



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



Thermometer or Thermostat?

Wednesday, January 24, 2018

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Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Philippians 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Philippians 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

Philippians 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Philippians 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Philippians 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:20 Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Again, Philippians is a wonderful book. Paul is writing to the church at Philippi. If you read the book of Acts, chapter 16, you will find out that Paul goes to Philippi. Philippi is a long way up. If you look at a map, and I encourage you to do that sometimes. Just look at a map and see where all these places are at. It is interesting to do.

It was a Roman colony. It was a place where—if I understand things correctly—where they mined gold. It was a place where they had a lot of farming that went on. However, Paul goes there. We know when we read Acts 16, that he establishes a church here. Do you remember the Philippian jailer? Do you remember the guy that gets saved? They threw Paul and Silas in jail and they begin to sing at midnight and pray. Do you remember that story? That happened in Philippi. That is where this church is at. Paul establishes a church here. We know that he moves on and goes to different places and establishes different churches in that part of the world.

Philippi was a church here, when you read, supported Paul financially. You also read here that in the beginning of things, in the beginning of the gospel here; the church was established. In the beginning of the church at Philippi, as Paul moved on from Philippi, they supported him financially. However, something happened—I don't know what happened for sure, the Bible does not tell us; Paul doesn't tell us—but they quit supporting him. They stopped supporting him. I don't know the reason why. However, if I look at dates and my math is right, probably from the time Paul establishes the church until he is writing back here to the church at Philippi, we may be looking at ten or twelve years. The greater part of that time, they have not supported him. Again, I don't know why. I don't know for sure. However, some good things are going to happen and they did happen.

Paul writes to the church at Philippi. There is one word—again, as I read these few short chapters—there is one in here that you won't find. That is the word *sin*. It is not in here. Probably, the church at Philippi that had it going on. They had some issues. They had some women here that couldn't get along. They had some people here, that if you read down through the book, you will find out that Paul had some very stern things to say, to some of the folks there that were not walking right. He mentions many of them that weren't walking right. He broke Paul's heart when you read in chapter 3, verse 18 there. It says that he was even weeping because of how some of the folks there were living. He also mentions whose end was destruction. They must have been involved in something pretty serious for Paul to make a statement that they were going to be destroyed. However, you will not see all of the issues here in Philippi, that you saw, for instance, in Corinth.

Corinth had all kinds of issues. Corinth and the church today have a lot in common, because a lot of problems that went on in Corinth are going on in churches today.

Paul begins to write to the church in Philippi. The whole book speaks a lot about joy. One thing I want you to keep in mind here, that it speaks a lot about, is our mind. Our mind has a lot to do with what we do. Truth? What we think has a lot to do with what we do. What we think has a lot to do with how we feel. Truth! How that we think and what we think about affects the majority of our life in what we do.

Sometimes, when a thought comes through my head, do you know what I have to say? Get out of here. I don't need that. I am not going to think about something that I know is sin. I'm not going to sit around and dwell on something that I know is not right. I'm not going to sit around and dwell on things that I know is just going to bring me down. Bring me down off the spiritual high that I am on. I don't want to think about that stuff. Sometimes I have to say, Hey, I'm not going to do that. Move on. The devil will always bring things around for us to think about and all kinds of garbage. It is everywhere. It is everywhere we look. It is everything we see and hear. Do you know what we don't have to do? We don't have to sit around and think about it. We don't have to sit around and think about what we see and the things around us to affect what is going on.

Tonight, I want to talk about this. As you think about the book of Philippians; it is about joy. It is about our mind. It is about a lot of different things. But Paul writing in this particular chapter...

I want you to think about something as we talk just a little bit tonight. There is a vast difference between a thermometer and a thermostat. Truth? If you just think about that for a minute and hear thermometer and you hear thermostat; you think well they must be close to being the same thing. However, they are not. A thermostat does one thing but a thermometer does something else.

A thermometer—we used to have those ones years ago that had the mercury in them. You would shake them all up and stick them under your tongue. They were about that long. They had the mercury that run up and down them. Do you remember that? They have outlawed them. Do you know what it did? You shook that thing down when the temperature was up and would stick it under your tongue. Do you know what it would tell you? It would tell you what your temperature was. Do you know what it did? That is all it could do. It couldn't heal you. It couldn't make your temperature come down. Do you know what it did? It went up and it went down. That is all a thermometer can do. truth! Does everybody get that?

