

The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

Opening Thought:

Thus far we have covered the Letter to the Philippians from a military perspective. The reason for this pattern is because Philippi was a military colony for retired Roman soldiers. Paul used a military theme because they were soldier-minded at the core. Following the opening of the letter, he used many military phrases and words in which they would have been very familiar with. The lesson titles and associated verses are the following...

- The Military Progress of the Gospel (1:12-26)
- The Good Soldier of Christ (1:27-2:11)
- The Mindset of the Christian Battlefield (2:12-18)
- A Good Leader to Christians Soldiers (2:19-30)
- Protecting the Morale of the Troops (3:1-11)
- A Christian Soldiers Ultimate Victory (3:12-21)
- The White Flags of the Christian Soldier (4:1-9)
- In this lesson we will tackle the last military theme....

The Logistics of the Christian Soldier (Philippians 4:10-23)

There are many factors to go into a successful victory of a military force, either ancient or modern. The public eye is often focused on the front line of the battle for that is where the action seems to be. Soldiers with their weapons going against an enemy force has been the focus of many books and movies. Understandably the front line is where the bulk of the deaths in battle will occur, but the real action is in the logistics, i.e. the supply line of the military force. During the time of Paul's writing to the Philippians there was a common military proverb, *"Whoever does not provide for provisions and other necessities, is conquered without fighting."* This is true, for the army that is not supplied cannot be successful in battle, but will simply wither and die.

An ancient army would have to know all the logistics: choosing a location that would serve as a functional base, making sure the resources could be built up and maintained, being able to protect the supply line and a thousand other items of importance. In his 1999 publication *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*, Jonathon Roth discusses not only the importance of the supply lines of the Roman Army, but the inner workings of them. When Jerusalem was under siege and destroyed in the first century, Roth explains the logistics of the ordeal.

"In preparation for the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Titus ordered his troops to concentrate at Caesarea, rather than at Joppa or Jamnia, cities closer to Jerusalem. Caesarea provides a good example of the factors the Romans considered when selecting an operational base. Though the Romans could, and did, unload cargo directly onto beaches, they preferred to use ports whenever possible. The vast amounts of grain that the army transported required the proximity of storage-facilities, and the availability of a trained work force. Caesarea had the advantage of good harbor facilities and boasted a sizable

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Roman community, including numerous merchants, who could be counted on for enthusiastic support of the war effort.

Without a good supply line in place, the greatest of armies would never have victory, but only failure. Logistics is everything and everything is logistics in the military world.

It is the same for the spiritual world of the Christian. Often there is great focus on the work of the preachers, elders, missionaries and a few others of a congregational work. We must always remember that victory on the front line can never be possible if it were not for the supply line that supports it all. This is what we are reminded of in the closing words of Paul to the Philippians...LOGISTICS. He covers three thoughts to have in mind that binds the entire Christian military force together.

1) A Christian Supply Line is a Blessing to You.

Philippians 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

- Paul rejoiced in the Lord greatly because of the revival of their concern for him. It was not that they were not concerned before, but they had not possessed such a great opportunity to come to the aid of Paul. When Paul left Philippi for the first time in Acts 16, he went to Thessalonica, Athens and then Corinth. He was having to work part-time and preach part-time. It was hard work, but there was no other choice. The Philippians took on the logistics and ramped up the supply line for Paul.
 - The result was Paul "*devoting himself completely to the word*" (Acts 18:5).
 - 2 Corinthians 11:9 "...for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need..."
- Paul was very gracious for their generosity, but made sure to place it on the background of CONTENTMENT. The word content is *autarkes* (αὐτάρκης), meaning "sufficient in oneself". It was one of the most discussed virtues among the ancients of a Stoic society. It was commonly taught that true contentment was when you stopped caring about all the things of the world.
- That is not the God's definition of contentment. John the baptist reminded a group of soldiers who came out to be baptized unto repentance to "...*be content with your wages.*" Being often underpaid, but in a position of authority, soldiers would extort money from the populace. They were allowing their desires for worldly goods to work evil.

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- A Christian soldier is content with what they have knowing that God will take care of them. Through all the uncertainty of the mission life of Paul came extreme contrasts, but he trusted God.
 - He knew what it was like to be in humble means, often homeless and on the road. He also knew what it was like to be prosperous, having rubbed elbows with the wealthy.
 - On the mission field he dined with some of the finest people and the finest food. He also knew what it was like to not eat for days at a time, whether at shipwreck, in prison or fasting.
 - He sampled what it was like to have an abundance and suffering need.
- It was through all this stretching of his earthly circumstances that he acquired the greatest of blessings, a certain secret knowledge that you only gain in the adversity of the Christian life. What is the secret? I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME!
- True contentment of the Christian soldier is not to hate all worldly goods, but to understand that God is in control of his army and His logistics will always get us through. He won't leave us on the battlefield without supplies. When He is using the church in such a way, then we understand the secret of life: We can do all things through Him who strengthens us. The LOGISTICS of God is a blessing to you personally.

2) A Christian's Supply Line is a Blessing to Others.

Philippians 4:14-17 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵ 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; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

- Paul's use of financial metaphors in this part of the letter (4:15–18) implies that the gift consisted primarily of money, although it may have included clothes and other basic necessities that would ease the harsh conditions of his imprisonment. Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 3: Romans to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Even beyond the money, clothing and food was the gift of their time. Those back in Philippi worked hard for their money. Those supplies were not FEDEXed to Paul's location, but were brought through the travels of Epharoditus, one of their very own. Though the entire congregation could not go and see Paul in prison, their continuous prayers were offered up to God on his behalf.
- We must understand that a person does not have to be rich to be giving. They give in accordance to how God blesses them. They can also give of their love, of their time, of their sweat and tears. Though the base of the gift that Paul refers to the material, it was also inclusive to the heart and all that comes with it. YOU (plural) are God's primary supply line! Just

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knowing that should be a blessing, knowing that without that victory could never be savored. The Christian supply line is a blessing to others.

3) A Christian's Supply Line is a Blessing to God.

Philippians 4:18-19 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

- There is an offering from the Old Covenant called the burnt offering (Leviticus 1). It was an offering made by Jews to show God that they were willing to be completely consumed for the cause of God. The animal would be completely burned upon the altar and then followed up with a grain offering. As the smoke ascended unto God above, they envisioned Him smelling the sweet aroma of sacrifice.
- Paul applies that imagery to the supply line of the church. The Philippians might have sent the sacrifice as a blessing, Paul might have received the gift as a blessing, but the greatest blessing of all was that God was blessed. Paul said that God was in heaven and received the smoke-ascended email of blessing. He said it was well-pleasing to Him, for it was His blessing.
- Jesus said something of the like in Matthew 25:37-40 “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?’ ³⁸ ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?’ ³⁹ ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ “The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.’
- We must understand that the supply-line logistics of our giving of funds, time and love is a great blessing to God. He sees us working together like the fine-oiled machine, a powerful force for good in this world. It brings great joy to the mind of God to see such, for it is a blessing to Him.

A Love-filled Closing of the Letter

And with that Paul closes his letter to the Philippians. It is a warm, loving greeting which sets the table for his deliverance from prison and a future visit in person the church at Philippi. It is as if his mind advanced to the end of the war to savor a bit of the communal victory that awaits all of them.

Philippians 4:20-23 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.