't try to, you know. There's other places in the Bible that says, purge out the old leaven. And touch not the unclean thing.

Well, you can't just be saying, well, I'm only looking for clean things and not ever notice the unclean. It says, he that does not work does not eat. Well, you've got to take note of the guy that's not working.

You can't just be Pollyanna and going around saying, well, you know, look at how many people are working. I mean, you do have to take note. There is a time and a place for correction and for improvement.

Certainly when we look at ourselves, judge yourself that you be not judged. We can't just say, well, look at all the good that I'm doing and ignore where we're failing. So this doesn't completely abnegate the other.

But it does tell us, particularly in the one another situations and in the world of relationships and in the world of circumstances, when it comes to our peace, when it comes to our happiness. Remember that preceding section began with the peace of God that passes all understanding and it ended with the God of peace will be with you. The peace of God and the God of peace.

And you're not going to have either one by constantly jumping on bad stuff. You just won't. You just can't.

You won't have it yourself and you're going to take it away from other people. So, I know whereof I speak. So, the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.

So then we pick up tonight in verse 10 and let's read this next section of Philippians 4. Philippians 4.10 and following says, in the New King James, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now, at last, your care for me has flourished again. Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

If you ever learned that in the King James, it's Christ which strengtheneth me. I always thought that was a bizarre thing even for King James English to use which instead of who. That's how they did it back in the 1600s.

Nevertheless, verse 14, you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

And my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. By Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Well this is the section we address this evening. We come back to verse 10.

He says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again though you surely did care but you lacked opportunity. What's he talking about? There was a time in the past and it's recorded in the book of Acts. You may have a cross reference if you've got a Bible with footnotes in it.

But during the time that Paul was traveling, and he makes a specific note of it down, when he departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. This was previous to this Roman imprisonment from which he is now riding. When he was traveling around he didn't get any support from anybody except the Philippian church.

Now this Philippian church to which he's riding, I mean they've got elders and they've got a

structure, they're big enough to have factions led by Euodia and Syntyche and so on. But if you remember Acts 16, who knows Acts 16.31? Remember that? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. Do you remember the occasion of Acts 16.31? Who is Paul speaking to when he speaks those words? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

Who's he talking to? The jailer. What jailer? Philippian jailer. It's the Philippian jailer.

Acts 16 is the story of Paul's visit to Philippi. He goes there, he starts preaching, a riot ensues, he gets locked up, then there's an earthquake, and the stuff is opened up, and they don't leave. Remember the jailer comes in, he thinks everybody's gone, he's about to slay himself, he's about to commit harry-carry, and Paul says, Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on.

We're all here. And the guy is so relieved, he takes him to his house and bathes him and dresses their wounds, and in the course of that, Paul shares the gospel with him. And he says, man, that's for me.

And he says, what must I do to be saved? And Paul says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and in thy house. And so he does. Well, that's Philippi.

That's the germ, that's the origination, that's the seed planted that resulted in this church. Well, these people loved Paul. This is where Lydia was, you remember.

And these people loved Paul, and they kept track of him, and they had concern for him, and they sent support, they expressed their concern with support. They weren't a rich church, they weren't well-off, they were small, but they sent what they could. And little did they know that for a time, they were the only church sending anything to meet Paul's needs.

And he says, I don't know if you know this or not, but when I came from Macedonia, I wouldn't get anything except what you sent. And I praise God for you. And he says, now here in verse 10, he says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care for me has flourished again.

Well, after the missionary trip, through some unknown set of circumstances, that this wasn't a regular, you know, monthly check they were sending to support Paul. And, you know, lapses in communication, you think about the ancient world, not knowing where Paul was or what he was doing, or if he had needs or not. And so there was a period of time where the Philippian church wasn't helping Paul with any material gifts.

It didn't mean that they didn't care about him. They did, but there was no occasion. There was no opportunity.

The word here in Greek, when he says, your care for me has flourished again, though you surely did care, you lacked opportunity. You have it in the New King James. But this is the word, a-kai-

re-o-mai.

And in the root of that is kairos. But a-kai-re-o-mai means to, you know, there's an alpha privative on there. You know, you have kairos and kronos, two different words for time, times and seasons.