A thermostat is totally something different. The thermometer cannot change the area that is around it. it can't heat it up and it can't cool it down. A thermometer can't do that. However, a thermostat does. Truth! A thermostat changes what is around it. You set on whatever temperature you want to set it on. If it gets colder than that it will warm the area that is around it. It changes the area around it. If it gets too hot, it will kick the air conditioner on. It changes what is around it. Does everybody get that? Either we are a thermostat or we are a thermometer. Remember that. That is really true. Either all we do in life, we are up and down.

Christian people should not be up and down just like a thermometer.

The temperature goes we go up. The temperature goes down, we go down. Do you know what dictates a thermometer going up and down—the mercury going up and down? Its surroundings. Truth! You can take it and if you would put it in something that was the same temperature all the time, then that thermometer would stay the same temperature all the time. We have them hanging in the brick house down there. You can go down there in the summertime and it will be 75 degrees. You go down there tonight and it will probably be in the low 50's or maybe even upper 40's. Do you know what changes it? The surroundings changes—it goes up and it goes down.

Christian people should not go up and down like a thermometer. We should not do that. We should not allow our surroundings to make us spiritually up, and spiritually down. Does everybody agree with that? That is true. Isn't it?

Now, Paul was a thermostat. He did not allow what was going on around him—I'm going to prove this to you. I've read this to you. He did not allow what was going on

around him to make him on spiritual highs or on spiritual lows. Paul did not do that. He found the secret. Paul was initiated into and brought into a secret—we are going to look at that in a minute. He learned something about life that you and I need to learn. It took me a long time in life to figure this out. The reason I want to talk about this tonight is if we can get a grasp on what I am going to talk about here; it may not take you 30 years to figure out. Amen! If it does not take you 30 years to figure it out; then you will be able to change the situation around you instead of allow the situation around you to change you. Amen!

Paul is writing to the church and he mentions, what we read to you. He begins here by saying...

Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

These folks, again, had blessed Paul. When he preached, and he was there; the church was established. He goes on. They would send him money. They would support him financially. It takes money to preach the gospel. It takes money to take the gospel around the world. It takes money. It takes money to do that. Paul was somebody here that the church at Philippi was supporting. When you look at what happens here, Paul did not allow the things around him—he was not a victim. He did not allow the trials and things around him to overtake him. He did not become a victim of circumstances. Paul became a victor over circumstances. Okay?

We can allow, we can be the same way. We can either let things overcome us or we can be overcomers. We are all going to have all kinds of issues in life as we do that.

Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Do you know what he is saying? It has been a long time, but I am glad that you are starting to support me again. You are starting to send some money. Get this now. The word *flourished* is a good word. It means or brings out the idea of reviving, reviving again. It is a picture of plants, and flowers that are sprouting, shooting forth and blossoming again. We don't see much of that going on now. However, Lord willing, in a few short months, we are going to see flowers shooting forth. We are going to see buds on trees. We are going to see things flourishing, blooming and blossoming again. That is what was happening here at Philippi and Paul saw that. He saw and he was able to receive an offering for them and from them. They had quit. They had stopped but now they had started bringing him offerings. They had flourished. They were doing something here that they had stopped doing. Now they started doing it again. Do you know what it did? It rejoiced Paul's heart. Do you know what Paul knew? Paul knew when people supported the preaching and the ministry of the gospel then the God of heaven would bless them for that. That is what we need to understand sometimes in life.

As we support the preaching of the gospel, it is one thing what we give; but do you know what God always does? God always blesses people when they give, when they give freely, when they give with a true, clean, and pure heart; God will always bless you for that. Paul knew that.

Do you know what he is saying? The reason he was saying this is because he wanted these people to be blessed. Amen! There is nothing like being blessed. Again, is a key word here because they had started. They had quit. Ten or twelve years had gone by since they had sent an offering. Now, he wants them to understand that he appreciates that so very much.

Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Again, Paul understood that they had thought about him. Different things had gone on, but whatever thing that happened that kept them from giving to Paul; he says, "Hey, I understand." Whether they were going through hard times, or whether people quit giving. I don't know what happened. However, Paul says, "Hey, that's okay. I'm so very glad that you have revived. I'm so very glad that your love for me is flourishing again. Your giving to me is flourishing again. I'm happy for that."

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

Paul says, "I'm talking to you guys. I'm thanking you for your offering. I'm thanking you for what you sent to help me in preaching the gospel." He says here, "I'm not saying these things because I lacked anything. I'm not thanking God for your offering because I lacked anything." Do you know what Paul is saying? God has given me everything I need. God has supplied everything. Do you know what God will always do? God will always supply that which we need to be able to carry out the work that God has called us to do. He will do that. He will supply whatever it is. If God has called us, God has laid His hand upon us; then God will provide the money. Amen!

