

Series: Graced to Give
“The Beauty of Giving”

Philippians 4:10-20

This morning we are in week four of our sermon series “Graced to Give.” Throughout the course of this study, we have been reminded continually that we have been greatly graced by God. We would not be who we are or where we are today if it weren’t for God and His amazing grace. Grace is not something that we have earned or deserved. It is something that God gives out of His mercy and love for us. The greatest evidence and expression of this grace occurred when God gave the gift of His Son for us. **John 3:16** clearly states, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” This is truly an indescribable gift. However, we must recognize that all who have believed in Christ have also received many blessing and promises through Him. Last week we saw that clearly as we looked at how God continually graces us and blesses us so that we might bless others. Even in the matter of generosity God provides everything that is needed so that when we give to His work, He continually provides for our needs and equips us with more to give. **2 Corinthians 9:8, 10-11** says it clearly, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.” Many people here like to focus on what they get from giving, but make no mistake about it, the focus of God’s provision is that God gives graciously to us that we might generously give for His glory and the good of others.

I believe wholeheartedly that it is a beautiful thing when we give generously to the work of the Lord and to the needs He makes us aware of. Earlier in the series, I shared about my own children who were burdened to take our vacation money and give to bless several families in Haiti. As a father, it was a beautiful thing to watch as my children gave sacrificially and cheerfully to be a blessing to others. I believe that the Bible is true – that God loves a cheerful giver. This is far more than just our resources. When we give generously of our time, talents, treasures, and things for the glory of the Lord and the good of others, it is a beautiful thing. As a pastor I can tell you that I have seen people give of all of these areas and when it is done in love for the Lord it is truly amazing!

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Throughout this entire series we have been looking at Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians and have learned of how he instructed them to give. To help Paul better explain what generosity looks like, He used a contemporary illustration by speaking of the “churches of Macedonia”. In **2 Corinthians 8:1-5** he said, “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify

that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” Paul was using this to show that we are to give of our ability, we are to give abundantly, and we are to give of our own accord. What an honor to be spoken of so highly. So, who was he speaking of? He was speaking of the church in Macedonia. And guess which church was the lead church in Macedonia? Philippi. The passage that we read today is Paul’s direct address to the Philippian church for their profound generosity. I want us to see four aspect of the beauty of generosity:

I. The Commendation of Generosity (vs. 10-14)

Now this sounds like a simple statement, but it is important to point out that Paul took time to commend these believers for their generosity. Sadly, Paul couldn’t commend every church for this. On many occasions he had to rebuke a church, like the church at Corinth. There was immorality and division, and Paul had to give strong words of rebuke. But to the church at Philippi, he writes and commends them for their faithfulness in giving. I think it is important that Paul specifically took time to say “Thank You” to those who had met his need. Paul was grateful for the Philippians’ investment in his life. Paul lived his life with an attitude of gratitude. A lot of people live their life feeling like people owe them something, but not Paul. Neither should we feel this way. Paul was grateful to serve the Lord and grateful the Lord had provided for him. Now, he didn’t have much, but he had learned through the grace of God to be content with what he had. Paul was concerned that they knew he was grateful for their gift. He was so busy giving thanks and praise to God that He wanted to be sure that he spoke directly to the givers. Paul understood that the provision came from God, but he also recognized that the Philippian believers were the channel that God used to bring the provision. ****ILL:** Scott and Julie Graef taking me to lunch and purchasing me clothes for ministry at Liberty. I praise God for His amazing provision, but I was sure to thank them for their amazing generosity because they were a channel of God’s provision. God loves to meet the needs of others through those who are rightly related to Him. I might pray and say, “God, here is my need,” and if that need is sitting on my front porch the next morning, I can either believe it fell from heaven or I can believe that God spoke to somebody and that individual obeyed God and met the need. Paul commended them for two primary things about their generosity:

A. They were Commended for What They Shared

In verse 14, Paul sums up his gratitude and the actions of the Philippians in one simple statement – “You have done well to share with me in my affliction.” When Paul says, “You have done well,” he is saying, “You have done a beautiful and noble thing.” We know that at this specific time, Paul was in a Roman prison and his circumstance wasn’t good. He didn’t even know initially if he would make it out alive or not. In that day when people were in jail, they were not taken care of by the state. Prisoners were completely dependent on those outside to provide for their needs. In this case, the church in Philippi reached out to him and gave. God can provide in amazing ways, but He often chooses to do so through the faith and sacrifices of His children. It was important to Paul that the

Philippians understand that the Lord gives bountiful provision to the saints, but believers have an important part to perform in the transaction.

