
PAUL'S APPRECIATION OF THE GIFT FROM THE SAINTS AT PHILIPPI

PHILIPPIANS 4:14-23

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PREAMBLE

Our Lord Jesus Christ had emphasized that teachers and preachers of the Word have a right to be supported by those they teach (**Luke 10:7**). Paul also said the same thing {**1 Corinthians 9:9-11, 13, 14;**}. "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches". (**Galatians 6:6** NKJV).

Paul, however, was unwilling to accept support from the congregation where he currently works (**1Cor. 9:18; 2Cor. 11:7, 9, 1Thess 2:9; 2Thess. 3:8**).

The chief reason for this is to avoid brethren's misunderstanding that the motive or reason for preaching was to receive money....." *See, I am now for the third time prepared to visit you, but I will not be a dead weight to you. I desire not your money, but yourselves; for children ought not to put by for their parents, but parents for their children*" (**2 Corinthians 12:14 WNT**). Apostle Paul often supported

himself by working as a tentmaker (**Acts 18:1-3, 1Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8**).

At the same time, Paul was willing to receive help from places where he had formerly preached (**2 Cor, 11:8,9**). Such support would generally allow him more time to spread the gospel but remained sensitive to the possibility that some might accuse him of "preaching for money". The tension this produced in Paul may help to explain why he expressed his thanks to the Philippians as he did. He wanted them to know that he appreciated their gift but did not want to leave the impression that he preached to receive gifts or make a living.

In **Philippians 4:10**, he first said that he rejoiced in their help but then added that he was not dependent on such help (vv. 11-13). However, to avoid seeming unappreciative, he quickly added that they had done well in helping him (vv. 14). Studying Philippians 4:10-20, we see that

Apostle Paul moved back and forth between expressing appreciation for the gift (vv. 14-16, 19) and denying that he had to have the assistance (v. 17a).

A very careful study of **Philippians 4:14-20** reveals what giving will do for the Giver. Most times, we think of what our giving will do for the recipient, with little thought about what it can do for the Giver. The Bible clearly teaches that giving benefits the giver more than the receiver {**Malachi 3:10, Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11**}. As we study the concluding part of Paul appreciation to the Philippians (vv. 14-20) the benefits the giver derived are revealed, this will hopefully challenge us towards more benevolence work in the Kingdom.

THE BLESSING DERIVED FROM SHARING (4:14, 15)

Paul said in Verse 14... “*Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.*” [some version used share in my distress/troubles]. The NIV has “it was good of you to share in my troubles”. Some of Paul’s “troubles” or challenges were doubtless financial (see v.18). Regarding the apostle’s financial difficulties, Paul was not on fix income. Sometimes Paul received help from places where he had previously preached, and sometimes he did not. In the past, this was not a major challenge to him since he could always make a living as a tentmaker.

However, for four years or so (see **Acts 24:27, 28:30**), he had been

imprisoned and unable to work. This may have contributed to the once independent man to be dependent on the generosity of others. The word for emphasis in verse 14 is “share”: They had done well to share. Paul referred to the fact that the Philippians had shared with him in the past and in the present (1:5, 7). The word “share” is also used in 4:15; “...no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you alone.” The Philippians had fellowship with Paul as they took his financial burden on themselves.

When you and I give to the Lord’s cause, what does it do for us? It enables us to share in the Lord’s work. We become partners in whatever work we support. As we hear reports of good work or act of benevolence that is being done, there is that inward joy that we have a vital part in making that happen.

THE DERIVED SATISFACTION FROM HELPING (4:15, 16, 18a)

Closing related to the derived blessing of sharing is the satisfaction of knowing that others have been helped. As the Philippians read Paul’s expression of appreciation, they surely enjoyed that satisfaction. “*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. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*” (**Philippians 4:15-16 NKJV**).

Paul was aware of their generosity, and they knew that he was aware. The church at Philippi was the only congregation that had consistently helped him – the only constant partner in his missionary work. The church at Philippi was small and young in faith. According to biblical and secular history, the citizens of that area were struggling financially (**2 Corinthians 8:1-4**), Thessalonica was a larger, more affluent city. That not withstanding the Christians at Philippi had sent help to Paul even while Thessalonica.

The church at Philippi did not reason... oh we are small and poor, may be struggling to build their meeting hall, the young congregation immediately started helping Paul as much they could. Not a one-off support but consistent up to a decade if not more than. The Philippians did not base what they did on what others were doing (or not doing). They loved Paul and were determined to help him – whether anyone else did or not.

It must have given brethren at Philippi great satisfaction to read, “I have enough of everything--and more than enough. My wants are fully satisfied now that I have received from the hands of Epaphroditus the generous gifts which you sent me” (v 18a). in addition to funds, they may have sent clothing and other supplies. Whatever they sent, Paul said, in effect, “I have enough for my present needs – and more. I even have some leftover to meet future needs.” Knowing you have helped others is one of the blessings of giving!

