

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. (Philippians 4:14-23, NKJV).

Martin Luther said three conversions take place in a believer:
Conversion of the heart.
Conversion of the mind.
Conversion of the pocketbook.

The Bible speaks a lot about finances.

The Bible has much to say about finances. The Old Testament and the New Testament speak much about money (treasure). The Bible has approximately 500 verses on prayer, but over 2,000 verses on money. I have never taught on money in the years that I've been at Union Grove because we haven't studied passages that have been dealt with until this one today. Jesus taught more about money and possessions than He did about heaven and hell. That's kind of amazing. So, this morning let's see what we can learn from this passage.

On Wednesday I talked about an evangelist who in 1987 told the public that if he didn't raise eight million dollars, God would call him home. He was extorting money from his congregation. That's not how God does it, but Jesus did say: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21, NKJV). I don't know about you all, but my checkbook tells a lot about what is important to me, and I will say that the work of God is important to me.

The church in this passage, the church in Philippi, was a church that was engaged in sacrificial giving. They had sent a guy named Epaphroditus to Paul with finances and other comforts that he needed. We'll pick out some insights from within this passage this morning that help us to understand what giving is all about. It is about being in partnership with God in His work here on earth.

Verse 14 – ¹⁴Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. (Philippians 4, NKJV).

In this verse, generosity is commended. Paul says "you've shared in my distress" and "you have done well." The word that he used for "shared" is *συνκοινωνήσαντές* (transliterated into English as *synkoinonésantes*). Most of you all know what the prefix "syn" means within such words as synthesis. Here this word means "fellowship with or together," and you can see the word *koinonia* in there as well which means fellowship. Paul is saying that you've "had fellowship/partnership in my distress." The church in Philippi had chosen to be in "partnership" with Paul's needs.

I want to remind you that money itself is not evil. It is just stored value. Wealth is not evil. It is impersonal. The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil. It says: *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* (1 Timothy 6:10, NKJV). And let me tell you something else, a person can love money whether he or she has a lot of it or little of it. The "loving of money" is not reserved for wealthy people.

The Bible is full of instances of godly, wealthy people. Abraham was extremely wealthy. The Bible describes him as being *kavod*. That means "heavy." He was "heavy" with gold, livestock, servants, etc. He had wealth like a king of Canaan. Job was also wealthy. And even though he lost it, he ended up with more than he began with. Joseph ended up being the prime minister of Egypt (the richest nation at that time).

So, Paul is telling the Philippians that in their sharing, they have "done well." So, we know that giving for God's work is to do well. Some of you have asked me why I have never preached on tithing. I have told you that I do not believe tithing is a New Testament concept. We are under a different kind of measure of giving, but I'll get to that in a minute. It is a matter of the attitude within us when we are giving. We do not give out of duty. We do not give out of requirement. We give out of a changed heart attitude about what we hold in our hands and our bank accounts. And guess what? That's not even new. It was a standard even in the Old Testament. I read from Deuteronomy 15:

*10 You shall surely give to him, **and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him**, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. 11 For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore, I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'* (Deuteronomy 15:10-11, NKJV).

Giving is about a heart attitude more than anything else.

Verse 15 & 16 – ¹⁵Now 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. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. (Philippians 4, NKJV).

We learn much from this verse. Paul tells the Philippian church that they were the ones that had given to his work even when he was off ministering to other congregations. Thessaloniki, Corinth, and Colossae were all way wealthier than the poor church in Philippi, but the humble little congregation in Philippi was supporting Paul as he went to share the gospel to the surrounding areas. And he tells them that you "sent aid once and again." The Philippian church was full of "sanctified givers." Years ago I served on the board of Camp Peniel, and Chief Whitelock was talking to our board one day and told us that very few people nowadays are "sanctified givers." I've never forgotten him saying that. He was saying that very few people see giving as part of regular holiness living and they set aside nothing for giving and being partners in the work of God.

Verse 17 - ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Paul makes it very clear that he's not into begging for what he needs. He has never threatened the church that he would lock himself into a tower or anything else. What he is saying here is that in reality, he sought the "fruit" that would abound to their account because of their giving. He was saying that he loved to see them give because he knew that it would result in "fruit that abounded to their account." They would share in the eternal reward. They'll be the ones in heaven that people will come up to and say, "Hey, I'm here because of what you gifted to Paul."

The Greek word "abounded" is *πλεονάζοντα* (pleonazonta meaning accruing to them like interest, filling). Paul was telling them that what they gave in support had come back to them in "interest" so to speak. What does "interest" on money mean? It means that which "interests" the investor. In terms of loaning money, the interest is what the lender gets out of the deal. And what should the interest be to us when we make provision for the work of God? It should be souls being brought into the Kingdom and saints being built up to do the work of the master. Paul is saying "THAT'S the benefit in giving," and that benefit will come to your church in Philippi.

Verse 18 - ¹⁸Indeed 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.

