

Philippians 4:14-23

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 11/18/2007

The Secret of Contentment, Part 2: Biblical Giving

Prayer

Oh Father, we do give You thanks; and we praise Your name because You are a great and gracious God. Your lovingkindness is everlasting. Your faithfulness is new every morning and it is great. Your mercies never fail. And Father, we praise You that You have demonstrated Your grace and Your mercy and Your love. And You demonstrate it in the fact that You love us so much that You sent Your Son to die for us, and that He willingly came and suffered for our sins and died for us and rose from the dead. Father, thank You that You love us so much You gave us Your Son. And Father, You have also given us His Word. And Father, as we look into Your Word, I pray that You will help us understand it, that our hearts would not be hard towards You, that they would be soft, that we would respond, Lord God, not to man's words but to Your Word. So that You will be glorified. I pray You will bless this time together now. And again, may Your Son be glorified through it. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Sermon

Well, if you watch Christian TV, you will see many different theologies of giving. And what do I mean by that? The way and the means in which people believe giving should be done. I was flipping through the channels and came across TBN and there was a gentleman there who was telling the audience and the TV audience that if they did not give this day by that night, the angel of death would come and get them, ultimately. He was using the Passover as an illustration, blasphemously, to get people to give money. Now those types of things are kind of obvious. And other things are obvious too, where people say, you know, "If you give this, you will get a hundred-fold." A give-to-get scheme. And we see that on TV, too. But sometimes those who really want to serve the Lord and give to the Lord may not understand biblically, how is it that we are to give? How does that relate to our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? I think we are going to see today as Robert read in 2 Corinthians, that giving is not out of compulsion. That giving is not something that we are compelled or have to do. It comes out of a heart that loves the Lord and loves His people and wants to provide for His people. And therefore, I believe it is a fitting end to the book of Philippians, as we see Paul exemplifying the hearts of the Philippians, who were generous in their poverty and gave for the needs of the saints, which was an evidence ultimately of their true faith in Christ.

Today we are going to look at the last section, really I believe, in what Paul is talking about concerning the secret of contentment, which we have seen. I believe we are going to see in this passage a paradigm of how to really give and what are the right motivations for giving in the body of Christ. Now as you know here, we do not have any sermon series on giving and tithes and all that stuff. And we do not have little booklets on what you should do with your money. We believe as we go through the Word of

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God, the Word of God is going to address every area in our lives. And this is what the Lord in His sovereignty has decided to address today with us.

Now we have come to the end of the book of Philippians, the close today. Lord-willing we are going to finish the book of Philippians today, and so be praying about what we will be doing next. I have some messages in the interim here that we are going to do. But ultimately which book the Lord would have us go into. And we have seen in this wondrously fabulous book, the heart of the Apostle Paul. We have seen that heart in the fact that he is in prison but yet the ministry is not imprisoned. Paul recognizes that the Word of God is not imprisoned. But ultimately through God's sovereign circumstances of imprisoning Paul, the Gospel had been advanced ultimately. And we saw his attitude, that even in those circumstances, that he might be put to death, that to die is gain. To live is Christ and to die is gain. And he clarifies what it means, "To live is Christ." To live is to serve Him and ultimately it is for the benefit of the Philippians, if he is to stay around. To live is to serve the Lord and His church ultimately, and to die is gain because "I would be with Christ, which is much better."

We saw in everything throughout this book that the Apostle Paul desired Christ to be magnified in his circumstances. To have an attitude which was like Christ. He addressed the attitudes of the Philippians, he exhorted them to be of the same mind, united in spirit, considering others as more important than oneself, not thinking or doing anything based on selfish ambition; but always looking for the needs of others as more important. And he gave the example of Jesus Christ, and he commanded them and us to "have this attitude," or have this mind, "which was also in Christ Jesus." To have the mind of Christ as revealed in Scripture concerning Him, which was He humbled Himself to the point of death, He was obedient, but His obedience was in serving us we see ultimately. Taking on human flesh, living the perfect life, obeying the Father to the point of death on a cross, and therefore God highly exalted Him. We see the ultimate example of considering others as more important than oneself in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And so too, we are to have that attitude. And ultimately because of His incarnation and His gracious work on our behalf, He was brought to the place He was before He set aside His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore God has highly exalted Him above all things. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And if He is such, then we should be working out our salvation with fear and trembling, for that King of kings and Lord of lords is at work in us.