And kronos is time, kairos is season. Well, a-kairos would be no season. And a-kai-re-o-mai is to have no season.

And the o-mai ending on there, o-m-a-i, this in almost any Greek word, any Greek verb, when you see o-mai on the end, arne-o-mai, kra-o-mai, any of the o-m-a-i words, this suffix has the idea of sort of, it's a cross between the passive and the reflexive. It means that it involves the subject in a Greek way that we don't have in English. I don't know how else to say it, but we have the active voice and the passive voice.

I hit the ball or I was hit by the ball. Active in one sense, passive in the other. Well, Greek has got the middle voice.

And in the middle, the subject may act on an object, but he does it in his own interest. We do it with a reflexive pronoun. I cooked myself supper.

Well, in Greek, there's a verb that says something like, I cooked myself, at least that verbal idea. I cooked for myself this dinner. You don't have to say for myself because it's wrapped up in the verb.

It's an o-mai verb. So just note to the wise, when you're reading the Greek next time and you see an o-mai word, you'll know that it at least implies or suggests that in the original sense of the word, there was an involvement of the subject. So what do we have here? He says, you a-kai-re-o-mai.

You had no season for yourselves. You had no season that you could exploit. It's all wrapped up in the verb.

It's one word and it's one of the beauties of Greek. It's kind of like Hebrew. You can get so much packed into one word.

He just says, a-kai-re-ste. And it's a second person plural. He says, you all had no season to express your care for me.

It's all in the one word. And so now, why am I belaboring this point? You say, well, you know, why are we sticking around on this? There's more interesting stuff down the road. Think about this.

Here's Paul the apostle. He's teaching the word of God. He's revealing church age doctrines for the first time.

He is the steward of the mysteries. He's going around bringing this wonderful good news

throughout Asia Minor to the Gentiles on these missionary journeys and so on. He's an important guy.

And the work that he's doing is unimaginably important. Right? It's going to affect people for centuries and millennia, for all eternity. The things he's writing down will live and abide forever as a part of the word of God.

So here he is. And he's got needs, right? He needs money. He needs encouragement.

He needs comfort. He needs bag carriers. He needs a retinue.

He needs somebody to look out for him and to go ahead to the next city and make arrangements so he doesn't get there. You know, there's a party with him that helps him get done what he needs to get done and to minister to need. He can be ill.

He can have wounds. He gets beat up. He gets the 40 lashes minus one.

He gets imprisoned and knocked around. Somebody's got to dress the wounds and change the bandages and take care of him. He's an aging... You know, it's one thing if you were 20 and somebody did this stuff to you.

He's 55, 60, and in the ancient world he's near the end of the road and they're knocking him around this way. So he has needs. Here's a church that loves Paul beyond all measure and is anxious to meet his needs.

So you think, well, this is a match made in heaven. Here's a guy with needs. Here's a church that wants to meet his needs, loves him to death.

It's all going to redound praise and glory of God, laying hold of righteousness by faith. This is just going to be a constant flow. But do you notice something? Although there is a need on one end and a willingness to meet it on the other, the flow from point A to point B is interrupted.

Now whose idea was that? Well, it's in the plan of God, right? God is actively superintending the ministry of the Apostle Paul. God is actively superintending in the lives of the Philippian believers. And here's the point.

It is a part of the plan of God that from time to time our provision is interrupted. It's a part of the plan of God. God did it to the Apostle Paul.

You say, there really should be no reason for Paul ever to be in want. He's got church after church after church that is beholden to him, that loves him, that understands the issue, that is willing to send support. And yet, Paul finds himself from time to time in need.

Why? God allowed a situation of need to arise in the life of the Apostle Paul. I suspect that if he is

going to work that into his plan and purpose for the Apostle Paul, he is going to work it into his plan and purpose for you and for me. There are times when it is beneficial, when it is going to work together for good that we lack, that provision falls short.

It's right here in the verse. Now at last your care for me has flourished again, because there was a big drought in the expression of your concern for me. And he says, it wasn't that you didn't care.

