

## ***The Joy of Giving in the Gospel – Philippians 4:14-20***

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Derek at [Derek@chapelpasadena.com](mailto:Derek@chapelpasadena.com).]*

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Philippians 4:14-20...

Please stand for the reading of God's word:

*<sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. -Philippians 4:14-20*

One of the highlights of my adult life was graduating from seminary. This took place Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC in May of 2019. Shortly after graduating, I began receiving letters asking if I'd like to become an official alumnus. This meant more than just being a former student of the institution, but this was a call to partner with this seminary in order to achieve their goal. As you can imagine, there was a price that came with this status of partner or alumnus. One that deterred me from moving forward. But I do like the thought behind what they were seeking to accomplish. Without such partners, there's no way the mission of the seminary can come to full fruition. They're in need of graduates who are so dedicated and sold on the vision and mission of the seminary, that they're willing to provide continual financial aid so professors can continue to equip future pastors and church leaders. But alumnus also receive a benefit, such as auditing any class that they so choose. The Philippian church was in a similar situation with Paul. The difference is the fact that the apostle didn't solicit. Rather these believers were so united, they couldn't keep themselves from assisting.

Here are our three points for this morning:

- I. ***Partnership*** of the Philippians (v.14-16)
- II. ***Profiting*** of the Philippians (v.17-18)
- III. ***Prosperity*** for the Philippians (v.19-20)

*<sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to **share** my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into **partnership** with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*

Not only was the apostle their brother in Christ, but he was genuine friend. This theme of friendship is heavy in this epistle. There is a three-way bond that includes, Christ, Paul, and the Philippian church. Now the word *yet*, makes clear that this is a continuation of thought from the previous text. Last week we considered the fact that although Paul was appreciative of the fact that this church revived their concern for him, he would be able to rejoice regardless, because his contentment was found in Christ as opposed to abasing or abounding.

So yet again, Paul provides clarification lest he be misunderstood. Basically, “now that I’ve explained that I would be content in Christ regardless of your gift or not, let me commend you for your generosity.”

If you grew up among tight knit siblings, you know what it’s like for a problem that your brother or sister has with someone to become a problem of your own. I had an older brother, so if I had trouble with someone, so did he. That’s just the nature of family, we share one another’s trouble and burdens. This is the sentiment of the Philippians regarding Paul the apostle. It was second nature for them to share in his troubles by supporting the apostle because they were true partners. Paul has embedded this idea into this friendship letter written to the church.

Verse	ESV text
1:5	Partnership in the gospel
1:7	Partakers with me of grace
4:14	Share my trouble
4:15	Entered into partnership

Two distinct Greek words are employed by Paul in these four passages, but the concept is fairly similar. A few months back we considered the importance of the word *koinonia*, translated many times as fellowship, or even partnership as we see in this passage. We usually dub watching a football game with another believer as *koinonia* or fellowship, but this isn’t this word’s original meaning in the first century. It had commercial overtones.

If two individuals buy a boat and start a fishing business, they have entered into a fellowship or partnership. Interestingly enough, even the New Testament word is often tied to financial matters. As *DA Carson puts it*, “***The heart of true fellowship is a self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision.***” So if the two individuals mentioned earlier put their savings into a fishing boat, they now share the vision that will put the fledgling company on its feet. Analogously, Christian fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to the gospel. In the early chapters of this letter, Paul was referring to their evangelistic efforts and willingness to suffer for the gospel’s sake. In this passage, the definition remains the same, self-sacrificing conformity to the gospel, but here Paul is referring to financial giving. Let’s reread 15-16 so we’re clear.

*<sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into **partnership** with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*

I'm currently reading one of the best books concerning pastoral and ministry philosophy that I've ever read. I've had it on my bookshelf for a while, but for some reason I'm just now getting to it. The book is entitled *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything*. In this work, the author makes a true and profound statement:

*The Christian without a missionary heart is an anomaly. The missionary heart will be seen in all kinds of ways: in prayers for the lost, in making sure our behavior offends no one, in gospel conversations with friends (at dinner parties!), and in making every effort to save some. -Colin Marshall and Tony Payne*

I would add to that list financial giving for the purpose of gospel advancing. Paul wanted his readers to understand that giving to support his ministry was taking up fellowship or partnership with him in his present tribulations. We see in the text time and time again that giving to the mission and ministry of the Word is a Biblical indicator of spiritual health. Zacchaeus, who was once a greedy and ruthless individual, decides to give to those whom he defrauded. Why? Because generosity is a sign of a regenerate heart. As Kent Hughes says, "What we do with our resources is a window into our souls." Therefore, giving to mission and ministry is substantive evidence of one's participation in the fellowship of the gospel. And the Philippians generosity proved to be stellar!