Therefore, we saw, we should not complain. If God is sovereign and Lord over all things, and along with the example of Paul, if we are considering others as more important than ourselves – we should do all things without complaining and grumbling. And then we saw three examples of selfless humility. We saw the Apostle Paul himself. We saw Timothy, where Paul said he had no one of like mind who would genuinely be concerned for their welfare. A genuine concern. And Epaphroditus who risked his life to serve the Apostle Paul on the behalf of the Philippians and ultimately the Lord. Three examples of seeing others as more important than themselves. And then at that point, Paul revealed as he revealed back in chapter 1, that we would face opposition. He says in Philippians 3:2-3, "To remind you of these things is no trouble at all. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision. Beware of these guys. There are bad guys out there." And then he said in contrast, "For

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we are the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God, glory (or boast literally) in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh."

True believers, true followers of Christ do those things, as opposed to the false guys who were like Paul was before he came to Christ. If anyone could boast, Paul would share, "I could boast about my religious accomplishments." And he goes through a list of everything, which far exceeded those false teachers that he had mentioned to beware of. But he said all this stuff he considered to be loss in view of what is really important, the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, in whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted it but dung or rubbish.

Then we saw the Apostle Paul wanted them (and us) to mimic his faith, a faith that is pressing forward towards the goal, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus – being with Christ and ultimately being like Christ. For once we see Him we will be like He is. We will be conformed to His image completely, and we are to press forward towards that goal, forgetting what lies behind, as the Lord conforms us to the image of His Son. And why should we do that? Because there are many who are not doing that. There are many who are not doing that, many who are on the road to destruction, who set their mind on earthly things. But we are citizens of heaven. And we wait for a Savior who will take our humble state and bring it into conformity with His glory, the great wonderful truths about what God has promised for His people. Therefore, we ought to have different lives. We ought to be pressing forward towards that goal. God is going to make us like Christ, and the process is happening now. Therefore press forward, not looking back.

Therefore we saw in chapter 4 we should stand firm in the Lord. Stand firm in the Lord. And as we went through chapter 4, we saw some threats to standing firm in the Lord. The first one was disunity. And within that we saw the example of Euodia and Syntyche, that they were not to address their issues, but they were to have the same mind. They were to be harmonious or like-minded, to think the same way (same word). That is how you have unity is to think the same way. And ultimately in context, how is that? It is to have the mind of Christ. When I have the mind of Christ from His Word by the power of His Spirit and you do too, then we are going to be united in Spirit. And then we saw we are to rejoice, finding our joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord and again I say, rejoice." We are to rest, recognizing that the Lord is near.

⁵ Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. (You do not have to address every issue because God is near. He is sovereign, He is taking care of things. Therefore,) *⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* *⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses (super abounds) all comprehension, shall guard (and garrison) your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:5-7]*

You pray rather than worry and Christ will guard your heart and mind. And then we saw the things we were to be thinking of continually. Those things of Christ as revealed in His Word. And then we saw we were to do the things that we had learned. It is not good enough to learn the Word of God and to learn

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about Christ and to learn about what He wants us to do and not do it. It is not good to be hearers and not doers as we are reminded of in the book of James. The things we have learned, we are to practice these things.

And then last week we saw the beginning of the secret of contentment. We saw the Apostle Paul was so thankful for this gift the Philippians were finally able to give to him, now that they had an opportunity. He was so thankful for that, but he said, "You know what?" Even if he had the gift or didn't have the gift, he was content in whatever circumstances. And we saw that Paul's attitude ultimately was not from the basis of want or desire. It was not because he wanted their gift. It was because as we will see, he desired the eternal profit that would be laid to their account. The Apostle Paul through this portion shows us as we saw last week that those who are truly content are not driven by their wants. And let's review that.