Their gift was a means of provision for Paul, but it was also clearly a means of partnership. We are a part of His work, and when we give we partner with God in His work and with others in their need. God could do it all on His own, but He has chosen us to be a part of meeting the needs of others. When Paul said, “You have done well to share with me in my affliction,” he wasn’t just referring to the fact that they gave to him while he was in a state of affliction. When he saw the gift, he saw them. So, while Paul was alone in a Roman prison he knew that the Lord was with him, but he also knew that the Philippians were partnered with Him. But, please understand that this was not the Philippians giving out of obligation or resentment. They wanted to give to be a blessing. Remember the verse from 2 Cor. 8:3-4. They had begged Paul for the opportunity to give to bless others. In verse 10, we see the same thing towards Paul. They simply longed to share and be a blessing.

B. They were Commended for What They Showed

Paul understood that their gift was given from the heart. He recognized that they gave because they were concerned and they cared for him. In verse 10, we see it clearly that their concern for Paul was “revived”. The word that was used here meant “to blossom, to flourish.” It was a word used to describe the beauty of a flower that has completely opened. Paul is basically saying, “Your love and concern is in full bloom”.

Some background of the church is helpful to understand the significance of the moment. The church at Philippi had been started 10 years earlier after Paul had led Lydia, the Philippian jailer and his household, and the demon possessed girl to faith in Christ. Acts 16 records the story when the church is established in Philippi and from there Paul and Silas left to go preach the gospel and participate in God’s plan to plant more churches. But although it had been 10 years, this church hadn’t forgotten Paul. They knew that God had called him. They knew that he was faithfully serving the Lord. They knew the trials and persecutions that he had been through. They recognized his circumstance and his needs and had a deep concern for Him. This is the way that it should be. When one part of the body of Christ suffers, all the others suffer with it. This was true of Philippi. They recognized his needs and showed great love and compassion.

This is how it is with us as well. Our generosity shows who or what we truly love. In 2 Corinthians 8:8 Paul stated that our giving proves the sincerity of our love. It truly reveals our love for God and our love for others. Giving always communicates where our love is. If your first love is fishing, it will be seen in your pocket book. If your first love is movies, it will be seen in your pocket book. If your first love is JMU football, it will be seen in your giving. No wonder Jesus said in **Matthew 6:21**, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” What you give to, spend your treasure on, and invest your time in is a clear picture of what is first in your heart and life. If you look closely at your checkbook you can quickly discover what is important to you. How you use your time,

talents, treasures, and things reveals a great deal about your heart. The Philippians were so concerned about Paul and his need over in Rome that they considered his suffering to be their own.

II. The Commitment to Generosity (vs. 15-16)

The next thing we see about the beauty of giving is their amazing commitment. Simply put, this church wouldn't let anything stop them from giving. They had first wanted to give, and weren't able to do so. But that didn't stop them. They continued to look for an opportunity and find a way to give. Their commitment is seen in three ways:

A. They Practiced Uncommon Generosity

Verse 15 is an astonishing statement. Paul says that while he was in Rome under house arrest and had various needs, only one single church gave to his need – the church at Philippi. There were certainly other people who individually blessed Paul along the way, but Paul tells us here that only one church reached out to him in this way. Apart from the church at Philippi, there is no record of any other church in the Bible giving support to Paul. If ever there was a missionary or a statesman who deserved support, it was the apostle Paul. When you think of Macedonia - Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi - it is mind boggling that only one church responded to his need. But that is exactly what happened. Not only did they help provide for his needs while he was in prison, but they helped meet his needs while he was ministering in Corinth. In **2 Corinthians 11:9**, Paul reminds the Corinthians, “When I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.” He is referring to these believers from Philippi. They had taken care of his needs so that he could minister to others. They were willing to honor God and do what was right, regardless if anyone else stood with them. Crosslink Community Church, we must be faithful in the same. It doesn't matter what is popular. It doesn't matter what the world says or even popular opinion says. What matters is that we seek the Lord in all things and obey Him – even if that means we stand alone.