*We want you to know, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5*

The same goes for us today. Now one may ask, is giving to the local church the necessary application of this text. To which I would respond with, if the local church is God's primary plan to advance his kingdom in your community and around the globe,<sup>1</sup> then yes, I believe this is the appropriate application. Now, are there some who write big checks in order to ease their conscience for their lives being devoid of any gospel application. Absolutely! And we must beware of this danger because God doesn't need your money. Paul already said God has all riches in glory in Christ Jesus. While at the same time, if the gospel is good news to you, then our natural response will be to give. As the gospel is all about God as giver. This is why it's important to become a member of a gospel centered church that's dedicated to making disciples by the power of God through the gospel. That's our vision here at the Chapel. We exist to reflect the grace and truth of Jesus Christ to Los Angeles and the world. We're able to see this vision come to full fruition through your giving. In a few weeks from now, Pastor Chris will unveil a fundraising endeavor called, "Securing the Foundation." I'll spare you all the specific details, as he's a lot more equipped to provide you with those as it is. But our primary task is to raise the funds in order to pay off our mortgage on this property. Why? So that we can say we own land in Los Angeles? No. Rather so we can be freed up financially in order to allocate those funds to church planting endeavors. That's our DNA here at the Chapel. We're huge advocates of the

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<sup>1</sup> Art Rainer, *The Money Challenge*

local church, specifically gospel preaching local churches, in which Los Angeles needs more of. So, we want to be able to equip individuals with the tools, finances, and resources that are required to have an effective local church in a specific part of town here, and abroad. You'll hear more about our pastoral internship program in a couple weeks as well. So, securing our foundation here at the Chapel will in turn aid in our gospel mission. So, here's a very practical application for this text. Remember these words that Paul penned to the Philippians as Pastor Chris rolls out this plan. And also remember we're supporting brothers like Pastor Steven to go plant a church across the seas. It's your giving and sharing in trouble that allows any of this ministry to take place. So, in this text we see the financial partnership of the gospel and are exhorted to follow suit. Next, we'll see that we also receive a benefit from our financial giving to the mission of God.

## II. *Profiting* of the Philippians (v.17-18)

*17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*

Once again, Paul seeks to remove any misunderstanding. *Not that I seek the gift.* Meaning, "don't think I'm just buttering you up so I can get more cash and food out of you." That's genuinely not where he's coming from. He actually appears to be more thankful that these believers are conforming to the will of God, as he is having his needs met. This is an apostolic heart. The apostle John would say,

*I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. -2 John 4*

So, these leaders rejoiced when congregations were obeying the word! This is Paul's point. "Me receiving a gift is secondary, I just want you to enjoy the benefit and blessings that come from obedience to the word!

*27 As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" -Luke 11:27-28*

Paul wants the Philippians to be blessed! As your teaching pastor, I want you to be blessed. Any Christian leader who's worth their salt has the same end goal in mind. That is the win. If you're an outsider you may hear this message as just an appeal for people to blindly give their money, but I promise you that's not it. Anytime I hear of members opening their homes to host community groups on a weekly basis that is dedicated to the Word and prayer, I feel this excitement from Paul. Anytime I hear that a member is witnessing to their lost neighbor or coworker, I'm busting at the seams with joy. Anytime I hear a family is adding to their already busy lives by fostering and loving on children who otherwise wouldn't receive this love, I'm filled with joy! Anytime I hear believers are sitting down with one another to read the bible, joy! And the same goes for faithful financial giving to the gospel mission.

So, Paul makes clear that the win is tied up with the faithfulness of the Philippians. *but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.* Generous believers have a spiritual IRA plan. I used to work for a call center in my late teens and very early 20's called ACS. They were a third-party company that companies would outsource as a center for customer service. If you don't believe in the doctrine of total depravity, just work at a call center. The things people will say to you when they know they can get away with it due to their distance, is astounding. And also, if you want to be sanctified, work at a call center. But anyway, my first year at a call center had us working with USAA bank. So, we had to gain a rudimentary understanding of CDs and IRAs. As many of you know, I'm sure even better than me, an IRA is an account that allows an individual to save for retirement with tax-free growth, which is what makes it so desirable. There are some who roll over their retirement funds into an IRA account instead. There's something beautiful about storing up money in an account that's continually growing until a set day, where you're able to enjoy the fruits of your labor sort of speak.

Well did you know generous believers also have an IRA account that is located in heaven. That's what Paul is getting across to the Philippian church here. This text can also be rendered, I seek the profit that accrues to your account. Paul says, "you too have a great benefit of partnering with me financially in the gospel. You're building a retirement plan in heaven! One where the stock market and interest rates have no binding power.

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,"<sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. -Matthew 6:19-20*

You who are frugal with your finances. Making wise investments and planning out your 401k. Are you also storing up an eternal investment through your partnership with the gospel? Only Jesus and the apostle Paul set somewhat of a reversal, right? The more money we keep, via the IRA, the greater the cash out. For this gospel principal, it's the generous giving that builds up treasures in heaven.

*Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." -Matthew 19:21*

Paul would say that this type of partnership in the gospel is *a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* Which is an Old Testament picture that refers to burnt offerings in which the roast-like aroma would rise up to the anthropomorphic nose of God. We initially see this in Genesis 8:21 as Noah sacrifices clean animals unto God after the flood. This should also remind you of another Pauline passage in the letter to the Romans.

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. -Romans 12:1*

After describing the profit of the Philippians, he explains the prosperity for the Philippians.

### **III. Prosperity for the Philippians**

*19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Before we go any further, let's just deal with those first three words. And my God. Who was the one that Paul knew was able to supply the needs of the Philippians? It wasn't just any God. He doesn't just say "a god" or the "gods," no he says, "my God." Not the gods of the Greeks, Egyptians, Assyrians, or Romans, but rather, "my God". He's being specific and personal in this passage. And who is Paul's God. Paul's God is YHWH, the creator. The God who has eternally existed as one, in three distinct persons. The one who said let there be and there was. The "Who" has the power to speak the Heavens and the Earth into existence. The one who determined the measurements of the earth. The one who had all of the sons of God shouting and singing for joy during his display of creative power. The one who shut the sea with doors and prescribed limits for the clouds. Paul's God is the one who knows when the mountain goats give birth and the one who owns cattle on a thousand hills. The one who clothes himself with glory and splendor that if any man sees his face they would fall dead. It's Paul's God who can draw out and tame the levitation, lion, tiger and bear. The God who took dust in his hand and breathed life into the first human. The God who was rebelled against by humanity and therefore has a cup of wrath that equals eternity in hell for those who reject him. And yet it was Paul's God who wasn't taken off guard by the sin of man, but rather provided the promise to humanity that a Messiah would come and reverse the effects of the fall. Paul's God is the one who called out a Mesopotamian idol worshipper unto himself and created a whole nation after this man. This God raised up the nation of Israel and delivered them out of their slavery in Israel. This God sent prophets, priests, and kings to call this nation of Israel to repent of their sinful ways that they may fulfill their role as priests, drawing all nations unto Zion to worship this Triune God. It's the second Person of the Godhead, the perfect prophet, priest, and king, who became a man to do what Israel could not. It's this God who lived a sinless life, and then drank the full wrath of God on the cross. It's this God who resurrected from the grave defeating death for all his people. It's the third person of the Godhead who came and regenerated Paul and provided him with new life. This is the Triune God that Paul is referring to.

But is he your God this morning? If he's not your God, meaning you've never come to him through faith in the Lord Jesus, surrendering your all to him, then these promises in Scripture are not for you. I would implore you. Respond to the gospel this morning through repentance and faith. Because your greatest "need," is to have your sins forgiven. And only Jesus Christ makes that possible.

It is because of this gospel, that God makes the promise for his people to meet their financial and natural needs. It's according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. What a beautiful promise to have. Through the gospel, meaning Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, generous believers have this promise. At least with this text, Paul is specifically referring to those who have responded in a very practical and appropriate way to the gospel, and that's through generous financial partnership. He even provides a play on words here. Just as in verse 18, these believers have kept Paul "well supplied," they now have a promise from God that he will "supply their every need." Now this obviously doesn't refer to every desire. Paul is literally writing from a jail cell. I'm sure

his desire is to be free. And yet, we see God fulfilling this promise to Paul through the generosity of the Philippians.

For a many of Christians throughout church history, this has been a profound promise. When Charles Spurgeon built his orphanage, this passage, Philippians 4:19, was cut on one of the pillars of the entrance. He said this,

*This I took for the foundation of the institution and set my seal to it as true. And it has been so. Time would fail me if I were to tell how often God has interposed there for His numerous family-those children that are cast upon the divine Fatherhood. He has honored His own promise and our faith, and I believe He always will. There on the forefront of the Orphanage stands also the word, "The Lord shall provide." You shall see whether it be not so. As long as that place stands my God shall supply our need, and it shall be a standing encouragement to us all. -Charles Spurgeon*

Perhaps you're familiar with the story of George Müller, who was a missionary and coordinator of orphanages in England. He too trusted in the Lord's provision, no doubt hanging tightly to this verse.

One morning, all the plates and cups and bowls on the table were empty. There was no food in the larder and no money to buy food. The children were standing, waiting for their morning meal, when Müller said, "Children, you know we must be in time for school." Then lifting up his hands he prayed, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock at the door. The baker stood there, and said, "Mr. Müller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow, I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast, and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So, I got up at 2 a.m. and baked some fresh bread and have brought it." Mr. Müller thanked the baker, and no sooner had he left, when there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it.

This dear brother gave his finances and life to become a partner in the fellowship of the gospel. Therefore, the Lord fulfilled his promise to supply every need of his according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

We'll close with the very words of Paul in this section. As it is appropriate. It seems as if the goodness of God leads him to close in this manner.

*<sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Let's pray.