Back in chapter 4, verse 10, let's look at that. He says,

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. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want; [Philippians 4:10-11a]

He says, "I rejoice" as we will see today that Epaphroditus was able to bring a gift to him. He rejoiced that their concern or their thinking was revived. But as we saw last week, it wasn't that they did not want to help him but that they lacked the opportunity to help him. And now that opportunity had arisen and they had helped the Apostle Paul. But we see ultimately he was not driven by his own desires. He says, *¹¹ Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. [Philippians 4:11]* And we saw last week that the Apostle Paul learned the secret to contentment. In the midst of physical circumstances, whether being poor or rich, whatever it is, whether having enough or not having anything, he says, "I have learned (aorist tense, completed action), I've learned it." Well what was it that the Apostle Paul learned? Verse 12,

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. (And here is the secret) ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. [Philippians 4:12-13]

We looked at that in depth last week. That is the secret. He says literally, "All things I am enabled to do in Him (not through Him, we looked at that. "in Him," it is the context of being in Christ), in Christ who strengthens me." When I am abiding and resting in Christ, He is going to strengthen me and enable me to do whatever He wants me to do, no matter what the circumstance. Rich or poor. "I can do all things in Him who empowers me." That is a total faith in Christ, recognizing we do not have the power, but Christ has the power; and He will empower me and He will allow me and bring me to the point where I can do anything and everything He has called me to do. Therefore Paul was not in any need. If you recognize that God is going to supply everything you need to do what He calls you to do, then what do you need? That is contentment. "I am fully supplied." But yet, did Paul say, "Well I really don't care

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about your gift”? No. We are going to see today that Paul’s understanding of their gift towards him will give us an understanding in the mindset of true contentment.

Again, let’s turn in our Bibles to Philippians chapter 4. And we are going to start in verse 14.

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 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. 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. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. [Philippians 4:14-20]

We are going to see today, those who are truly content have a true concern not for the finances ultimately, not for themselves. They are concerned about other believers and God’s glory. And we are going to see here today contentment illustrated in a Biblical paradigm of giving actually. We are going to see first of all Paul is more concerned about the Philippians’ welfare than his own need being met. Look at verse 17, “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.” Look at verse 19, “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Now with this in mind, I believe we are going to see today that the Apostle Paul not being concerned about the gift was more concerned ultimately about their eternal welfare and their temporal well-being in the context of following Christ. First of all let’s take a look at this eternal welfare, verses 14-17. And I will read that again.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, (even though he is totally content in Christ, even though he has no needs, and Christ is going to supply everything and Christ can enable him to do all things – “Nevertheless,” he says) 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. (And we read this before) ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. [Philippians 4:14-17]

You see the Philippians loved the Apostle Paul. And when they came to faith, they supported him. When he left Macedonia, which is the province which Philippi is in, they supported the Apostle Paul. And Apostle Paul had a paradigm of how he ministered to churches ultimately, which should be our paradigm for our missions work – when he went to a new work, sharing the Gospel, he never got money from them at all. He received it from other churches. And in Thessalonica, he did not take any money

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from them. He worked hard as we saw in 2 Thessalonians. But he also received gifts from the church to support him in the ministry while he was there. And these Philippians were the only church that supported him during this time. This church, which started out with the Philippian jailer saying, “What must I do to be saved?” after the Apostle Paul and Silas are let free because of a great earthquakes. They had sung hymns all night. And Lydia down by the river believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and her family ultimately. This church loved the Apostle Paul. And their love was manifest in their desire to take care of his needs in the ministry. He said, “You yourselves know, Philippians...” They were the only church that supported him.

Paul was saying ultimately he is content in Christ but nevertheless, back in 14, “You have done well to share with me in my affliction.” Literally, “You have done good. You have done good.” To do what? “To share with me in my affliction.” The word “share” – *sugkoinóneó*. *Koinóneó* – fellowship or sharing. *Sun* – with. To share with, to fellowship with in my affliction. He is saying they participated with him in his affliction by sharing this gift that Epaphroditus had brought. They participate in the affliction of the Apostle Paul by sharing this gift. Now this word “affliction” is *thlipsis*. *Thlipsis*. And it speaks of tribulation or affliction. It is literally of an outward pressure. It is that pressure bearing down from outside, from whatever it might be. They use this word to describe those who were being tortured. If someone was being tortured by Rome, they would lay weights on them, stone weights. And the pressure would build and the pressure would build and ultimately they would be tortured to death. That is *thlipsis*. Paul was afflicted and suffering for Christ. And he says, “You have done well to share (to participate) with me in this affliction.”

