
14 – Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

The opening “Nevertheless” (*Πλὴν, plēn*) hearkens back to v. 10 in which Paul offers his sincere “thanksgiving” for the aid supplied to him by the believers in Philippi. By using this word to introduce his thankfulness for the aid they have extended to him, Paul is seeking to make clear that his previous words (in vv. 10–13) were not at all to be taken as some kind of “rebuke” or “disappointment” in them as though they previously had disregarded his needs. He did not want his previous words (vv. 10–13), in which he emphasizes his own ability to persevere in spite of the dire circumstances in which he found himself, to be received as a rebuke or disappointment in their lack of assistance. Indeed, he makes it clear in v. 10 that their lack of coming to his aid resulted from circumstance beyond their control. Moreover, he wants his emphasis upon his ability to persevere without their assistance to be understood as giving praise to God Who empowered him to do so and not as in any way extolling his own strength and spiritual stamina.

...you have done well – The Greek actually has “you have done good” (*καλῶς ἐποίησατε, kalōs epoiesate*), translated by the NASB as “you have done well....” The issue is that in the Greek, the word *kalōs*, “to do good,” is the adverbial form of the noun *καλός (kalos)* “good.” Since it is grammatically improper in current English to use “good” as an adverb (though it is common to hear people say “You did real good!”), the NASB and other modern translations have used proper English grammar by translating “you have done well.” The NIV seeks to retain the concept of “good” by translating our verse:

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. (Phil 4:14, NIV)

However, this actually changes the meaning of the text, for this translates the Greek adverb *καλῶς (kalōs)*, “to do good,” as though it were an adjective modifying “you” rather than what the Greek text emphasizes, that what the Philippian community had done for Paul was very helpful for Paul in his time of affliction for the sake of the gospel.

... to share with me in my affliction – In the phrase “to share with me,” the concept of “sharing” is a translation of the Greek (*συγκοινωνέω, sugkoinōneō*) which is made up of the preposition *sun* (“with) and the verb *koinōneō*, “to share.” The related noun is *koinōnia* which is often used to denote “close association involving mutual interests and sharing,

association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.”¹ Thus Paul is emphasizing the tremendous value and even spiritual necessity of the believing community and its fellowshipping together which a local assembly provides.

How was it that the believing community in Philippi shared together in Paul’s “affliction?” We should first reckon with the fact that for people to be bringing necessary items, food, etc., to Paul while in prison, was likewise to show an association or connection to him. With the increasing antagonism against the followers of Yeshua which was extant among the unbelieving Jewish community, it is clear that those who brought the gifts of the Philippian *ekklesia* to Paul could also be associated with that which fomented Paul’s imprisonment. Fee notes:

In the present instance he refers to his imprisonment with the broader word “affliction,” used most often to refer to afflictions suffered by believers because of their relationship to Christ. It is an especially appropriate word in this case because not only did they “participate” with him in his affliction by sending their gift, but they did so in the context of their own affliction, noted in 1:29–30 and 2:17 and hinted at elsewhere.²

We may learn an important lesson from this, namely, the high importance the Scriptures put upon regular commitment to and attendance with a believing community. And this is all the more emphasized in our current text when the followers of Yeshua were targets not only for persecution from the Jewish community but also from the ruling government.

Why is it that very often people tend to diminish the value of being a regular member within a local community of believers until such time when the freedom to congregate together is taken away? For the scriptures plainly teach:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:23–25)

1 BDAG, “*κοινωνία*,” p. 552.

2 Gordon Fee, *Philippians*, p. 439.

Remember that Paul began this epistle to the Philippians by framing the faith of the Philippian believers as participation together within the local believing community.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.
(Phil 1:3–5)

In our current text, their participation is not limited to their regularly being together, worshiping together, and caring for one another in their life of faith, but also caring for Paul by supplying him with that which was necessary. That is, not only necessary for his physical life but also encouraging him by demonstrating their faith in Yeshua through obedience to His commands.

Thus we see in our text an example of putting into practice what Paul taught in his epistle to the Galatians about fulfilling the Torah of Messiah:

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Messiah. (Gal 6:2)

In our modern world, we have many ways to communicate with each other. We have phones, email, Skype, online services, etc., and these are very helpful and can be used for that which is good. In fact, by means of our modern technology that make such digital connections possible, we are able to communicate with other believers, many of whom we may never meet face-to-face. And yet, while meeting online is a wonderful privilege and has great advantages and may bear bountiful spiritual fruit, it does not entirely replace the real value of meeting together on a regular basis with other believers who are committed to each other in the many aspects of living out our faith in Yeshua. Even meeting on a regular basis with just a few other believers is better than not meeting at all. For in a “life-to-life” connection we are enabled truly to help each other with the goal of encouraging one another in the faith. What is more, we may also be challenged to love one another even when some within the community are more difficult to love than are others. This is one of the major drawbacks with online only associations. It is too easy to “leave the meeting” with a simple “click of the mouse,” whereas in a face-to-face community we are often challenged to grow in our ability to love each other even when we disagree, have differences of opinions, or various “life issues.”

