Living Church: Giving Generously

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0:00] Chapter 29, starting at verse 10, and that's on page 434. 434. 1 Chronicles chapter 29, beginning at verse 10.

David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our Father Israel, and from everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom. You are exalted as head over all.
Wealth and honor come from you. You are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name.
But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.
[1:11] We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow without hope. O Lord, our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your holy name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent.
And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O Lord, God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.
O Lord, God of our fathers, Abraham, and Israel, So, verses 10 to 20 of chapter 4.
I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.
[2:43] I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.
For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.
I have received full payment and even more. I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.
And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.
[4:00] Amen. Amen. Thanks very much.

Well, please keep your Bibles open at that passage there in Philippians. And chapter 4. We're thinking this morning of giving.
Do you have it? Oh, wonderful. Thank you. Magic, isn't it? We've been looking at different aspects of what we do on a Sunday morning.
So we've been looking at things like singing, prayer, hearing from God's word, meeting together, what we did last week. And then this week, we're going to be looking at giving.

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The collection, or as some people do it, by standing order. And as I've said, if you want to know more about giving, there's that sheet, which has just kind of a big overview of where the giving goes to, what comes in, what goes out, and how it is all used.
[5:10] Because we want to be up front. We don't want to be hiding anything from anybody, but that you all know what is happening in regards to our finances. But what about giving for ourselves?

Well, that's what we have to think through this morning. So let's pray. And then we're going to look at the book of Philippians as we think about giving. Let's pray together.
Father, we thank you for giving to us your grace, for giving to us your Son, the Lord Jesus, for giving to us the gift of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, living within all those who trust you and love you.
Father, we thank you for your many gifts, and we pray for your help, for your enabling, for your grace to be poured out upon us through your Spirit, that we may better grasp what it is to be a giving people, how we give, what we give.
Please teach us. And may your words shape our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as you sit, you must be thinking, Johnny, you must be mad.
[6:40] How can I begin to think of giving when I don't even have enough to be paying my bills? You must be living on a different planet or be best buddies with Bono.

Don't you understand the trouble that we're all in? The increase in tax, the cut in benefits, the introduction of levies, and the reduction in pay.
What are you going on about giving for? The government are taking enough of our money, and now it seems like the church are wanting a bit more. Well, before you all leave in protest, let me say this very clearly.
This is not a demand for more money. And this is not a desire to make anybody feel guilty. Okay? So do you hear that? It is not a demand for money, and it is not to see anybody feel guilty. For two reasons. Firstly, as pastor, I'm aware of people's generosity and their sacrificial giving.
[7:44] In fact, as a church, we have been able to give. Not only have we been able to give, but giving has increased when the economy has been going down.

You can have a look at the sheet and you will see that. At the end of last year, we managed to balance out at a time when businesses are going bust. And not only have we been able to give week by week or month by month, but we've been able to give as certain needs have arisen, such as many who is going to Korea or to the work of compassion.
People are and people do give despite tough times. So I want to recognize that. Second, on a surface reading of this text, we find ourselves in different circumstances.
Paul knew this very well in verse 12. He says, I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.
So each person here and every family represented goes through different seasons. Sometimes we're people who are in need, and sometimes we are people who have plenty.
[8:57] We're all in different circumstances, and therefore we have to respond accordingly. So this is not an attempt for me to get myself a white suit and some nice gold rings and a nice gold necklace, get myself on the God channel and say, sow those seeds of financial giving and the Lord is going to bless you richly.

It's not about that at all. So our aim this morning is to see if our attitude and our approach to giving is in line with what God has to say. Is our attitude and our approach to giving in line with what God has to say?
And to do that, we're going to look at these closing comments in Philippians chapter 4, this letter to the church in Philippi to help us be clear about giving.
So four things we're going to look at about giving. And if you pay attention, you might even hear me say, we don't want your money.
So pay attention. So the first one, partnership in the gospel of Christ. Giving is about our partnership in the gospel of Christ.
[10:12] Look at chapter 1 of Philippians, verse 3. I thank my God every time I remember you.