I think that verse 15 is one of the saddest verses that shows the lack of generosity of God's people. Praise the Lord for the beautiful example of the Philippians, but it is quite a shame that nobody else took the time to learn of the need and give to be a blessing. Paul had invested much at Corinth. But not only that, he had a hand in planting most of the churches that we read of in the New Testament. Who can fathom the thousands of people who had been saved because of his ministry? Paul was not looking for credit or for praise, but it would seem only right to be generous. Apparently, the believers then had the same struggles that we have today. They were busy, distracted, and blessed, but discontent and, as a result, missed out on an incredible opportunity to further impact the Kingdom. ****ILL:** Those who missed out remind me of the illustration of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10:30-37**. A Jewish man was headed down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked, beaten, robbed, and left for dead. As he was hurting and in need, a

priest was going down the road and saw him, but was apparently too busy to stop and help. Then a Levite was going down the same road. Upon seeing him, he immediately went over to the other side as if he didn't see the man. He ignored the need. Then came a Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews, but he had a heart of compassion and generosity. He took the man, bandaged him up, provided transportation for him, blessed him with a place to stay, and ministered to the man. He took of his own money and resources and gave them to bless the man in need. Then Jesus commanded to all who would hear in **verse 37**, "Go and do the same".

Let's be faithful to live like the Good Samaritan. Let's be faithful to live like the church at Philippi. They were the only church to give, but they were faithful on numerous occasions to do so and we should strive to do the same.

B. They Practiced Unhindered Generosity

Let me ask you a question - "Do you know which church in the New Testament is believed by scholars to be the poorest church of them all? Can you guess which church had the least resources available to them?" Answer - the church at Philippi. In **2 Corinthians 8:2**, we learn that they were actually in their own "ordeal of affliction" and they were in a state of "deep poverty". They faced the most difficult circumstances of anyone. They knew what it was like to be down to their last penny. In fact, the phrase that was used to describe them means "rock-bottom destitution". The word was used to describe a beggar who had absolutely nothing and no hope of getting anything. However, they didn't allow their poverty to hinder them from giving. They not only made it a priority to give, but they gave abundantly and sacrificially. I say that they were unhindered because they wouldn't allow anything to get in the way of being generous, even if it was their own circumstance and poverty. Occasionally I'll hear someone say, "Well I wish I had more so I could give." But friend, if you're not giving out of your poverty you likely will not give out of your plenty. A preacher of old said it well: "It's not what you do with the millions if fortune should e'er be your lot, it's what you're doing now with the dollar and quarter that you got."

The Philippians were so generous that Paul states in verse 16 that they gave even while he was in Thessalonica. That sounds odd to bring up this point, but he is doing so for a specific reason. The church at Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest churches of the New Testament because of the commerce of the city. But, you know where Paul got his support? From the poorest church in the entire region. The church at Thessalonica is what one scholar referred to as the "Country Club church", but on the other hand you have the poor people in Philippi who, in their poverty, gave sacrificially to the Lord. Their gift was nothing compared to what others could have given, but what they had they gave willingly and cheerfully to the Lord. Friend, never forget "Little is much when God is in it."

C. They Practiced Unending Generosity

The next wonderful thing about their commitment to giving is that their gift wasn't temporary. They obviously had determined to give, and they did so with willingness.

They had given on several occasions. But to them, there was still more to be done. So, they were willing and ready to give more. Paul writes, partly to thank them for their generosity, but he also wrote to explain clearly that he had enough. Look at verse 18. He said, “I am amply supplied, having received...what you have sent.” In other words, he is saying, “You have been so gracious and generous that all of my needs have been met. I have more than enough. You don’t need to send anything else.” Why did he say this? Because he knew that they so deeply loved the Lord and him that they would do whatever they could to give for the glory of God and the good of Paul. This is continual, never fading, never resenting, unending generosity. This is how we should live our lives until the Lord calls us home.

III. The Consideration of Generosity (vs. 17-19)

As Paul is thanking them for their generosity, he brings to light some things about generosity that we must take time to consider today. We often view generosity by what is right in front of us at the moment, but God wants us to have a larger view of what is happening when we give of our time, talents, treasures, and things for the glory of God and the good of others.

