

## Philippians 4:10-23

### ***The Contentment and Legacy of the Generous Christian***

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In Philippi, in this passage, we have a picture of a church that is remembered because it remembered. They remembered Paul in his seasons of great financial need. We remember the Philippian church for its example of true Christian compassion and stewardship. The Philippian church left a great legacy of sacrificial generosity.

**Why was Paul rejoicing over the gift? Was it the size of the gift (v. 10-18)?** It is not the actual gift put into Paul's hands that brought him joy, but rather the meaning of that gift. It was an expression of love and concern for him and his ministry.

The gift probably does not come to much if estimated in Roman coin, but he makes a great deal of it, and sits down to write a letter of thanks. The small amount they were able to give has been recorded for all eternity. That speaks of the importance of giving with the right heart in the eyes of God.

Paul knew there was great benefit to the Philippians in sacrificial giving. God was pleased with their hearts and their offering. They were storing up treasures in heaven.

**How should this principle apply to our giving?** Same as Philippians — it is good for us to be givers. Our sacrificial giving is a barometer of our heart toward God and stores up treasures in heaven for us.

**What are some guidelines in giving?** We are called to be good stewards — recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God and we should not hoard it for ourselves. Hold loosely onto your checkbook. If we don't give generously, we miss out on tremendous blessings from God.

**How much should we give?** *'You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit, says the LORD Almighty' (Malachi 3:9-11).* The Old Testament tithe was actually in excess of 20%. The New Testament does not specify an amount, but rather an attitude of the heart.

**We've established there is great benefit in sacrificial giving even though God doesn't need our money. What are some positive reasons and/or important implications for giving generously?**

- It actually benefits the giver more than the one receiving it: *remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).* Try it sometime and see the joy of anonymous giving.
- v. 17 *that more be credited to your account.* The most important thing to Paul was not the gifts themselves. It was the spiritual reward that would come to the Philippians because of their financial investment in his ministry. This text indicates our gifts to others are encouraged, noticed, and much desired by God.
- It is a form of worship. Just as Paul demonstrated, God's concern about giving is not the size of the gift, but that our hearts are lined up with His.
- *Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done (Proverbs 19:17).*
- *God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them (Hebrews 6:10).*
- *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (Hebrews 13:16).*
- *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under*

*compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).*

**What are some of the obstacles to giving generously?** Fear, lack of trust, hoarding, etc.

**Why doesn't physical need worry Paul (v. 11)?** He has learned to be content. Note that contentment is a learned behavior – not just something that comes naturally after becoming a Christian.

**If contentment is learned, how and when did Paul learn it?** Paul, writing this letter while in prison, learned contentment in the crucible of adversity and persecution: *Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).*

Paul reminds us his contentment is not a theoretical contentment, the kind that comes from reading a self-help book. He actually lived it out, experiencing this contentment as a real part of his life.

**How can we learn contentment?** Through the adversity of life's trials – tragedy, crises, health setbacks – and issues in marriage or raising a family. These trials are designed to produce character, hope and perseverance (see James 1:2-3, Romans 5:3). We can learn contentment just as Paul did – by living out our lives.

**How did Paul do it? What was his secret (v. 13)?** *I can do all this through [Christ] who gives me strength.* To achieve this contentment, Paul has known and experienced the strength of Jesus Christ. Earlier in this letter, (v. 2:7-11) Paul explained that being centered on Christ is the most important thing in life. Contentment is a fruit of doing exactly that.

**What was the most important thing to Paul in relation to the gifts (v. 17) ?** It was the spiritual reward that would come to the Philippians because of their financial investments to his ministry.

**What other sacrifices can Christians make to God beside our material possessions (v. 18)?** Our bodies (Romans 12:1-2), converts (Romans 15:16), and our praise and good works (Hebrews 13:15-16).

We come now to what is perhaps the greatest promise in the entire Bible: *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).* It is great because it includes all the other promises of God.

**Some of our needs are...?**

- Forgiveness
- Fellowship with God
- God's defense/power against enemies
- To be disciplined, taught, and tested

**What is the measure by which God will meet our needs?** According to – not out of – his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. If a millionaire gave a dime to a child he would be giving out of his riches. But if he gave \$200,000 to some worthy cause he would be giving according to his riches. The vastness of God's resources to meet our needs is incomprehensible.

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