You cared all along, but you didn't have an opportunity. Who provides the opportunities? God. God did not allow the Philippians to have opportunity.

It's a hugely important point to draw from this. And the opposite side of the coin is equally true. We may have great care and concern and desire and ability to meet the need of someone we love and someone we care about, and God may not grant the opportunity.

It's not doable. I found out that my 80-year-old father has been installing kitchen faucets. It's hard for me to install a kitchen faucet.

I twist myself around and pretzel up under there and try to get those little deals off, and I don't have trouble with bruising and tearing of my skin and whatnot. I am happy, as are my brothers, and any one of a number of other people would be happy and anxious and would drive all night to get there and do that, but none of us had the opportunity. It came up and happened and was done before we had a chance.

And it just makes me... I was about ready to jump in the car and go up there anyway. But you just can't always do what you would love to do. This is the part of the Philippians.

There is nobody the Philippians would not knock themselves out over more than the Apostle Paul. Paul says, I know that. I know you care for me.

You just didn't have opportunity. The point here is, the principle here is, this is a part of the plan of God. Get used to it.

There is a time when we can serve. There is a time when we can minister. There is a time when we can meet one another's needs.

And there are other times when we cannot. And it is of God. God is doing something in the life of that other person and He doesn't want us in there mucking it up.

There is a time when we are in need. And there are people who would be more than happy to dive in there and try to fill that gap. It's not God's desire.

God has some better thing in store for us. And it's not the time and it's not the place for that person to come in to this situation. And we need to recognize that these things are in the providences of God.

This is why Paul goes on to say, and you think about this, because Paul says, I am so happy that your gift got here. One of the reasons he wrote this letter is that Epaphroditus had brought the money. And that's what it was.

It wasn't muffins. It wasn't a cake. You think about the distance involved and he's in prison.

They didn't send a care package of food. This was cash. This was money to get stuff done with.

Epaphroditus brought a bag of money. And Paul says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly when your gift arrived. Because it's been a long dry patch and now we've got some shekels here to do something with.

We've got some denarii. I know you would have sent it in previous times. You would have been sending it all along, but that just was not opportunity.

It wasn't possible. It's not like calling up FedEx saying, hey, come by and send this. Who can they send? Who can be trusted? Who can make the trip without getting knocked in the head and robbed? Who can find where the Apostle Paul is? They don't have cell phones.

They can't text one another and say, oh, I'm in prison in Rome. Did you see this past week where they're having such a big problem with cell phones in prison? I told some of you all about this. But there's a huge problem with cell phones in prison.

They can't keep them out of the hands of the prisoners because they're small. People literally, I am not kidding, people slingshot cell phones over the prison walls hidden in potatoes. They stick them in a baked potato and they slingshot it over the wall.

The potato cushions the fall. The prisoner picks up the potato, pulls out the phone. Hi, Mom.

And if it gets confiscated, they just slingshot another one over the next week. In fact, there was a prison guard that was in a wheelchair testifying about this problem. And he said, the reason I have a special commode at my house, the reason I have a wheelchair, the reason I can't walk to my door to answer the doorbell is because of cell phones.

There was a coordinated attack on this guard by prisoners. They arranged it over cell phones. They showed a pile, there was a table with like 2,000 cell phones that had been confiscated at one prison over the last year.

They just can't. You know, these disposable, buy it for five bucks, use it one time. They're so easily hidden.

Well, they didn't have those in Paul's day. That's my point. Communication was extremely difficult and slow and had a time lag to it.

So they didn't have opportunity. There's lots of reasons why we may not have opportunity. But the money came.

Well, here's the danger. If Paul rejoices too much, if he says, oh, I can't tell you how I needed this money so bad and here it is and oh, it's raining after a drought and I'm like a thirsty man crawling through the desert and finding the oasis and here's this money and oh, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Well, the Philippians are going to say, my goodness, the poor man has just been living in abject poverty.

We better send him some more. And Paul doesn't want them to get the idea that he's just living for the money. You know, waiting for the next little bag of gold to arrive.

