



Philippians 4:14-23 Why Do We Give?

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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Last week we saw Paul saying thank you for a gift he received from the Philippians – and also testifying to his own contentment – he said he was fine whether he had a little or a lot, in feast or famine, in good times or bad, so long as he had Jesus. But now we’re going to see him say that even though he would have made it without their gift, it was still good of them to send it, and we’ll see what we can learn about our own attitude toward giving.

[14](#) Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. [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.

[21](#) Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. [22](#) All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.

[23](#) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

So, I want you to see this: Paul was content in Christ, even though he had real needs; but, it was also good for the Philippians to send a gift. Paul was trusting in God to provide and the Philippians were making themselves available to God to be the vessel He used to provide.

So what does that mean today? Well, it means that those who are in need should seek contentment in Christ first. NO MATTER THE SITUATION, people need to turn to Christ first for all their needs.

AND YET, we also have a responsibility to turn to Christ, for it may be that He wants to use us to show them His love or to be the agent of their rescue. So, both parties should be looking at the cross, and though we each look from different angles, it should be the center of focus for people on each side of the issue.

So today, just as the church sent time and time again to support Paul in his ministry, so we too provide ongoing support to those in need, and to missionaries who are working to help people understand their need for Jesus.

Our church supports:

- **Argaw and Rachelle** Ayele who are running an orphanage in Awassa, Ethiopia providing for kids who have no parents or whose parents are unable to meet their needs.
- **Chuck and Yumi** Robb who are serving God in Sendai, Japan ministering in the aftermath of the tsunami that devastated that country over a year ago.
- **Ed and Kelly** Compean who will be with us in August. Ed is pastoring and planting churches in Kenya while Kelli teaches women's Bible studies and uses her skills as an RN to help people who are suffering physically.
- **Prince and Florence** Lawrence who have endured robberies and physical beatings while ministering in Abuja, Nigeria.
- We provide a full scholarship each year at **Calvary Chapel Bible College** in Hungary for a student from Eastern Europe or Africa who is called to pastoral ministry.
- We are sending teams to **Haiti** to assist with ministry which began in the aftermath of the earthquake which shattered that country two years ago.
- Dozens of you have gone down to serve at the **Central Union Mission** to serve the homeless of our area.

I'm looking forward to the day when God calls someone out of this church to go and serve Him full time on the mission field or by planting a church here in the area.

There is no shortage to the needs of the world, or the needs of this city, and it is our privilege to help meet those needs by giving time and again like the Philippians.

What else can we learn about giving from this passage? I've got four points for you this morning.

#1. The gift was given by the church because people had given to the church.

There were times when Paul received gifts from individuals, but usually, it was the church as a whole that received from people and then sent to Paul.

Keep a finger here in Philippians and then turn with me over to Malachi Chapter 3.

Here we see God confronting the nation of Israel on the issue of giving, and here is what He says:

8 "Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
'In what way have we robbed You?'
In tithes and offerings.

9 You are cursed with a curse,
For you have robbed Me,
Even this whole nation.

10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,

That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,”
Says the LORD of hosts,
“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you *such* blessing
That *there will not be room enough to receive it.*

Now, what I want to point out to you is that God commands that the tithes be brought “into the storehouse.” The storehouse was part of the temple, the center of worship. Today, our church building would be the equivalent. So, it’s my conviction, we need to give first and foremost to the local church we attend. And then, after we have given *to God, through* the local church, we can also give offerings to other sources, ministries, and individuals. You can go above and beyond what you give at church, but you should give at church first.

Now, again, I’m not being legalistic about this, I’m just sharing my personal conviction and interpretation of Scripture with you. I’m also letting you know that your giving to this church is what allows us to do things like support the missionaries I mentioned, just like giving to the church in Philippi allowed them to support Paul.

So if you want to give to the Lord, through this church, you can do that in several ways – there is a tithes and offerings box over by the door, you can set up a monthly bill payment with your bank, or you can give through PayPal online. How you choose to give and what you choose to give is between you and the Lord, but you should be giving. Now, whether or not you do, I don’t know – I don’t touch the money here, I don’t know who gives what – I know what the money goes to, but I don’t know where it comes from, and I think that’s good.

Now keep a marker here, but let’s flip back to Philippians and see point number two.

#2. (vs.18) The gift was “an acceptable sacrifice.”

Paul talks about the Philippians and their giving in his letter to the church in Corinth. He said they, and the other churches of Macedonia, were giving out of their “deep poverty” and that he bore witness that, “according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of ministering to the saints.”

They didn’t have much themselves, but they sure wanted to be a part of reaching out to help others in need. And the reason they did this, Paul says in 2 Cor 8:5 was, “they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” The way they saw it, the Philippians were serving God by giving, and they were giving sacrificially.

A few years ago, around Christmas, it struck me that all giving is to some degree sacrificial. That’s what a gift is – I take something that is mine, and I give it to you, or I spend it on you

– I make a sacrifice of my stuff to give stuff to you. So, all giving is sacrifice, it's a way of saying, "You are more important than me."

Which is one reason why we should be giving to God - He doesn't need our money, of course not. He can do whatever He wants, however He wants. But when we give to Him, we are saying, You are more important than me. I have all these options about how to spend what I have, and the most important thing I can do is to give to You. It's also a recognition that life is about more than just the stuff I have.

And that means that our giving should be substantial – it should make a difference in your bottom line. CS Lewis has a great quote on this subject where he says essentially, there should be things you want to do, things perhaps your friends are doing, but which you can't because of the level of your giving; at some level, you should *feel* the giving that you do. And when that happens, you'll know that you're really making a sacrifice and truly valuing God and the needs of others above your own.