“Well,” you say, “what are these afflictions? What were Paul’s tribulations and afflictions?” Well we know he was in chains obviously, right? Chapter 1. We also know his death was possibly imminent. He could die any time! A soldier could come at any time and take him away and kill him. He is chained to one but someone else could come to take him away. We know he was not free. He was under house arrest. And we know from many passages that Paul suffered greatly for the cause of the Gospel. Back in Chapter 1, he reveals that the Philippians will suffer. But ultimately they are suffering the same thing that he suffers. Chapter 1, verse 28,

²⁸ in no way alarmed by your opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. [Philippians 1:28-30]

They saw Paul suffer as he was driven out. They also now hear that it is happening, that he is suffering, and by giving financially for his needs, he says, “You share in my affliction.” They are sharers, co-sharers of the affliction that the Apostle Paul is going through. You might say, “Well, why would someone want to share in affliction? Why would anyone want to do that?” Oh brother and sister, do not forget that we are going to be persecuted, that we are going to suffer. John 15, Jesus makes it clear why we suffer and that we will suffer. John 15:18, He is sharing to His disciples,

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¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." [John 15:18-21]

A slave is not greater than his master. We are going to suffer affliction. First Thessalonians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul a year after he had ministered at Thessalonica reminds them of what he had shared with this church in the first three weeks of them coming to faith. It says in 1 Thessalonians 3:1,

*¹ Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone; ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, ³ so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. (That word is *thipsis*, afflictions) ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, (that is the first three weeks of their salvation) we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction... [1 Thessalonians 3:1-4a]*

How many times have you shared the Gospel with someone and said, “Guess what? You are going to suffer? You are going to suffer now that you have come to faith. Your family may not treat you the way they treated you before. Those who do not know Christ are going to treat you like they would treat Christ.” He says,

⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. ⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, ⁷ for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸ for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. [1 Thessalonians 3:4-8]

He told them right away that they were going to suffer affliction. “We are going to suffer affliction, you are going to suffer affliction.” And it came to pass. And Paul wanted to find out how they were doing. Did their faith fail? Did the tempter derail their faith in this affliction? It is the paradigm of the Christian life, the sufferings now for the glories to follow. Romans 8:16, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” And how does the Spirit bear witness? The Spirit illuminates the things of Christ and illuminates the Word of God.

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¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [Romans 8:16-18]

If you are a true believer you are going to suffer with Christ now, but there is tremendous glory not even worthy to be compared. Second Corinthians 4:15,

¹⁵For all things (Paul says to the Corinthians) are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart, (He is saying, "We are suffering, we are afflicted in every way, but we are pressed down, all these things, but God's grace is spreading, which is causing thanks to God and glory to Him. Therefore we do not lose heart. Therefore we do not lose heart," he says. It is literally that - "Therefore we do not lose heart.") but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. [2 Corinthians 4:15-18]

And Jesus made it clear that we would be persecuted ultimately in Matthew 5, and that those who are persecuted are blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. These Philippians had the great privilege of sharing in the affliction of the Apostle Paul. A great privilege of sharing in the affliction of the Apostle Paul. They were sharing in the suffering that Paul was suffering for Christ by supporting him in the ministry. Through their love, not compulsion, desiring to support his needs – an evidence of their true and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you realize that when you support those who are doing the will of God, not those who are doing the church thing or whatever, those who are truly doing the will of God – that you actually share in their suffering, you share in their affliction? But ultimately we will see you share in their eternal rewards. Paul is saying by their gift they co-participated and co-shared with him in his affliction. Do you realize the Spirit-led financial support of the ministry of the Word makes you part of that ministry? You share in it. You share in its suffering and you will share in its rewards.