15–16 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

Paul uses emphatic language here when he writes: “You yourselves also know,” both by repeating the pronoun “You yourselves” and adding the word “also,” and this is strengthened by the fact that the Philippian community was alone in sharing with Paul to meet his needs while in prison. That he uses such language was not only to honor the Philippian community, but also to let them know that he had never forgotten the kindness they had shown to him, a kindness that flowed from their desire to honor Yeshua and to obey His commandments.

One can only imagine the grave circumstances Paul faced as he was taken, bound, and thrown into prison. For history alerts us to the fact that Roman prisons were a place where many died due to the fact that those who controlled the prisons did not consider the maintenance of prisoners to be their concern. They may have given minimal rations early after the person was incarcerated, but sustaining meals were to be supplied by family or friends and not by the prison officials. Moreover, generally speaking, most of those who were incarcerated were there simply awaiting execution.

Paul’s testimony in v. 12 of this chapter, that he was enabled by the strength God gave him to be content and even able to rejoice while in such dire straits, shows the power of faith for those who have grown strong in faith and thus by God’s grace are enabled to remain faithful even in such circumstances.

The structure of verses 15–16 is interesting, for they are formed in a way to emphasize the love shown to Paul by the Philippian community in the matter of “giving and receiving.” We can visualize the structure of these verses this way:

- At the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia
 - not one church shared with me
 - *in the matter of giving and receiving
 - but you alone.
- for even in Thessalonica
 - *more than once
 - you sent a gift ... for my needs.

... no church shared with me - In these words, Paul takes the Philippian believers back to the beginning of his association with them, to his second “missionary journey” into Macedonia, in which he first was at Troas, then to Philippi, next to Thessalonica, then Berea and Athens, before he left for Jerusalem and returned to Antioch. His point is that after his travels in Macedonai, no other believing communities helped him in terms of his physical needs, but only the Philippian community. Thus, the community at Philippi is marked by Paul as an example of what should be the pattern for all those communities who benefited from his ministry. As he taught the believing community in Galatia:

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things
with the one who teaches him. (Gal 6:6)

The word “church” in this verse is the primary English noun used to translate the Greek ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). While there exists an ongoing debate about the derivation of the English word “church,” the scholarly consensus is that it derives from the Greek κυριακός (*kuriakos*) meaning “of the Lord.” Its early use referred to things belonging to the Lord (the “Day of the Lord” or the “Table of the Lord”).¹ Eventually, by the 3rd or 4th centuries CE, the word was applied to a “church” building as “belonging to the Lord” and thus a sacred place.² This may be seen in Eusebius (4th Century CE), who notes that the Christians were given permission “to build churches” (*κυριακὰ*).³

... in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; – The primary expression of friendship in the Greco-Roman world was maintaining “a partnership in the matter of giving and receiving,”⁴ so when Paul emphasizes that the Philippian community was alone in caring for his needs, he is honoring them greatly for their faithfulness, not only to him, but to Yeshua Who commands us to care for each other and to

1 1Cor 11:20; Rev 1:10.

2 See “εκκλήσια” in *TDNT*, 3.531–32, n. 92; P Oxy VI. 903¹⁹ has ἀπελθοῦσα [εἰ]ς τὸ ἐν Σαμβαθῷ, “when I had gone out to the church at Sambathō” (MM, 364). The idea that the English word “church” has its derivation from Old English or Middle English “Circe,” a sorceress in Greek mythology, has no basis whatsoever, as the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* makes clear.

3 *Ecc Hist* 9.10, καὶ ἐπισκευάζειν κυριακὰ ἐπιτρέπονται, “he gave permission to build churches.”

4 Gordon Fee, *Philippians*, p. 440.

honor those who “work hard at preaching and teaching” (1Tim 5:17).¹ Here, once again, we see the great value and necessity for communities of believers to be in close proximity to each other, for it is in the sharing of life-to-life that we are enabled to fulfill the very purpose of the *ek-klesia*, namely, to honor and give praise to God and to help one another in the life of faith, so that all who are truly His become more and more conformed to be like Him.

It is amazing to hear these words of Paul, that the Philippian community was the only one sending necessary provisions to him, for one would have expected that all of the communities to which he had traveled and ministered would have wanted to send him aid. And this is especially true having been incarcerated in a Roman prison, for the prisons in Rome were well known for having no concern about the life or welfare of their prisoners. Thus, in making this statement, Paul is surely putting forth the Philippian community as a model to be followed in caring for those from whom they have received the message of life.

... for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

– Consider in ancient times how one would accomplish traveling over land. The roads were often the place where thieves took advantage of weary travelers, for there were very few inns where one could spend the night in safety. Moreover, the distance between Philippi and Thessalonica was nearly 97 miles. Given this understanding, we can see that those who carried the provisions to give to Paul from the Philippian community would have undergone quite an arduous journey. And they did this more than once!

This, once again, offers a true model for believing communities. The foundation of the community is the unity that comes by accepting and living out the truths of God’s word, with everyone striving to grow in their love for God and for each other. This requires establishing a genuine care for each other and a willingness to honor our Lord Yeshua through caring for each other and boldly working together for the mutual strengthening of each member’s faith, with the ultimate goal that God would be glorified.

1 Cf. also 1Thess 5:12.