Paul is giving a metaphor for their giving. He first thanks them again for all that they had done in sending Epaphroditus. The metaphor is equating their giving to the sacrifices that went on in the Temple. He is specific in saying that he has no needs because the needs that he had were met by Epaphroditus whom they had sent. He says that gift of Epaphroditus was just like that smell of a sacrifice roasting deliciously on a sacrificial fire (think of the aroma of the ultimate barbecue). Paul also goes on to say that such giving is "pleasing to God." I don't know about you, but I'd like to please God in my giving.

So, we see from these verses that we need to give with the right heart attitude. We need to be generous in our giving, and we need to understand that the right kind of giving is like a modern-day sacrifice at the Temple. It is filled with a sweet aroma and is pleasing to God. However, we need to understand that such giving has its rewards.

Tithing may not apply to the New Testament believer, but cheerful (hilarious) giving as a sweet-smelling sacrifice still is what "pleases God."

Verse 19 - ¹⁹And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This verse has been used to support more nonsense than probably any other verse in the Bible. This is not saying, "God will supply everything you want because He owns everything in the universe." You must look at the context of this verse. When we interpret a verse in the Bible, context is EVERYTHING. In real estate, we talk about location, location, location. Well in Biblical matters we have to look at context, context, and context.

Paul is telling THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH that THEY have been partners in Paul's distress, and it has paid interest. He tells them in verse 17 that those gifts to Paul's work "abounded" to their account (so to speak). And now Paul is tying that to this verse using a variant of the same word "πληρώσει" (plerosei) meaning that that "abounding" (filling) now comes to them as a function and result of their generosity. He's saying "in the way that your gift had abundance that returned to you, in that same way God now will 'pour out and fill with abundance' your own needs."

This is not a general statement that we can pick up and grab and apply to ourselves without seeing what was going on in this passage. Rather, it is a statement concerning how the accounting department works in heaven and the spiritual realm. When Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" he was not just giving a word to Jews at that time. He was giving an eternal principle of how things work in the Kingdom of Heaven. He's saying, "get out of yourself and you'll be more blessed." "Give of your time, talents, and treasure and you'll be so blessed." We would say it differently, "It can't be all about you if you want a blessed life."

Verses 20-23 - 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.

This is Paul giving them shocking news about the fruit that is coming from what they have given. Paul is informing the group in Philippi, that the gifts they have given have resulted in some of the royal family coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul says (and I paraphrase): "all the believers here and even those believers who are part of Caesar's household greet you." That's big stuff.

I want to summarize things now as we end our study of Philippians. First, understand that money is not evil. Riches are not evil. Money and wealth are just a tool. They can be used however you choose to use them. They do not replace your decision-making. Well known radio personality Dave Ramsey said: "financial peace isn't the acquisition of stuff. It's learning to live on less than you make, so you can give money back and have money to invest. You can't

win until you do this." I would add and say that until you can invest in things that have eternal consequences you're not going to win.

One of my historical heroes is Winston Churchill. In talking about giving and getting he said: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." In a temporal (worldly statement) Vidal Sassoon (Pastor Michael's old boss) said: "The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary." Likewise spiritual success (progress) comes after the work of letting all of you, including your resources, be directed and governed by the power of the Holy Spirit. While we're talking about famous people and what they had to say about money, you can't pass up Malcolm Forbes. He said: "I made my money the old-fashioned way. I was very nice to a wealthy relative right before he died." That has nothing to do with this lesson but it is hilarious.

In writing to the Corinthian church, Paul explains what I call grace giving. He tells us about how much we are to give.

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. (II Corinthians 9:6-7, NKJV).

Are you a cheerful giver? We've learned in this scripture today that giving to God's work is good. It's more blessed to be a giver than a taker. When King David was offered the threshing floor of Araunah for a place to worship, David said, "I won't offer that which costs me nothing;" so he paid money for it. He understood that giving comes from the heart and that there would be eternal rewards in giving rather than receiving.

Years ago, when I was at First Baptist Navasota a good friend of mine said, "Until I gave God His ten percent, He didn't bless my life." It sort of made me shudder because early on I had learned that God doesn't own ten percent of what I have. God owns it all! I understand what my friend was trying to say. He was saying that until he got outside of himself and focused on Kingdom things, his life wasn't where it was supposed to be." God is the owner of ALL OF YOUR TIME, TALENTS, AND TREASURES. You are merely a steward.

My friend also said, "You need to give until it hurts." Again, I dispute that a little bit. Sandy and I have practiced praying about what we're to give of our time, talents, and treasure, and then when something comes into our hearts, we do it. We don't do it till it hurts. But we sometimes do it until it even surprises us with joy. That's not the same as "giving till it hurts."

My suggestion to you today is that you learn to listen to Him about what you're to give. And, don't be surprised if sometimes it is even a joyful shock to you. Living like that, God will indeed supply ALL OF YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.