Now I need to give you one caveat. Ultimately there are ministries that are not good; and if you share with them you are actually sharing in their sin. We get this understanding from 2 John, where 2 John goes so far, if you say “brother” or give someone a greeting who is not really saved and is ministering, that you share and you lose your reward. You share in their wickedness. Second John chapter 1, there is only one chapter, verse 8, he says,

⁸Watch yourselves, (Be aware, be careful!) that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (You may lose some reward

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here) ⁹ **Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ,** (or the doctrine of Christ, the Scriptures that reveal the nature of Christ) **does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.** ¹⁰ **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house,** (These were house churches. “Do not let him come into your church if they do not bring sound, biblical, right teaching concerning Christ. Don’t let him in! If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him in your house...”) **and do not give him a greeting;** (In this culture a greeting would be, “You are my brother in Christ. I believe you are saved.” He says,) ¹¹ **for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.** [2 John 1:8-11]

That’s why we do not go to churches that do not preach Christ to try to save people and say “Brother” when they really are not brothers. That’s why we don’t go. And I was talking to a gentleman who was going to a Lutheran church that does not believe in Christ from Scripture. And I said, “You share in their sin by calling them brothers.” So what am I trying to say here? When we support those who are truly doing God’s will we share with them in the affliction and in the rewards. But be aware and be sure that you are supporting the ministries that are doing God’s will. If you are sending money to a ministry or sending money to missionaries, you need to know if they are doing God’s will. Seriously. If they sin, you share in their sin. If they are doing it in their own strength and wisdom, you are supporting people not doing God’s will. But here the Philippians were supporting the Apostle Paul, and they were sharing ultimately in his affliction. Their motives were right.

Verse 15 back in 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; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.” [Philippians 4:15-16] They were sending money for his needs. And Paul is reminding them of that, their former graciousness. That no other church did it except them. The Philippians were giving for the right motives. And you say, “How do I know their motives were right from that passage?” Well if you turn with me to 2 Corinthians 8, what Robert read, we will see that their motives were right. Second Corinthians 8. And Paul is actually encouraging the Corinthians, not out of compulsion but out of a desire for the body of Christ, to continue the giving that they had started before for the saints in Jerusalem. He wants them to continue that gift that they were going to give. They had stopped. They were not going to do it. He wants to encourage them. But he does not want to put them under compulsion. So he is showing them an example of those who had a right heart who gave, exhorting them to have the right heart ultimately.

Second Corinthians 8:1,

¹ **Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,** (That’s Philippi, there in Macedonia) ² **that in a great ordeal of affliction** (That’s *thipsis*, that’s pressure, that’s suffering) **their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.** ³

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For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, (They were not forced.) ⁴ ***begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation*** (or sharing) ***in the support of the saints,*** (The Philippians, they had begged to support the ministry. The saints were starving in Jerusalem. The true believers in Jerusalem were having a terrible problem, and they begged to help even though they were totally poor.) ⁵ ***and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*** [1 Corinthians 8:1-5]

Tremendous insight into the right motives for giving. They gave themselves to the Lord and then to them. Tremendous. Notice first of all their gifts are a manifestation of God's grace. "Now brethren we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given." When God moves a heart to give to the body, it is His grace behind it. Notice in verse 2 it was in a great deal of affliction that this abundance of joy came out. They had joyful hearts. They were cheerful givers in the midst of affliction. And they desired to help the saints. We do good unto all men, especially unto the brethren ultimately. But we do good first of all to the brethren. We take care of the church. To the saints. We love the brethren. These Philippians gave beyond their ability. It was not simply a detached check, trying to make a conscience feel better about an unfaithful life and not serving Christ. These Philippians gave of themselves first and it followed with their financial support of those truly following the Lord. What a tremendous example of right motives for giving.

In chapter 9 of 2 Corinthians, verse 7, ⁷ ***Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.*** That's the heart of those in Macedonia. That's the heart the Apostle Paul was soliciting in the Corinthians. "You do not have to give, my heart is that you have a heart to want to give." I want to ask you, do you have a desire to meet the needs of the body of Christ? Do you have a desire to do that? Or do you want your tax write-off or receipt? There is nothing wrong with being a good steward with the tax write-off. But what is your desire behind giving? I shared in our How To Study class this last week that we are talking about illustrations for preaching and teaching. And ultimately that I do not believe going to the internet and going to books of illustrations (which I was taught in seminary) is the right thing to do. To say stories as if they were in my life when they really are not from my life, is not a valid and genuine way to illustrate biblical principles. And I shared that God is faithful as I go through a text throughout the week to convict me concerning that text in things that happen in my own life! And indeed in this last week, two things happened ultimately surrounding this matter of giving. One good and one bad. And that is lately what the Lord has been doing with me. Having good things and bad things in the same package. Something bad that discourages me but then something good that encourages me in Him.