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. Why is he thankful and why is he joyful? Verse 5, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
In business terms, partnership simply means a commitment to a shared vision or a joint venture. Now I think that helps us understand the partnership between Paul and this church at Philippi.

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They both have a commitment to a shared vision, a joint venture. They want to see the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, go to every nation and every people group in the world.
That's their vision. They are partners in this gospel to see it go across the world. Now the church's commitment to this vision is seen in their sacrificial giving.
[11:24] In two ways. Firstly, in the presence. So as Paul is writing this letter, he's actually in prison. So look at chapter 1, verse 12.

He says, So even though he's in prison, the gospel is going.
But how did they partner Paul when he was in prison? Well, look at chapter 2, verse 25. And we get the answer. Chapter 2, verse 25.
He says, So here's Paul in prison.
How did they partner him? By sending one of their own people, Epaphroditus from their own church, to go to where Paul was to take care of his needs. And as a result of this partnership, the gospel continued to advance, even though he was in prison.
[12:54] But not only did they give people to Paul, they also gave gifts. Look at verse 29. Chapter 2. He says, So he's talking here about the fact that the church had sent a financial gift.

That was as much as they could give. And because there was no electronic banking in those days, Epaphroditus was the guy who was going to bring that gift to the church.
To Paul, rather. In prison. And he was going to go along and take care of his needs. So in response to their giving, Paul could say in chapter 4, verse 10.
He can say, I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.
Verse 14. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. So we can begin to see their partnership in the gospel. They were committed to seeing the gospel advance, and they gave of people, and they gave of their finances to make sure that that happened.
[14:19] So this was in the present circumstances for where Paul was. But it also happened in the past. Look at verse 15 of chapter 4. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance, and the same word there, acquaintance, is partnership.

Okay? So in the early days of your partnership with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.
For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Now if we went back to Acts 16, there's no need to turn to it.
We have this great account of how the church started in Philippi. And as soon as the church started, Paul then moved off from Philippi, and he went off down to a town called Thessalonica, where he continued to preach the gospel and start new churches.
And amazingly, this new church in Philippi, these baby new Christians, as Paul moved away from that church, they were the first church to support him and to help him in his church planting work.
[15:37] So verse 16, he says, when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. So that's why Paul can start his letter by thanking God for their partnership in the gospel from the first day right up until now.

Together, they are committed to the same vision. They have this joint venture to see the advance of the gospel and the planting of new churches.
Now, if we have faith in Christ, we together here are also partners in the gospel. We're partners with each other and with the wider church of God's people all around the world.
So as a church, we make sure that all our giving goes to the advance of the gospel and the starting of new churches.
So check out those sheets and make sure that that's what happens, that all our giving goes towards the advance of the gospel and the starting of new churches. Of course, there are bills to pay.
[16:49] There's rent and there's insurance. We have to meet somewhere like this. We have to pay for the lighting and all the rest of it. But all of that is geared down to making mission happen.

The training up, the building up of people, the advancing of the gospel and the starting of new churches. So let me make this crystal clear. Only give if you want to see the gospel advance.
If this is not your vision, if you are not concerned about the good news of Jesus going into all the world, then please don't give.
We don't want people giving their money to something that they don't believe in. And it's really important that we get that. Unless you are a partner in the gospel, unless your vision is to see the

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gospel advance and to see churches planted, then it's much better to give your money to something else that you do believe in.
We want and we encourage people to give those who are partners in the gospel. Unashamedly, we make it a focus within this church to see the gospel advance and to see churches planted and that's where we encourage people to give.
[18:15] If that's not your vision, then give to some other cause. So that's the first thing, we are to be partners in giving. The second reason for giving is about sharing in the grace of Christ.