And so he says, look, let me hasten to assure you that although I want you to know how happy I am and how grateful I am and how much I rejoice in the Lord that your gift has come, I am not speaking out of need. It's not like I was so needy that this gift just absolutely blew me away with its generosity. I'm not speaking as a needy person in abject gratitude.

That's why you have verse 11. Not that I speak in regard to need. He's balancing the expression of his gratitude.

He says, look, not according to lack do I speak. This is literally out of the Greek. Euk hati kath hustiresen lego.

Not that according to lack I speak. Ego gar emathon. I myself learned in whatever I am or in that which I am.

This is just has, in has. In and has is which, or whichever, or whatever. For I learned, and we translate this, it makes it easier in English to make it a perfect tense.

I have learned, but this is aorist. I learned at some point in the past. I learned in whatever I am to be, and you've got the word to be in two forms here.

You've got the present active indicative from amy, and then you've got the infinitive, ani. Whatever I am, whatever circumstance I am in, to be, and then you have this word autarkes, autarkes, a-u-t-a-r-k-e-s. And this means in need of no support.

And we're going to have quite a few very rare, in this case and in one other, hapax legomena. It's the only place in the New Testament where the word is used. It's the only place here where you're going to find autarkes.

But to be self-sufficient, to be, it isn't really so much content, that would be maybe some form of irene, to have peace, but this means I can get along. I can make it in whatever circumstance. I can cope in whatever situation I find myself to be competent, to be okay.

That would be a good way of putting it. Whatever state I find myself to be okay, I'm okay. Content isn't quite the shade of meaning.

You may not be content, but you can get along. You know, I had a really bad shoulder for about a year, and those of you that have had ailments know where, you know, long-standing ailments, you know what this is like. I'm not content with that, but I can cope with it.

I'm not, you know, crying the blues, but neither am I satisfied. Content means satisfied. Well, I'm not satisfied when something's broken, but I can make do.

And to make do, whatever I'm in, I can make do. That's probably a good colloquial translation. Verse 12, I know, oida, both, how to be humbled, taipenustai, and by the way, this is the very same verb in a different form that was used back in chapter 3 talking about the Lord Jesus, who did not think equality with God was a thing to be grasped, but humbled himself, this is the word, made himself low, lowered himself, Paul says, I know how to be abased, I know how to be humbled.

I know both, and it doesn't say how to be humbled, you wouldn't say that in Greek, there's just three words here, oida kai taipenustai, I know both to be humbled, I know also to exceed or to excel or to abound, to experience superabundance, so this is, when you have kai kai, it gets translated both and, I know both to be humbled, I know also to superabound. This next phrase is really interesting because it says en panti kai en pasen, and panti and pasen are both forms of the word pas, which means all, so en panti kai en pasen, the difference is that panti is singular and pasen is plural, and they both mean all, so your different translations try to knock this out different ways, in your New King James it says, everywhere and in all things, well, I'm sorry, panti doesn't mean everywhere, that's just wrong, minus one on your translation, New King James translator, red ink is coming out, it does not mean everywhere, it's a perfectly good word for everywhere, and this ain't it, it doesn't mean everywhere, panti kai en pasen, your New American Standard says it's in any and every circumstance, and that's better, in any and in every, it's not going to be possible to render this exactly in English, because we don't have singular and plural words for all, I would tend to say in each and every, in each and every, and there is no noun for those to modify, so you would say in each thing and in everything, that kind of captures your singular and plural, in each thing and in everything, now why would he double that up, because to handle everything, you've got to deal with each thing, this is the old Chinese thing, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, you've got to knock it out step by step, one thing at a time, if it's an everything problem, break it down into each thing, and tackle each thing, by the time you've handled each thing, you've handled everything, cleaning your garage, knocking out your grocery list, once you've put each thing in the basket, you've got everything, if you didn't miss any, so that's kind of in Panti, Cayenne, Possum, in each thing and in everything, now, here's where it really gets interesting, because your new King James says, in everywhere and in all things, I have learned, that's not the verb, perfectly good word for learn, this isn't it, this is the