A. Our Generosity is Put to Our Account

One of the key statements that we make here about giving is that it is not about what we want from you, but what we want for you. Where does that come from? It comes from right here in this passage of Scripture. The context here in Philippians is that when we give to the Lord, we are laying up treasures in heaven. In other words, what we give, how we give, and why we give to the Lord matters in eternity. One old preacher said, “You can’t take it with you when you go, but you can send it on ahead.” The gift the Philippians gave to Paul was being laid for them as a treasure in heaven. **Paul’s real joy was not what the gift did for him, but what the gift did for them.** The reason I challenge you to give is not what it will do for me, but what it will do for you. I’m not trying to get anything from you because God has taken care of me and will continue to do so. I don’t need your gift, and God Himself doesn’t even need it. **But we need what God does in and through our lives as we trust Him in the matter of giving and investing in eternity.** Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 6:19-20**, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” Jesus also told a parable to illustrate the point in **Luke 12:16-21**. The focus of the rich man was on how he could have bigger barns, more resources, more grain, and greater comforts and conveniences. This was his driving ambition in life. He was consumed with earthly wealth and the desire for more of it. He convinced himself that he would be happy once he had more. But Jesus concluded in **verse 20-21**, “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Who are you storing up treasure for? Your name and your praise or the glory and praise of God? Warren Wiersbe concludes,

“The church gave materially to Paul, and received spiritually from the Lord. The Lord keeps the books and will never fail to pay one spiritual dividend!”

B. Our Generosity is Pleasing to God

Paul describes their generosity from God’s perspective by using three phrases – a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, and well-pleasing. When we give willingly, cheerfully, and sacrificially for the glory of God and the good of others, it is like a sweet aroma to the Lord.

It is also an acceptable sacrifice. There are many “spiritual sacrifices” that we can offer to the Lord. Romans 12:1-2 says that we are to yield our bodies as a sacrifice to Him. Hebrews 13:15 says that the praise of our lips is a sacrifice to Him. Hebrews 13:16 shows us that good works are a sacrifice unto the Lord. Here, Paul points to the act of sacrificial giving as a sacrifice. But, please understand that there is one key difference in the Law’s sacrifices and the sacrifices that the Philippians were offering. John Phillips said it well, “Their gift was not something God required or demanded; it was the overflow of grateful hearts, ‘a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God’.” Just as the saints of old would honor God by presenting their best to the Lord and would bring it with a right heart, so too must we do the same in our giving.

Generously giving of our time, talents, treasures, and things is pleasing to God. If that alone is the only reason to give, then it is still worth it. Again, you are never more like Jesus than when you give sacrificially for the glory of God and the good of others. **Our giving must be an act of obedience from a heart that is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.** If we’re 10 million dollars over budget, I promise before God that I will be faithful to give because my **giving is done first and foremost to glorify the Son of God.** If you want to determine if your life is pleasing to God, you need to examine your faith (have you received Christ?) and your actions (how are you living and how are you giving?).

C. Our Generosity is Partnered with God’s Promise

This verse is never to be quoted as standing on its own or out of its context. This is not a verse for some carnal Christian to try to hold God hostage saying, “Well God you said you’d supply all my needs, now do it.” To those whose giving to the Lord is “a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God,” He promises to meet your needs. Now, consider what is happening. The Philippian church was not wealthy at all, yet they gave generously to help Paul in his time of need. So, Paul easily concluded that this was a great sacrifice which likely left them with many needs. His needs had been met, but he wasn’t sure about the circumstance that they were now in. However, Paul knew all that he really needed to know. He knew that His God was their God and that no one could ever outgive Him. Paul knew that God was infinitely rich and, out of His treasury, He would take care of the Philippians’ needs. Paul’s words could be summarized like this: “You met my need, and God is going to meet your need. You met one need that I have, but my God will meet all of your needs. You gave out of your poverty, but God will

supply your needs out of His riches in glory.” ****ILL:** God’s provision of the playground. We could’ve offered more, but we wanted to honor God first with our missions giving. We set a budget of \$10,000. We lost the auction. Then two weeks later we received a call and bought it for \$9,000. We honored God first. He still provided the playground and we even saved money in the process. Praise God that He continues to meet our needs!

IV. The Celebration of Generosity (vs. 10, 20)

I feel like I’m starting to sound like a broken record. Where does generosity begin? It begins with God. Where does it conclude? With God. In verse 10 Paul started with the statement, “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.” Then in verse 20, overwhelmed at the grace and mercy of God, he concludes, “Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” When you have experienced the grace and mercy of God, you can’t help but to feel the same way. It is all about God, it is all for God, and it is all through God. However, if you don’t feel the same way then you are missing the most important thing in life – a relationship with Jesus. The heart of Jesus was to love others and generously give of Himself for the glory of the Father. Those who know Him and love Him have the same heart. It is a beautiful thing when we love the Lord and others and demonstrate by giving of our time, talents, treasures, and things.