Sharing in the grace of Christ. chapter 1 verse 7. He's been talking about their partnership.
He says, it's right for me to feel this way about all of you. Since I have you in my heart, for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.
So whenever Paul went to Philippi, he told them the good news about Jesus Christ, about the grace they had received. That through our faith in Christ and everything that Jesus has done for us, we're forgiven of all of our sin, all of our guilt is dealt with, we're set free from God's wrath because Jesus took that and we are now welcomed into his family.
So he's reminding them of the grace that they share in together. In fact, he reminds them of the outworkings of that grace. Look at chapter 3 verse 20.
[19:36] This is an aspect of sharing in the grace. Chapter 3 verse 20. But he says, our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body.

So this grace that they share in has dealt with their past and the grace that they share in has secured their future. The grace that they have received is so rich and so generous that their lives have been radically changed and transformed.
Now the grace that they share in is now being worked out in practical ways of giving. And for this church it meant giving to support Paul in his gospel work.
So look at chapter 4 verse 18. He can say, because they've shared in this grace together, he can say, verse 18 of chapter 4, I have received full payment and even more.
I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts, or if you like the word there, is the graces that you sent.
[21:02] So the church's giving was in response to God's amazing generosity to them. The gifts that they had received from, the gifts that Paul had received from the church was in response to the grace that they were sharing in.

Receiving from God gets worked out in giving back to God. And let's be clear that their giving was not to try and earn God's favour or try and earn God's blessing.
Look at the end of verse 18. He says, they are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. So this was in response to God's amazing generosity to them.
It was their means of expressing their thanks and their joy, to God for everything that God had given to them and in response to his grace they share generously with those around them.
Now we're people who share in God's grace. In fact the only genuine way, the only generous way that giving happens is when we experience God's grace for ourselves.
[22:15] The more we experience his grace, the more we understand his grace, our giving will be genuine and generous. So that's the second thing.

First, it's about the partnership in the gospel of Christ and second, it's about sharing in the grace of Christ. Now I'm just going to pause there very briefly because I understand these plastic chairs are not very comfortable, they're not the blue ones, so I'm going to say if you want to have a stand and a stretch and move your back, please feel free to do that.
If you want to, if you want to, stay where you are.
The third one then is giving is all about contentment in the sufficiency of Christ. Paul himself had learnt to be content.
Look at verse 11. He says, I am not saying this because I am in need. So he's not giving them all the thanks and all the praise so that he can receive more.
[23:30] It's kind of like, oh you are so generous, so kind, and if he wanted to give me a bit more I'd be very happy. No, he's not saying that. He's just wanting to thank them for, he says, I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

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I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. Now in this context Paul is the receiver but he's not the giver.
But I think we've got a principle here about contentment that affects our attitude towards giving.
Now generally speaking our giving is dictated by our circumstances.
Isn't that right? So if we have plenty, well we're able to give. But if we're in need, then we don't give.
But I don't think it's not about how much we have or how little we have.
It's about being content in the sufficiency of Christ. That's what should shape our giving. So look at the rest of verse 12. He says, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
[24:47] You see, for Paul, his life is not dictated by circumstances. He is content with all that he has from Christ.

Christ is his contentment. Christ is his sufficiency. So look back at chapter 3 verse 7. This is what he can say.
whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.
I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. Christ. So for Paul in his life, Christ is sufficient.
Christ is the one who fills us.
Christ is the one who satisfies us. So all we ever need is found in Christ. So Paul's life is not changed whether he is well fed or hungry, whether he is living in plenty or in want.
[25:58] Christ is sufficient. That's the principle. Now I think we can apply that same principle to our own giving. Our giving is not dictated by our circumstances.