Well first of all there was a person who has donated some stuff they wanted to get out of their garage basically after I talked to them. And they couldn't get over the fact that they hadn't gotten their receipt within three weeks. And they were very angry about that and that grieved me greatly. That's the wrong motive for giving. That is totally wrong. That is not out of love for the body of Christ, as I studied this passage, that is not it. That is totally wrong. But then on the other hand, we shared our needs for this body on Saturday morning at our men's breakfast and someone gave a tremendous amount of money

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anonymously not expecting anything in return. Generously. Totally the opposite. I was just blessed by God's graciousness to provide for us through the hearts of His people. And what a difference in attitudes and motives.

Now if you are still wondering what the proper motives for giving should be, let's listen to some of these passages. I will read them for you. You can look them up later. Matthew 6:1, Jesus is telling the Pharisees,

¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (When you do it before men and the men notice you, that's your reward. That's it, you're done. Your reward is there. It's done.) ³ "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing ⁴ that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

[Matthew 6:1-4]

This is between you and God. Matthew 6:19-21, after He gives a couple different illustrations about practicing righteousness. One being giving alms, the other one being prayer. He kind of sums it up here. Matthew 6:19,

¹⁹"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." [Matthew 6:19-21]

Your heart will be also. Also from 2 Corinthians 9, I will read verse 6-7, *⁶ Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly;* (If you are a penny pincher with God, you will reap sparingly. If that is your heart, that means you are not walking with the Lord. We are going to see later on when we have a desire to meet the needs of the saints, God will supply all your needs in Christ Jesus. When your heart is love for the body and addressing those situations as they come, when the opportunity arises, God is going to take care of you.) *and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.* *⁷ Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.* *[2 Corinthians 9:6-7]*

Did you know, men, that we work so that we can give? Ephesians chapter 4:28, *²⁸ Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.* *[Ephesians 4:28]* Part of why God has you work is so that you can share with those who are in need. Proverbs chapter 21, *²⁵ The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work; ²⁶ All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.* (It is a different heart) *²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, How much more when he brings it with evil intent!* *[Proverbs 21:25-27]* How does God feel with those

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who mess with this issue of giving in the church? How does He feel with those who pretend in things and do stuff and deceive in their giving? God does not take to it very kindly and we see that in Acts chapter 5. And let's turn there right now. God does not take kindly to those who play games with Him and lie to Him ultimately through acting one way in giving but yet doing something else. Acts chapter 5.

But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. (Now you see, people had been bringing stuff up to the apostles' feet. The heart of the body was to give. And people were giving and the apostles were giving it to those who had need. It was just the heart of Christ in this body. And these guys, Ananias and Sapphira basically saw this and thought, "They are getting some acclaim from this basically. People are saying, 'Wow, look at what they gave,'" ultimately. But we see here that they held back, "kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.") ***³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."*** (And by the way, he lied to the Holy Spirit, lied to God, the Spirit of God. ***⁵ And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. ⁷ Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.*** (By the way, there were together for three hours. It was a long church service.) ***⁸ And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." ⁹ Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well."*** ***¹⁰ And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.*** [Acts 5:1-11]

God did not take too kindly to a manipulative giving for people to see that in the genuine church in its infant stages. It is serious stuff. Folks, if you come here week after week and you do not have a heart to meet the needs of God's people you need to check your heart. You need to check your heart. If you do not care about the needs of His people, you need to check your heart. If you are giving for the sake of getting a tax receipt or a write-off, you need to check your heart. If you are giving to unload the stuff that is in your garage because it is becoming a hassle, you need to check your heart. If you are giving because you feel you have to, you need to check your heart. If you are giving for people to see that you are giving, you need to check your heart. These Philippians were not like that. They were genuinely loving the Lord. There are financial needs in this body. There are financial needs within the body of Christ that the Lord has placed you in. If you shut your heart to them, how could the love of Christ be in you? First John 3:16, ***¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods,*** (that is just stuff, right?) ***and***

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beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, (This is about believers. This is about the family of God.) ***how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. [1 John 3:16-18]***

The Philippians genuinely loved the Apostle Paul. They loved Christ. And they gave out of their poverty, not because they had to. It is a beautiful picture of a genuine heart towards the Lord. He says, "You have done well."