word for to be initiated into a secret, this was the word, in fact, the noun form of this verb, this verb is is MUEO M-U-E-O MUEO and that's the verb, the noun is MUEOSTERION MUEOSTERION comes from MUEO and it's such a short word, it makes it a lousy noun, so they put STERION on the end of it, to give it some mass, help it to stay on the line, you wouldn't just have like a MUON, that's like a subatomic particle, so they put MUEOSTERION and STERESIS, and you know, medical people can tell you, you know, HYSTERESIS, it's all Greek, but MUEO is the verb here, and it was used in the mystery religions, when you were a novice, when you were an initiate, and you would go down, and this is like being a mason, you go down and they say, okay, we're going to teach you the secret handshake and give you the book that you can decode these otherwise indecipherable things with, well, you're read into what is not commonly known. The best and easiest way to translate this, although I said the word doesn't mean to learn, but the easiest way to get its meaning is to say, I have learned the secret.

I've cracked the mystery. I've been shown the trick. I now know what I didn't used to know because it's largely unknown.

See what I mean? That's why, remember, he talks it over and over again. He uses the noun all over the place, the musterion, the mystery, the mystery of godliness. This is the mystery that was hidden four times, and I'm steward of the mysteries of God, the church-age doctrines.

Well, he says here, I know how to be humbled. I know how to superabound. In each thing and in everything, I've learned the secret.

I've cracked the code. I figured it out. I know the drill now.

And this is what it is. This is the secret. This really stunned me.

How many times have I looked at this passage? I've memorized it. I've known it since I was a child, but I'd never really looked at it in Greek until this study. In each thing and in everything, I have learned the secret.

Now, there are four words, each introduced by Kai. Now, you know the secret. Now we're done.

But, listen to the structure. You can look at your New King James and figure out roughly what these words mean, but listen to the structure in Greek. And remember, when it comes in pairs, it's typically translated both and.

So they've broken this into two pairs and said, I know both how to be filled and to hunger, both to exceed and to be in want. What did they leave out? Left out that middle Kai. It's both and, both and.

But when you have four of them, I personally think the rule breaks down. Think about this. And you can see this once I've pointed this out, you can see it in English.

In your New King James it says, everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry. That's both at the same time. It doesn't mean I've learned that when I'm empty, I can get along, and when I'm full, I can get along.

He says, even when I am empty, I know how to be full. Even when I'm full, I know how to be empty. I know how to superabound, to exceed, and even in the process and in the status of being superabound and exceeding, I know how to be in lack.

And when I'm in lack, I still know how to superabound. These are not either-ors. These are truly both ands.

But the secret here is they're not at different times. Because what's the secret? What happens when a people become so prosperous that they forget how to be hungry? You achieve success in business and you lose that hunger that made you successful. You are so hungry that you can think about nothing but your hunger and you can't think about the areas where you're really superabundantly blessed.

Paul says, you know the secret I've learned is that in each thing and in everything, I see it all. When I have a lack, I recognize that I am still superabounding. And when I'm superabounding, I still have a lack.

When I am filled, I have learned how to still be hungry. I can have the Word of God and I never get sated. I'm still hungry.

when I am hungry and in lack and I can't find the teaching of the Word of God somewhere, I can still know how to be filled. I don't know if I'm getting this across very well, but it's both at the same time. He said the secret is when I'm empty, I don't wait until your gift comes and meets my need and now I'm full.

Even when your gift wasn't here, I was still full. And with your gift and with it meeting my needs, I still know that I have needs. It's simultaneous.

That's why you have chi, chi, chi, chi. I am empty and I am full and I am hungry and I am superabounding. The secret is never let one obscure the other.

Never be full to the point that you lose your hunger. Never be abounding to the point that you lose sight of your need. Never be so needy that you lose sight of the abundance that God has given us.

And never be so hungry that you don't recognize what God has provided that fills. That's the secret. And to learn that, Paul says, I have learned that mystery.

I have figured out that secret. I never let my needs obscure my blessings. I never let my blessings obscure my needs.

It's a terrific piece of wisdom expressed here. Well, that brings us to verse 13, a verse that's going to need a little bit of explanation as well, so we'll pause here and take our break. We'll come back.

We'll pick up at that point.