

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Philippians' Gift to Paul
Philippians 4:10-20
Part 4

Christ taught His disciples that it was more blessed to give than to receive. Even though most Christians would openly agree with Christ's teaching, they do not demonstrate in their giving practices that they really believe this. If they really believed this they would be managing their money differently.

Most Christian families approach giving as a necessary activity but not as a very blessed activity. Therefore, their attitude when it comes to sharing their financial resources is to give as little as possible. Giving as little as possible entails on the one hand doing what they have to do in order to salve their conscience, while on the other hand not doing so much that they threaten the lifestyle to which they become accustomed.

Though this may be true of many, if not most Christian families, this certainly would not have been true of Paul. And Paul makes this abundantly clear to us in **Philippians 4:10-19**. Let us once again read this wonderful passage of Scripture, **“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. (14) Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. (15) And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed 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. (18) 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 shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”**

Philippians 4:10-19 records for us Paul's response to a very generous gift that he received from the Philippians to meet his expenses while under house arrest in Rome. This response went far beyond a simple thank you. Rather than responding with a simple thank you he responded by giving a great deal of instruction concerning the relative blessedness of giving and receiving.

The question that I began to address several weeks ago in light of **Philippians 4:10-19** was, “What did Paul's thank you to the Philippians involve?” The first thing that we saw in Paul's thank you to the Philippians was Thanking the Philippians involved telling them how their gift made him feel. Let us read **verse 10**, **“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.”** What else?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Thanking the Philippians also involved clarifying that their expression of care was a greater benefit for them rather than for him (Philippians 4:11-17). This is spelled out for us in **Philippians 4:11-17**.

Paul began this clarification by looking at the benefit of their gift to himself (Philippians 4:11-13).

We found this clarification in **Philippians 4:11-13**. Let us read these verses, **“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.”**

What was Paul saying in these verses? Paul in essence was telling the Philippians that he saw very little personal benefit in them giving him this gift. How could Paul say this? Certainly from a purely financial standpoint he needed their gift. And certainly from a purely financial standpoint he would have had an awareness of that need. But obviously he is not talking to the Philippians in financial terms. He is not evaluating his situation from an earthly perspective. He is looking at their gift and the benefit of that gift in terms of what he most highly values.

Paul saw very little personal benefit to himself because he did not see their gift or any other earthly circumstance as critical in achieving the ultimate goal of his life. What was Paul’s ultimate goal?

What was Paul’s passion? What was the obsession of his life? It was spelled out for us in

Philippians 3:7-11, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, (9) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (10) that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; (11) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” The goal of Paul’s life was to get to know Christ better and ultimately perfectly at the resurrection from the dead. This is what drove his life. This is what explained his life.

As long as Paul was able to keep his heavenly focus and demonstrate steady progress toward his goal he was content in every circumstance.

Keeping his heavenly focus of course would not be easy. The world, the flesh and the devil were continually seeking to distract him as those same forces are seeking to distract us. But Paul through his lifestyle choices positioned himself for victory. He was a man who did not take the Christian life lightly. He built things into his life that nurtured a heavenly focus. He was committed to the Word, to prayer, to fellowship and to outreach. Though these activities in and of themselves will not produce contentment they will prepare us to take advantage of the very thing that will provide us what we need to be content in every circumstance. And what is that? Paul’s secret of contentment and his ability to maintain his heavenly focus was dependent upon the strength of Christ. We saw this in **Philippians 4:13**. Drawing on Christ’s strength allowed Paul to maintain his heavenly focus while keeping his circumstances in their proper perspective.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This is where we left off last week. This week we are going to move on to the second part of Paul's clarification to the Philippians.

Paul concluded his clarification by looking at the benefit of the gift to the Philippians themselves (Philippians 4:14-17). Let me read for you **Philippians 4:14-17**, “**Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. (15) And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from 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.**”

Let us begin our study of this section of Scripture by looking at **verse 14**, “**Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.**” Why did he start this way? Paul wants to make sure that the Philippians do not think in light of what he just shared in **Philippians 4:11-13** that he was ungrateful for their gift. Yes, in terms of what was most important to him in his life their gift had little impact. This is true. But this did not change the fact that he was extremely grateful for their gift. He may not have felt he needed their gift in order to continue his pursuit of the resurrection from the dead and perfect conformity to Christ but he saw their gift not only as a demonstration of genuine care but also as an attempt to share in his affliction. What did the verse say? “**Nevertheless, you have have done well to share with me in my affliction.**”

The word “share” (SUNKOINONEO) means ‘to participate in something with someone, become partners with.’ How had the Philippians partnered with Paul in his affliction? The Philippians had become partners with Paul in his present affliction by sharing the expenses of his imprisonment.

But the Philippians had not limited themselves to sharing their money with Paul in the time of his affliction. Paul in **Philippians 4:15-16** chooses to outline a number of other times the Philippians chose to partner with him through their financial generosity. What is obvious from the examples that Paul will give us is that their giving went far beyond giving to him just in times of his affliction. They were committed to supporting Paul and his ministry no matter what situation he found himself.