The Bible teaches that we don't really own our stuff anyway – we're just stewards. And one day you're going to have to sit down and explain to God how you handled everything that He allowed to come your way. That doesn't mean you can't have cable or order a Frappuccino, but it does mean you ought to ask yourself regularly, what am I trying to accomplish with my life? What am I trying to build?

I love the line I've heard from Pastor Chuck Smith so many times, "Only one life, will soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last."

And that relates to our next point:

#3. (vs.17) The gift would be rewarded.

Paul says that because they gave, fruit would abound to account.

When we give to Lord, He sees it and is pleased by it. That's why I stress so much that what you give is between you and God – you shouldn't give *to the church* – you should give *to the God of the church*. Now that means that most of the time you will give *through* the church, but your gift is always *to* God.

And you will never be the poorer for having highly esteemed and given to God. He will not let Himself be in debt to you. He will reward you or restore you, guaranteed.

On the other hand, if you take all you have and try to use it to satisfy your own desires, you will find that you're just throwing money into an empty pit, and lasting satisfaction just cannot be found. Temporary satisfaction can, temporary joy is available at a cost, but nothing that lasts.

Turn with me to Haggai and look at what God has to say there (Go to Malachi, then turn back through Zechariah, and then to Haggai):

Israel was captured and taken into captivity and spent 70 years in Babylon, then some people returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, but they got distracted:

[2](#) “Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: “This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.” ’ ’”

[3](#) Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, [4](#) “*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?*” [5](#) Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways!

[6](#) “You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.”

They were working hard and trying to get ahead, but God kept spoiling their efforts. Why? Because they were putting themselves before Him.

[7](#) Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! [8](#) Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD.

[9](#) “*You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?*” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that *is in ruins*, while every one of you runs to his own house. [10](#) Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. [11](#) For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your hands*.”

Jesus asked in Mark 8:36 “*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?*” What good does it do you to make a lot of money, have a lot of stuff, and not worship God by giving to Him? It’s actually a mercy of God that He is willing to stop our progress and prosperity when we start to get off track, otherwise we could plunge headlong into our own ruin.

If, on the other hand, our primary motive is to love God and serve others, He’ll make sure we have what we need to do that.

#4. (vs.19) The gift would be replenished.

Paul tells the Philippians that, because they have been giving, God will meet all their needs. They were able to give much and yet have it feel like they weren’t really missing anything.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:6, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

One of my favorite stories of giving comes from the 19th century. George Muller was running an orphanage in Bristol England, running it on faith, believing that God was able to provide for whatever was necessary to do the work and so Muller never asked anyone to give anything to the orphanage, he just prayed and watched God provide. His biographies are full of accounts where money or food was needed and then was provided even at the last minute. Do a search for George Muller and the Milkman sometime if you want an idea of what I’m talking about.

And yet, this same man would send nearly ten thousand dollars a year to the mission field to support Hudson Taylor and the work of the China Inland Mission, money that often showed up exactly when it was needed in China, just as it had in England.

Muller wanted to give back to the God who was giving to him, and he felt a good way to do that was by supporting and encouraging Taylor, here’s a piece of a letter he sent once:

My chief object is to tell you that I love you in the Lord; that I feel deeply interested about the Lord's work in China, and that I pray daily for you.

I thought it might be a little encouragement to you in your difficulties, trials, hardships and disappointments to hear of one more who feels for you and who remembers you before the Lord...

...In the greatest difficulties, in the heaviest trials, in the deepest poverty and necessities, He has never failed me; but because I was enabled by His grace to trust in Him, He has always appeared for my help. I delight in speaking well of His name.¹

Muller experienced great difficulties, heavy trials, and deep poverty, and yet he wasn’t stingy – he gave, and he used his giving as an opportunity to encourage others!

It is a strange thing, you know, God doesn’t need your money. He *could* do His work all by Himself. He could do missions, He could do evangelism, He could provide benevolence and disaster relief all by Himself, but He doesn’t. He chooses to use us. And He gives us the privilege of being His hands and His feet to show His love to people.

¹ *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, (Hendrickson: Peabody, MA), 2008, pg 126. Full text also available online.

When we give, we're really just conduits. His blessings come to us, and we have the chance to either stop up the flow, or keep it moving along. If we stop up the flow and try to use everything for ourselves, He can easily just stop or slow the flow from reaching us, but if we let it keep going, we have no idea what He might want to do next.

BUT, you need to know that God might not simply provide for you by increasing what you earn. He might also provide for you by decreasing what you need.

That was the promise He made to the people who heard the message of Malachi. He promised to, "rebuke the devourer for your sakes" (Mal 4:11). And it's what he did for the children of Israel as they wandered in the desert and their shoes didn't wear out. You might not get a raise simply because you start to give, but maybe your car won't need some repair. I don't know exactly what God will do, but I have tested and proven Him for over 13 years now and He has blessed me in more ways than I tell.

Of course, the greatest way He provides for us is through His Son – He promises to provide for all our need "according to His riches in Christ Jesus." What we have received in Him is so valuable we could never buy it or earn it – it is a gift of grace – it is God offering to forgive all our sins and rebellions, all our selfishness and the hurt we have caused others by taking it all upon Himself. Christ going to the cross, dying a death He didn't deserve to die so we can have forgiveness and new life in Him, and so that, one day, we could enter into His presence forever.

We're going to celebrate that as we receive communion this morning – a tangible reminder of what God has given to you. And as we prepare to receive it, I encourage you to consider what God has given you and ask Him how you might give back. Lay not just your wallet, but your whole life in front of Him and ask Him what He wants from you as a cheerful, joyous response.