There are people everywhere that God will bless when they give their money. Amen! Many people I have heard said, "I can't afford to give to God. I couldn't afford to support the missionaries."

I'm really excited about this young man coming, Jazriel Bacol. We are going to get him to come back. I talked to him on the phone a couple of days ago. I'm excited about him coming back. Here is a young man that is a long way away from his home. I don't know whether you watched the news today or not, but in the country where he is at, there is a huge volcano erupting down there now. Do you know what this young man wants to do? He has been here going to Marietta Bible College. He has a heart to be able to learn something here about ministry, about establishing churches and teaching people the truth. He is learning that up there. He wants to take that back to his own people and teach them something about the God of heaven. Do you know what I say?

I say, "Glory to God!" We need people like that. He is twenty some years old—twenty-two years old. His dad is a pastor over there. Those people, the Philippines people, need Jesus just as bad as we need Jesus. Amen!

Here is the thing. You go over there and preach over there and you might have 10,000 in attendance or 20,000 in attendance. You may have thousands and thousands of people come when you preach about Jesus Christ that He died on a cross to save you, to redeem you and give you eternal life. People flock to that. We preach that same message here today, people turns up their nose and walks away. They stick their fingers in their ears. Do you know that? It may do us some good sometime to take some of the efforts that we are spending here and send it there. It is just a thought.

Paul was thanking them for sending him a gift. He was thanking them that they had sent the money. Again, as I read to you here; he wasn't talking to them and thanking them for the gift because he needed it. That wasn't the reason.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

Paul says, "I'm not thanking you for the gift because I needed it." He says, "For I have learned..." Paul says, there is something I have learned. The word here means something that you have learned by experience. From the time that God called Paul to preach, it hadn't been a bed of roses. Amen! It hadn't been a bed of roses.

I'm going to tell you something. If you work in the gospel ministry today, and you have a heart to do something for the God of heaven, and you are working and your light is shining, and God is blessing you—you are not going to be a popular feller. The majority of the folks are not going to like you. They will do all kinds of things and say all kinds of things. That happened to Paul.

Paul was beaten. Amen! They threw him in prison here at Philippi. They stoned him. They left him beside the road for dead. God raised him up. He was shipwrecked. A day and night he spent in the deep. He was snake bit. Do you remember that one? Amen! I don't even like to talk about that one. I don't like talking about getting snake bit. Do you? However, he was. We could go on and on with that.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

He says I learned something through all the trials, and the problems that have come in my life, I have learned something. I have learned some things by experience. Some of you all have testified tonight; do you know what you have done? You have learned some things by experience, by the hard times in life.

I mean this sincerely. Some of the greatest lessons I ever learned in my life, that I did not have a dollar to my name. I did not have any idea where I was going to feed these kids. How we were going to feed them. Laying in the floor crying is when I have learned some of the greatest lessons in life. Amen!

I think some of the greatest things—prosperity can be a good thing. However, if you look at the church at Laodicea, I think that is representing the church age we are living in today. Do you know what they had on their mind because they were rich? They were increased with goods. Do you know what they said? We don't have need of anything. Prosperity can be a good thing but it also can be a disaster.

Prosperity in the life of a lot of Christians has caused them a lot of problems. I have seen Christians get—they have struggled, and they didn't do very well. They did not have much money. They seemed to struggle through life. They were just from pillar to post. There were a lot of things that kids had that their kids did not have. Then something happens where they get a promotion or a better job and now they have all kinds of money and all this stuff. You see them just drifting away.

We forget about sometimes, the hard times. we forget about when we did not have any money. Amen! We forget about when we did not have any money to take the kids to the doctor when they were sick. We forget about some of those times. We get on our face calling out to the God of heaven and the God of heaven would come down in the middle of the night and break the fever. If you have kids and you are very old then you have seen that happen before. Amen!

Paul learned some things through the difficult times in life. He learned...