HEAVENLY “ACCOUNT” BUILT UP (4:17, 18a)

“It is not that I am anxious for your gifts, but I am anxious to see the abundant return that will be placed to your account. I have enough of everything, and to spare.” (Philippians 4:17 TCNT). Having mentioned the Philippians gifts in the past, Paul thought he should emphasize again that he was not hinting for additional gifts: “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account” (v. 17). If there is one verse that summarizes the Christian motive for giving, this is the one.

Through His inspired writers, God commands all Christians to give (**1 Corinthians 16:1, 2**). This is not because He needs anything (see **Acts 17:25**), but because we do. He wants us to give because of what giving will do for us. The LB has this paraphrase of Paul’s words in Philippians 4:17 “But though I appreciate your gifts, what makes me happiest is the well-earned reward you will have because of your kindness.

When the Philippians helped Paul, they were depositing “treasure in heaven” (**Matthew 6:20; see 1 Timothy 6:17-19**). Paul told them that their spiritual “bank account” was drawing “interest”. He used a present tense form, indicating that, even as an investment account or bank saving account draws interest every day, so their heavenly “account” was continually gaining “interest”.

By using accountant terminology, Paul was not trying to reduce the

Philippians' gift to a routine financial transaction, he just enjoyed using figures of speech, even as some do today. The apostle vivid language was just a way of assuring the Philippians that God had "recorded" their good deed and would not forget it - "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister". (Hebrews 6:10 NKJV). The Lord would not fail to reward them (1 Corinthians 3:8b) – and the rewards would exceed what they had done!

We can have the same assurance when we give to further God's cause. That is one of the blessings of giving!

"SACRIFICE" TO THE LORD! (4:18b)

Paul would not want any to think that the subject of giving can be relegated to ledger sheets. He moved quickly from banking terms to priestly terminology:

....." I am amply supplied with what you sent by Epaphroditus--an Odor of sweet fragrance, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God". (Philippians 4:18b MNT)

The imagery here is taken from Old Testament references to sacrifices and offerings made to the Lord. For instance, the smoke of burnt sacrifices was said to rise as a pleasant aroma, soothing to God {*Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17*}.

Paul used the phrase "a sacrifice acceptable" or an acceptable sacrifice." All Christians are priests

and are to offer sacrifices to the Lord (*1 Peter 2:5,9*). In the old they offer sacrifice for sin (*Leviticus 4:2, 3*) and sacrifices to express thanksgiving and praise (*Leviticus 7:12,13*). We cannot offer a sacrifice for sin because our Savior Jesus Christ did that on the cross (*Hebrews 9:26; Ephesians 5:2*). We can, however, offer ourselves, our resources – all that we are and do – as sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise {*Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15, 16*}. One way we do that is to give generously to the cause of Christ (*Phil. 4:18*).

The apostle told the Philippians that their gift was "an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God (*Malachi 1:6-8*), he was in effect saying, "I know you sent your best!" We, too, should always give our best to our Maker.

In this verse, Paul wants the Philippians and by extension, us to understand that, in the end, their gifts were not so much to him as it was to the Lord [*Matt. 10:40-42, 25:31-40; Acts 9:3-5*]. He was the immediate recipient, but the ultimate recipient was the Father. Knowing that our gifts are to the Lord is one of the blessings of giving.

EVERY NEED SUPPLIED (4:19)

The Philippians had taken care of Paul's needs, the apostle desired for them to know that God would take care of their needs. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". (*Philippians 4:19* NKJV) Since the Philippians had been generous in

their gifts for Paul, God would be generous in His care for them. The lesson for us is that if we have the unselfish giving habits of the Philippians, God will also supply our needs.

What will God do? “*God will supply all your needs.*” Does this mean God will give us anything and everything we may want? No. He gives us our “needs” not our “greed.” The Lord supplies that which we really need, that which is good for us. Earl Palmer wrote, “Our needs are defined by what God wants us to become, not by what we want to be or do”.

God supplies both temporal and spiritual needs. Should we quit our jobs, give away everything we own, and just “depend on Him”? No. our jobs and possessions are part of the Lord’s provision for us – “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”. (***James 1:17*** NKJV).

It is foolish to think you can squander what God has given you... and then expect Him to step in and meet your need. The Lord expects us to work (***2 Thessalonians 3:10***) and do what we can to provide for ourselves and others (***Ephesians 4:28***). God has promised us His continual providential care (***Romans 8:28***) and always supplies our spiritual needs by His personal love and concern (***Romans 8:39***).