How have they done well? Verse 17, back in Philippians 4. "¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account." Paul was not seeking the cash; he was seeking the profit that increased to their account. He was not concerned about the temporal benefit of the gift, but the eternal profit, which it increases. The word "profit" means "fruit." And the word "increased" here is "super abounds." It is the super abounding, becoming more and more. And to their account, their *logos*, "their word" it is, and ultimately in context this speaks of "their account." What Paul is saying I believe is their Spirit-led, Christ-focused love for the brethren manifest in giving brings spiritual increase and it yields spiritual interest. Folks, there is great reward when you lay up yourself treasures in heaven. We have read those passages. It is an example of those who truly believe Christ is sufficient. If you believe Christ is sufficient, your focus will be on the benefit to those who are giving rather than the gift, right? It is not about the money.

Now lest people think Paul was only concerned for their eternal welfare, we see he is also concerned about their temporal welfare. Verse 17, ¹⁷ ***Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*** I believe he is speaking about eternal rewards for their giving ultimately is Spirit-led for the body of Christ. Then he says, 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 4:18-19]***

Paul got the gift from Epaphroditus, who sacrificed almost his life to deliver it we know, back in chapter 2. Paul got that gift. And notice what he says about this gift, end of 18. "...a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." Do you realize what he is saying here? Spirit-led, Christ-centered love for His body manifest in giving constitutes worship. *Spirit-led, Christ-centered love for His body manifest in giving constitutes worship.* It is a fragrant aroma, acceptable sacrifice. It points to the idea of an offering to the Lord.

Ephesians chapter 5, ¹ ***Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. [Ephesians 5:1-2]*** It is speaking of worship, offering oneself up. It is well-pleasing. Ananias and Sapphira did not give a well-pleasing sacrifice. The Philippians did. Now let me remind you, if you are not saved and you are trying to give to God, here is what God says about you. Proverbs 21:26, ²⁶ ***While the righteous gives and does not hold back. ²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, How much more when he brings it with evil intent! [Proverbs 21:26-27]*** How can you give to a God you do

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not have a relationship with? It is an abomination. But these Philippians, their sacrifice was a fragrant aroma, acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. That is why we have our offering during our worship service. It is part of worship. That is one element of worshipping the Lord is our giving to Him together. We worship Him by singing about Him; we worship Him by sharing the finances that He has given to us for the body's needs; and we worship Him by the proclamation and response to the Word of God. Do you see why if your motive is for a tax write-off alone it is so perverted? You see why? That's it. "Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver." [2 Corinthians 8:7]

Are you content? Are you others-centered? It is going to manifest in a desire to help His body, right? It is not a give-to-get scheme like TBN, it is not something for someone to see what you are doing. Do you worship God with your finances? It is an act of worship. Now Paul, rather than seeking the gift sought their temporal welfare. Again, verse 19, "¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." [Philippians 4:19] Paul is saying if you have a heart focused to serve the Lord by providing finances for the need of the body, God is going to provide for you. It's not "My God will supply all your needs" in a basic statement on its own apart from this. These are believers who gave out of their poverty for the needs of the body, and "My God will supply all your needs." If your heart is to supply the needs of His body genuinely because you love them, God is going to supply your needs. God is going to supply them. You wonder why your needs aren't met? Maybe that is why. Maybe because you are focused on your needs and not the needs in the body. "My God will supply..." "My God" he says. "All your needs according to the riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The Creator of the universe who holds all things together, who owns all things and is above all things – it is according to His riches in glory.

So often we make the error, "I can't help someone because I need to take care of myself." That is a lack of faith ultimately. I'm not talking about a ridiculous faith where you don't feed your kids, you deny other principles of Scripture to do something extreme. But ultimately we need to recognize we give our first fruits to the Lord, and He will provide for us. Proverbs 3:9, ⁹ **Honor the LORD from your wealth, And from the first of all your produce;** (That's the first, that's the best) ¹⁰ **So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.** [Proverbs 3:9-10] God will take care of you. Malachi 3,

⁸ **"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings.** (The Lord says) ⁹ **You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!** ¹⁰ **"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.** ¹¹ **"Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts.** ¹² **"And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.** [Malachi 3:8-12]

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See God was allowing their stuff to be devoured because they were robbing from Him. And like I shared earlier, we are not going to sit here and preach and tell you to give out of compulsion. But when the Scripture comes to it, that is what we see here with the right heart. If you give to the needs of the body, God will supply your needs. Seek first His kingdom, be about His business, focus on supporting His people, and He will supply all your needs.