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Do you know what that means? Paul says I know I have learned by experience how to deal with poverty and I have learned how to deal with prosperity. I have learned that. I have learned through the issues, problems, trials of life on how to deal with being poor and how to deal with prosperity. Do you know why Paul did that? He was a thermostat. He did not allow being poor to bring him down; or, he did not allow prosperity to bring him up. He was a thermostat. He did not allow the situations that were around him to change who he was. He was steady. His temperature was the same. Do you know what Paul did because he was a thermostat? He changed the situations that were around him. Everywhere he went things changed. Amen! Sometimes they run him off. Sometimes they put him in prison. Sometimes they did all kinds of things to him. Things changed where he was at. Why? Because he did not allow the circumstances that were around him to dictate whether he was up, or whether he was down. He was a circumstance changer. Amen! That is what we need to be.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I know how to be abased. I know how to abound. I know how to be poor. I know how to be wealthy. I know how to deal with all of that. I have learned that through the troubles, and trials in life.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

“Everywhere in all things I am instructed...” Here is a word I want you to get. If you don’t remember nothing else I mentioned tonight, remember thermostat and thermometer but remember the word *instructed*. The word *instructed* means to be initiated into a secret.

There are different clubs you can belong to. There are different things that you have to go through to be initiated into the inner circle thing, where you are on the inside and some of the secrets they have, you can learn. However, you are initiated into that. Amen!

Paul was initiated into a secret. The secret that he learned was again, that through the trials and troubles of life; Paul knew—Paul was able to be initiated into the secret of (get this) contentment. Contentment is an absolute, awesome thing. That is one of the greatest things in my life and your life is to be content.

Do you know what the word *content* means? It means to be contained. It means to be contained.

There was something that was containing Paul. There was something that was going on inside of Paul that kept him from going up and going down. The circumstances changed. Paul didn’t change. He had money. Paul did not change.

You have heard the old saying that “Money changes people.” It does sometimes. Do you know that? I want to tell you this too. Don’t get me wrong. Some of the richest people in the world today are people who are trusting Jesus Christ. Some of the wealthiest people in the world today, are people who loves the God of heaven. Some of the wealthiest people that ever lived on planet earth are people who worshiped the God of heaven.

When you look at David and Solomon and a lot of those folks, they were worth untold billions and billions and billions of dollars. Amen!

Get this. I know sometimes we get the idea that if we are Christian we have to be poor. That is stupidity. Do you know that? We are serving the God of heaven that owns it all. Amen! We are not wealthy people and we don’t need to be wealthy people. However, do you know what Paul learned? Paul learned through trials, tribulations, testing’s; he learned something that kept him steady through life, even though the circumstances were all changing up and down. He learned how to be content. He learned how to be steady. He wasn’t up one day and down the next day; as a lot of us are. Amen! He wasn’t allowing...

Listen. If it takes money in your pocket to make you content then your contentment is going to be short lived because it is going to be gone... If it takes things to make—when I say things; houses, homes, cars, junk and stuff. If you have to have the latest and the most modern version of whatever to make you happy then you know nothing about contentment. You absolutely know nothing about the indwelling of the God of heaven because He is the One...

Do you know what Paul did? Paul got very personally acquainted with the God of heaven because he was beaten. He was shipwrecked. He spent a day and a night in the deep. He was hungry. There were times he was cold. All the things that happened to Paul, it furthered the gospel. It drove Paul to his knees. It drove him to a place in life that he got in life that he was steady. He stood. He was firm. He did not allow things to change him every day. He was the same every day. He didn't allow things to get him all twisted up.

Do you know what? Do you know what he had? I have to skip over so much. However, if you go on and read here; he says...

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

What made Paul a thermostat, what made Paul somebody that circumstances did not make his life go up and down; what made him...there was the indwelling of the God of heaven on the inside. He was contained. That contained him. That kept him where he needed to be. That kept him steady and firm. He wasn't somebody that went up and down.

I know that issues and problems come. I know we all have to grow up. I understand all of that. However, when we have been on this way 5 to 30 years; we shouldn't be allowing circumstances around us to make us go up and down. There should be a time in our life that we will get to the place in that we are steady. A place where we know the world is going to hell in a hand basket. Amen! Do you know what it is not going to do to me? I'm not going to allow that to take me up and bring me down. Amen!

You see all of this going on everywhere—it is going to get worse and worse—as you look around in the world, if you think things are going to get better here, they may for a short time but as you look at the whole picture it is going to get worse and worse.

There is going to be more pressure put on Christians the closer we get to the return of Jesus Christ than ever in history. Do you know what we can be? We can be thermostats. We can be people that are not going to be affected by all the surroundings. We can be people that are going to change our surroundings. That is what a thermostat does. That is what Paul was.

He was a changer. Do you know what we need to be? We need to be a changer.

Come and pray—