

19. The Book of Philippians 4:10-20

Joy in Giving-Part 2

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(10-15-23)

Find this weeks' sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

So far, we've looked at:

- I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6
- II. Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18
- III. Joy of Faith—1:25
- IV. Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2
- V. Joy in Service—2:12-18
- VI. Joy in the Lord—3:1; 4:4

And the 7th and final one in our series—“A Journey in Joy”:

VII. Joy in Giving—4:10-20

Philippians 4:10, 15–20 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity...

¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

So here Paul is thanking them for the generous gifts of money the Christians in Philippi had given to him for his ministry.

Let me just say at the outset that the only time I talk about money is when we come to a place in God's Word where money is talked about.

There are several reasons for this:

1. *Spiritual hucksters and charlatans on radio and TV are always talking about money, asking for money, haranguing people for money—and I don't want to be associated with them.*
2. *If I pressure you into giving to God—you're probably going to do it out of compulsion and not out of joy and as such you won't receive a reward from God for your giving.*
3. *I don't want people to think God needs their money—God is not a 'pauper' who needs to come to us begging for money so that He can continue His work on the earth.*

Now having said that—I probably haven't done you any favors by my reluctance in talking about money.

I say that because giving to God is a subject that permeates the Bible from cover to cover and is tied to the blessings of God both in heaven someday but also on earth right now—not the least of it being great joy when it's done in the right way and from the right heart.

The Bible likens giving to God to the sowing of seeds in a field—which will result in a 3-fold harvest of blessings.

However, before we look at that, let's look at the basic principles or laws that are tied to sowing and reaping in general—and in fact, there are 3 of them that we need to understand:

1. **You will reap what you sow**

God established this as a law of sowing and reaping at creation when He said, *"Let everything bring forth after its kind."*

In other words—if you sow corn, you're not going to harvest wheat—if you sow tomato seeds you won't reap watermelons—it's an immutable law of sowing and reaping—you reap what you sow.

This law also applies *spiritually*—

Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption [hell], but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life [heaven].

But we could also apply this principle to marriage, family, ministry, or to life in general—and that is you will only get out what you put in (love, commitment, selflessness, etc.).

2. **You will reap after you sow**

The harvest comes after the sowing (planting)—and for a believer that can be sometimes difficult to deal with. That's because often we want to see fruit *before* we actually sow the seeds of kindness, unselfishness, and faithfulness into our marriages or into our walk with God.

In other words, many people want to harvest a great marriage, or a strong walk with God *before* they put the hard work into their marriages or into their Christian lives (by faithfully reading and studying the Bible, going to church, praying, and staying in fellowship with other Christians).

It would be like a farmer expecting to harvest his field *before* he does the hard work of cultivating it by breaking up the soil and then clearing out the rocks and weeds, before sowing the seeds—but that’s not how it works, not in literal farming or in life!

Yet it seems that many times, people think that the fruit should come *first*—which will then prove to them that putting all the effort into their marriage or walk with God—is worth it. This is why so many young people live together before getting married—they’re taking their relationship for a ‘test-run’ to see if it’s worth marriage.

But that’s where faith comes in—the faith that believes (as God has told us in His Word) that marriage is worth the hard work—and the same goes for growing a strong relationship with God.

It’s the same in farming—the farmer *believes* that all the hard work of cultivating his fields and planting the seeds will produce a harvest—will produce wonderful results in time!

It takes time to grow strong and healthy crops—even as it does to grow a strong, healthy marriage and walk with God. So, we must learn to exercise two important qualities:

- a. **We must learn to exercise faith that God is at work even if we can’t see anything happening right away—**

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing [by faith] that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

- b. **And we must learn to exercise patience—**

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

And let us not grow weary while doing good [in other words—be patient], for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

So, we will reap good things if we’re patient and don’t give up sowing—whether we’re talking about sowing the seeds of the gospel or simply sowing into our lives obedience to God in general.

But this also works in the negative.

The person who is taking drugs or is involved with internet pornography or messing with the occult often makes the mistake of thinking—*“Nothing bad has happened to me so far, things are going good in my life, so what I’m doing is harmless (flirtations at work with co-workers or on Facebook or with old boyfriends or girlfriends) ...”*

Look, that’s a flat out lie from the devil!

Look, what’s obvious in farming is often not obvious in other areas of life—like what you sow today you won’t reap today—the harvest comes later. If I sow irresponsible or sinful actions in my life today—I won’t reap the consequences of those actions immediately.

Often, it takes years before the lung cancer shows up or the cirrhosis of the liver, or the venereal disease, or the marriage fails, or your world implodes etc.

You don’t reap before you sow, you reap after you sow—but even then, it often doesn’t happen right away.

Again, the classic mistake that many people make is thinking that because they aren't suffering any immediate negative consequences (and in fact they still seem to be being blessed by God)—what they're doing or how they're living must not really be wrong.

The reason they are misinterpreting their circumstances is because the goodness and grace of God often aren't removed immediately from a person's life once they start down the path of sin or compromise—but make no mistake, God is not blessing you in your sin.

He might be blessing you in spite of your sin because He wants His continued goodness and blessing in your life to bring you to repentance (Romans 2:4).

But don't ever make the mistake of thinking you can violate anything God says in His Word and not eventually reap the consequences.