When the Spirit-led love of the brethren is in your heart, and you are truly ministering for Christ, God will take care of you. I'm not talking about giving money to people who are unwilling to work. As you know, there are biblical principles and there is wisdom ultimately in who to give to. But giving to those who are truly following Christ and truly in need. When you do that, God will supply your needs. How about you? Are you seeking to meet your own needs or are you content with whatever the Lord brings you, looking to supply the needs of others? That is an evidence that you love the Lord. Or are you robbing God? Now the Apostle Paul was not out for the money; he was out for the profit it brought to them eternally in giving and also their temporal well-being with the right heart in serving Christ and His people and thus being amply supplied. And what happens in that? God will receive all the glory. He sums up this passage here, verse 20, ²⁰ ***Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*** **[Philippians 4:20]** It is all about God being glorified.

And I want to ask you, is God glorified when you turn away from supplying the needs of His body? Is God glorified when you give to get? Is God glorified when you give because you have to give? Is God glorified when you merely desire to unload your stuff, your old stuff for someone who might need it? The answer is no. God is glorified when Christ is manifest in His people, and evidenced by love for one another. And that evidence will be in supporting the needs of those people who are truly doing the work of Christ. The Apostle Paul exemplified that. The Apostle Paul cared about people, about the body of Christ.

Verse 21 in Philippians chapter 4, ²¹ ***Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.*** (Those are the ones who are close to him in his chains) ²² ***All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.*** (Those are those who came to faith because Paul was chained. His terrible circumstances, which he did not complain about, brought about people coming to faith. And then he says,) ²³ ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. [Philippians 4:21-23]*** May it be within the inner man. May you be controlled by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. May you grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May this be the way you function. And that's it.

What can we learn today? Those who are content are not driven by want. Those who are content have learned the secret, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me." Those who are truly content will manifest a concern for God's people rather than themselves. Have you learned the secret of contentment? That Christ - when you are in Him, abiding in Him, His Word in you – He will empower you to do everything He calls you to do. It does not matter how rich or poor you are, what your circumstances are. Today we saw the Philippians were gracious and gave to God by giving to the Apostle Paul. They shared in his affliction. They shared in the ministry, and thus they will share in his

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reward. Is that your mindset in giving? That if I give, God will supply and it is all for His glory. Folks, some of you may come here week after week and you don't have a heart to give to the needs of the saints. I'd ask you to check your hearts. Check your hearts. If you do, the Lord puts it on your heart, which He should if you are walking with Him, then you will experience eternal increase and temporal supply. Whatever the Lord calls you to do, He will supply that.

I am going to close with 2 Corinthians chapter 9. If you want to turn there, we are going to see that ultimately this giving in the body of Christ causes the body to give thanks to God. That when someone receives a gift, who do they praise? They praise God and they give Him thanks when God supplies their needs through the body. Second Corinthians 9:6

⁶ Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. ⁷ Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; (God is going to supply your need for every good deed) ⁹ as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever." ¹⁰ 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; (God is going to provide for you in the midst of becoming more like Christ, as He builds the body up) ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. [2 Corinthians 9:6-12]

When the Lord loves through you, His people, it brings thanks and glory to Him.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. And Lord, I pray that we would see this understanding of giving in its right context. That no one would give out of compulsion. That we would only give, Lord God, as You prompt us to address needs in Your body, Lord God, for Your glory. That we would give graciously and liberally because You will supply all of our needs. And Father, may the result of giving in this body for one another's needs, may that result in You being praised and thanksgiving rising up to You. Father, I thank You so much for so many people who have given for Hillary and I so many times. That You have done that graciously for us. And I thank You for providing for the needs of this body individually and corporately. We thank You for an opportunity to serve one another and to share in one another's affliction and thus their glory in You. And Father, I pray if anyone here has a different attitude that You would show them. That their hearts would be yielded, Lord God, and bring You glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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