God’s resources are glorious – because they are inexhaustible!

Therefore God ... “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (***Ephesians 3:20*** NKJV).

The magnificent promise of 4:19 is fulfilled “in Christ Jesus” and is only for those who are in Christ Jesus: those who have been baptized into Him and who are living in Him (***Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:6***). If, however, we are committed to doing The Lord’s will – including giving as we should – He has promised that He will supply every need. That is one of the blessings of giving.

GOD GLORIFIED (4:20)

Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (***Philippians 4:20*** NKJV) God is to be glorified forever. One way we do that is to give as we should. Knowing that we are glorifying God is one of the blessings of giving. Verse 20 closes with the word “Amen”: “so be it” or “This is true”. Without a doubt, what brother Paul had written was sure and unquestionable! “Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

POSTSCRIPT (4:21-23)

Above, Paul reached the climax of his writing to the ***Philippians in 4:19,20***: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen”. (***Philippians 4:19-20*** KJV). That would seem a good place to close, but Paul had a few more

matters to cover. We might think the final three verses as the apostle's "PS" (postscript).

Some think that, after verse 20, Paul took the stylus (pen) and personally wrote the final lines. May be this is his distinguishing way of writing. Example, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, near the end, he said, "I, Paul, add this greeting in my own handwriting. It is my signature to every letter. This is how I write". (**2 Thessalonians 3:17** TCNT); see also **Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18**.

"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen". (Philippians 4:21-23 NKJV) We cannot be certain that Paul penned those words with his own hand, but one thing is clear: He did not want to close the letter without focusing on brethren he held so dear. One way God can restore spiritual power is through people - the brethren.

Every Saint: Verse 21 begins, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus." "Saint" means "holy one" or "set-apart one"; it was a designation applied to every Christian (see **1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1**). However, the term was a continual reminder of the exalted privilege and the obligation to holy living. The question to us, are we living as Saints in our life.

"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of

God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain". (Philippians 2:14-16 NKJV)

Paul next said, "The brethren who are with me greet you" (4:21b). These may be Brethren who shared the apostle's ministry in Rome - including Timothy (1:1) and others (**Colossians 4:14; Philemon 23, 24**). Truly others with him would still have wanted the church at Philippi to know of their good wishes; good to take others along! After that, Paul wrote, "All the saints greet you" (v.22a). These would have been the other members of the church in Rome. The Apostle wanted greetings and Christian's fellowship to flow back and forth.

Certain Saints: Paul singled out a special group of saints who sent their greetings: "especially those of Caesar's household" (v. 22b). Nero was the reigning Emperor (Caesar) in Rome during the period of Paul's incarceration. Most writers point out, that while the words "Caesar's household" might include Nero's blood kin, they did not necessarily include such, but servants at his court. Some of Nero's elite troops - those responsible for guarding Paul- had been converted to Christianity (see **Philippians 1:13**). Why did Paul include this in his letter to the Philippians? Perhaps he thought it would be encouraging for them to know of the power of the gospel in Rome, which was the hub of the civilized world and Philippi was a

Roman colony. Quite astounding to think that the gospel had penetrated that “den of iniquity” where Paul was held captive. One commentator paints this picture of the Emperor’s Palace ... *“Christ had invaded and infiltrated the very citadel of unbelief... In the very rooms where His name had been unmentioned, Christ as Lord was ... being openly discussed. And all of that was happening right under Nero’s nose.”* (Swindoll, 235).

There are lessons to be gained from the fact that there were saints in Ceasar’s household. One is that if the

gospel could reach people in that environment, it can reach people in any environment. **Roman 1:16** attest that the gospel is powerful. Perhaps the lesson most needed by many is that they can be Christians – faithful Christians- wherever God has put them. **Philippians 4:23** was the closing line. Paul did not close his letter with “farewell” as was the customary, but rather the apostle closed his epistles with a benediction, a prayer for his readers. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”.(v. 23)

CONCLUSION

Lets draw our conclusion from the thematic statement of the book: *“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God”.* (**Philippians 1:27-28** NKJV)

This was also restated in **Philippians 4:1**: *“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved”.* (Phil. 4:1 NKJV). The central concept of the book is stated in **Phil. 1:27** and restated in 4:1. We are to conduct ourselves in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel by standing firm for the Gospel. Christians must stand firm amid suffering or challenges. We must stand firm by emulating the humility of Christ. We must stand firm by dealing with the enemies of the cross. We must stand firm in the Lord (4:1). Philippians 2:12 instruct us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

“let us work by the same rule – “Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind”. (Philippians 3:16 NKJV). The things which you learned..... these do (4:9). A key word of the letter is “joy” – The living of the Christian life by standing firm must be punctuated and permeated by rejoicing in all circumstance of life.