1. **You will reap what you sow.**
2. **You will reap after you sow.**
3. **You will reap more than you sow.**

In other words, if you plant one apple seed, you will get an entire apple tree with many apples on it each containing many seeds. If you plant one grain of wheat, you will get a whole stalk containing many grains of wheat.

In fact, Jesus Himself said in John 12:24—

John 12:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Jesus here is using a farming metaphor to teach a spiritual truth—that if we live our lives for ourselves, we will not produce any fruit for the Kingdom—but if we die to self and live for God, we will produce much fruit for His Kingdom.

(Listen: —what you do can impact you're whole family or a politician a whole nation)

Alright, as I said earlier—giving to God is a subject that permeates the Bible from cover to cover and is tied to the blessings of God both in heaven someday but also on earth right now.

The Bible likens giving to God to the sowing of seeds in a field—which will result in a 3-fold harvest of blessings.

I. It Blesses the Heart of God

Here in Philippians 4:18, Paul is writing to the Philippians in part to thank them for a gift of money that they had given to him and calls it—"a **sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God.**"

Paul here uses the language of worship as found in the offerings of the Old Testament sacrifices.

Giving someone a gift of money to help them in a time of need blesses the heart of God.

And in fact, as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:18 it becomes an acceptable sacrifice which ascends to His throne like a sweet-smelling aroma and becomes to Him the *'fragrance of worship.'*

John 12:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. ² There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. ³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

Of all the places in the Bible where worship it talked about—this is the only place in Scripture, that I can think of, where someone actually *exemplified* it.

When Mary of Bethany took that alabaster flask of precious oil of spikenard and poured it upon Jesus preparing His body for burial—she became a living illustration of what a life of worship truly means.

➤ *Why is it so important that we understand what a life of worship is all about?*

Because Jesus told us in John 4, that the Father is seeking *true* worshippers who worship Him in Spirit and in Truth—which is in fact the goal of all of redemptive history (Revelation 5:8-14).

Mary of Bethany was a true worshipper.

What can Mary teach us about the nature of worship—well, first and foremost, she teaches us that true worship is often costly!

John 12:3 (NKJV)

³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair...

- It cost Mary something very precious to worship her Lord in this way—in fact, we are told in verse 5 that this pound of spikenard was worth 300 denarii—almost a year's wage back then.
- The first lesson we learn from Mary's act of worship is that worship involves sacrifice by giving to God what's most precious to us—not the leftovers of our time, our energy or our possessions.
- Mary gave the most precious thing she owned to her Lord in worship—oil of spikenard.

Spikenard was made from something called *'nard'* which came from a flowering plant that grew up in the Himalayas between China and Tibet.

It had to be brought out on the backs of camels down the Himalayan Mountains all the way to Israel where it was made into a costly perfumed oil and placed in an alabaster flask.

Needless to say, it was a very costly procedure which yielded a very precious commodity—as we said this pound of spikenard was worth almost a year's wage!

There's something else you might not realize from this—this oil of spikenard was probably Mary's dowry.

In those days if they wanted to make an investment for the future, there weren't any stocks or IRA's or savings bonds, so instead they would invest in gold, silver, precious stones—or even in precious ointments or perfumes.

This is apparently what Mary had done—she made a very costly investment in this spikenard to be saved as a dowry (her father was obviously dead by this time)—but in an act of true love and worship she poured it out on Jesus anointing Him for burial.

To the world or even to the average Christian her worship seemed extravagant in the extreme, but when you're talking about worshipping Jesus—can anything be too costly to give to Him in light of what He gave for us?!

If this was her dowry (and I believe it was) then culturally speaking—it meant she was pretty much giving up any hope of ever getting married and having a family.

In that culture a woman without a dowry wasn't likely to find a man willing to marry her. What a tremendous sacrifice Mary made to worship Jesus—look at what it cost her! Because she sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him speak (she had no agenda like the disciples) she knew what He was about to do for her—and she responded by anointing Him for burial.

This was a true sacrificial offering of true worship by giving to Jesus what was most precious to her.

It seemed that Mary understood well what King David had expressed so many years earlier when he said that he wouldn't give the Lord an offering (as an act of worship) from that which cost him nothing.

Notice that Mary didn't 'open the bottle', *dab* a little of the perfumed oil on Jesus, saving the rest for herself. In fact, she couldn't have done that anyways because once these alabaster flasks were filled—they were sealed shut! The only way to *open* them was to break them open—which once having been done meant you had to use it all.

In other words, it spoke of *total* commitment—not holding anything back but giving it all for Jesus—

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices [*the burnt offering—the offering of total commitment and consecration*], holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

When I think how valuable our time is today and how we often measure out a small amount to give to God each week (church and devotions) but the rest of our time we lavishly spend on ourselves.

It makes me wonder if we really understand what it means to worship the Lord through a life of total surrender, devotion, and commitment—giving to God our best!

Worship is costly, requiring sacrifice.

Let's not forget that for centuries under Roman persecution it cost Christians a great deal to worship the Lord; or today those living under Communism or in Islamic countries... (Read Fox's Book of Martyrs)

So, the first blessing we reap through our giving is that—it blesses the heart of God (which should our passion).

This is especially true when it comes to supporting the ministries of those out on the mission field or the work of the church in our own communities.

True worship is giving to God by sharing with others—sharing your love, the gospel, and your resources.

God considers it worshipping Him because by your example of giving to Him in these things you are putting Him on display in your life—you are glorifying Him by representing His heart to this world.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).