In fact, I believe based on these verses that the Philippians, when compared to other churches, maintained a totally unique relationship with Paul in this regard. In order to demonstrate for the Philippians their unique partnership with him in this matter of giving and receiving Paul supplies two examples (Philippians 4:15-16). These examples that he will share had occurred over a decade earlier but the very fact that these examples had occurred so long ago coupled with Philippians present generosity demonstrated the unique relationship that he enjoyed with the Philippian church from a financial standpoint.

Paul's first example of their unique partnership with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving was their gift to him after he left Macedonia (Philippians 4:15).

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let me read for you **Philippians 4:15**, “**And you yourselves also know, Philippians that at the first preaching of the gospel after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.**” We know from this verse that no church shared with Paul after he left Macedonia but the Philippians alone. But the question we must ask is, “What is the specific time period that Paul is talking about?”

We have to assume when Paul speaks of leaving Macedonia that he is referring to when he left Macedonia during his second missionary journey rather than on his third journey. Why would I say this? I would say this because Paul’s reference to leaving Macedonia is connected with the “**first preaching of the gospel.**” Isn’t this what the verse says? “**And you yourselves also know, Philippians that at the first preaching of the gospel after I departed from Macedonia.**” Now let me ask you this question: From the standpoint of the Philippians, how would they have understood this phrase, “**the first preaching of the gospel?**” They would have understood the phrase to be referring to when they first heard the gospel. And when did they first hear the gospel? They first heard the gospel on Paul’s second missionary journey when he established the Philippian church. So what have we learned? Paul received a gift from the Philippians alone after he left Macedonia on his second missionary journey.

But this raises another question. At what point after leaving Macedonia did he receive this gift? It is quite apparent from **2 Corinthians 11:8-9** that he received their gift after leaving Macedonia during the second missionary journey while he was at Corinth. Paul’s first example of their unique partnership with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving was their gift to him after he left Macedonia (Philippians 4:15).

What was the second example Paul gives? Paul’s second example of their unique partnership with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving was their gifts to him before he left Macedonia (Philippians 4:16). Let me read for you **Philippians 4:16**, “**for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.**” The Philippians were so committed to supporting Paul that even before he left Macedonia they sent multiple gifts to him while he was at Thessalonica. What is significant about this is the fact that Thessalonica was the first town he visited after leaving Philippi. Paul had a unique partnership with the Philippians in this matter of giving and receiving. And Paul was extremely appreciative of their commitment to him.

You might be saying “good for the Philippians, how wonderful that they felt compelled to do this. But should their example impact us?” Hopefully we will be led to follow in their footsteps. Obviously we do not presently have the opportunity to partner with the apostle Paul in his apostolic ministry. But this does not prevent us from partnering with the ministry of the church. It all boils down to whether or not we will choose to use our monies to share in the work of the gospel or not.

But is there any profit in all of this? Is there any profit in choosing to share our monies with others in supporting them in the work of the gospel? Hopefully, what Paul shares with us next will be a help answer that question.

Philippians 4:17, “**Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.**” Is Paul by what he has said in some way fishing for another gift?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Paul begins this verse by strongly denying any interest in pursuing further gifts from the Philippians. What does he say? **“Not that I seek the gift itself.”** If he is not seeking a gift then what is he seeking? Let us continue to read the verse, **“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit.”** The word “profit” (KARPOS) which can be literally translated “fruit” and in this context it refers to the advantage that is gained in a business transaction. When the Philippians chose to transfer some of their money from their pocket to Paul’s pocket in order to support him in his ministry there was a certain advantage that they gained.

Did this make them financially richer? No! But it made them spiritually richer. How did this make them spiritually richer? They were spiritually richer from Paul’s perspective because they were managing their money like the righteous would manage their money. They were spiritually richer from Paul’s perspective because they were managing their money like people who were truly born again.

Earlier in the epistle Paul calls these kind of choices, these kind of actions that flow from a genuine relationship with Christ the “fruit of righteousness.” Let me read for you **Philippians 1:9-11**, **“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; (11) having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”**

When the Philippians chose to transfer some of their money from their pocket to Paul’s pocket in order to support him in his ministry they displayed the fruit of righteousness, and this demonstration of the fruit of righteousness was from the perspective of the apostle Paul was an advantage for them. It was an advantage because it demonstrated that they were spiritually alive.

But how great an advantage is that? Let us again look at the verse, **“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”** The word “increases” (PLEONAZO) means to super-abound. The Philippians should not in any way think that they will be shortchanged when it comes to reaping benefits from demonstrating that they are spiritually alive. The profit or the advantage that they gained by manifesting the fruit of righteousness will superabound to their account. When? At the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Philippians’ generosity was a concrete demonstration that God was completing the good work that he had started in them when they believed the gospel (Philippians 1:6). The Philippians generosity was a concrete demonstration that they were getting to know Christ better and would one day know him perfectly at the resurrection. Do you think Paul could get excited about this? And the answer is of course.

We all have choices. But we need to understand this: Those who are earthly minded will choose differently than those who are heavenly minded. And nowhere is this difference seen more clearly than in the way we manage our money. The earthly minded will be concerned about storing up earthly treasure and the heavenly minded will be concerned about storing up heavenly treasure.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

CONCLUSION

Hopefully you now understand why Jesus taught it is more blessed to give than receive. Hopefully now you understand why Paul agreed with Jesus in **Philippians 4:11-17**. When we receive money we are benefited materially but when we give money generously we are benefited spiritually by confirming that we are heaven bound.