Our giving is being moved by what brings us contentment. So our concern is not whether we are rich or poor, but that Christ is sufficient.
If Christ fills us and satisfies us, if Christ is better than anything we have or we don't have, then our approach to giving is going to be very, very different.
So let's apply this with a couple of questions. If we're in a position of plenty and it was suddenly taken away from you, all right, just put yourself in that position.
If all of a sudden you had to downsize your house, you had to sell your car, you had to go on the dole, how would you cope?
[27:04] If all of a sudden everything had to be narrowed down, you had to sell a house, sell your car, go on the dole, what would it be like? If the very thought of that devastates you, then your contentment is in material things.

that means we won't give for fear we'll lose what we do have. It's saying that Christ is not sufficient so that we must desperately hold on to what we do have.
But it applies also to the opposite end. If we find we're in a position of need and imagine that suddenly you became very wealthy, who knows, you win the lotto.
more cash in your pocket, more resources at hand, how would you cope then? What changes would it bring to your life?
If the very thought of having more money sends your head in a spin of how much better life would be and how much more happier you would be, then your contentment is also in material things.
[28:18] That means you will not want to give because you'll always be wanting more. Christ, you'll be saying, is not sufficient because you're always on the ways to look out for how I can get more money.

So contentment is independent of our circumstances and also our giving needs to be independent of our circumstances. We give because Christ is sufficient.
He is greater than having plenty and he is greater than being poor. He is all that we ever need. So, partnership in the gospel of Christ, sharing in the grace of Christ, contentment in the sufficiency of Christ, and then forth, giving is about trusting in the riches of Christ.
Christ. Look at verse 19. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
Now, there's a promise, isn't it? We read it again. My God will meet all your needs according to the glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
[29:41] God is so our giving is based on the fact that God has promised to meet all of our needs.
Let's be clear, this is not a promise that God is going to make us all wealthy and healthy.

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This is a guarantee that God will meet all our needs, not our grieves or our wants. And again, Paul knew this from experience.
Look at verse 13. chapter 4. He says, I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Again, this didn't mean that Paul in his difficult circumstances could suddenly just click his fingers and get money from nowhere.
He could do anything he wanted. No, it means whatever his circumstance, whether he's in plenty or whether he's in want, whether he's hungry or whether he's well fed, he is able to do everything that God calls him to do.
Whatever circumstance of life he's in, he will be able to do everything that God calls him to do. He is not going to be lacking at any point because God is going to give him the strength that he needs to deal with whether he is well fed and in a nice big house or whether he is hungry and in prison as he is in this circumstance right now.
[31:09] Now in the same way we have this amazing promise from God. He will meet all of our needs according to the glorious riches that are in Christ Jesus. He doesn't give us what we want or what we think we need.

God will give to us what he knows we need. And I think because God made us, he knows us far better than we know ourselves. And whatever that need is that we may have, his glorious riches, and I don't think there's any limit to God's glorious riches since he owns the whole world, they belong to him, he is able to meet that need.
And once again this promise shapes our attitude and approach to giving. Our concern is to be the needs of others, the advancement of the gospel, the planting of churches and the needs within this church.
We are not to be so tied up with our needs because God looks after our needs. Well, you say, how do you know if that promise is true?
Because this is a promise, verse 19. Well, apart from Paul's experience, he could say this was true for him. The only way that we're going to experience if this promise is going to be true for you and for me, is if we step out in obedience and trust and do what God says.
[32:44] We give trusting in God's generosity towards us. But let's be crystal clear in this again. This does not mean guaranteed comfort or better salary.

If we decide to give more, it doesn't mean to say that you're going to have more. it means that Christ is sufficient and he will meet all of our needs.
It's a promise. So we are not asking for more money and we're not demanding for more money. We're not wanting anybody to feel guilty. We've recognised that as a church people give sacrificially and generously. we simply want to hear what God has to say about our attitude and our approach to giving.
Giving is not a thoughtless matter, a thing we just do as the bag is being passed around in front of us or something we decide off a whim. It's not about that. Our giving is about these four things.
[33:50] It's about partnering in the gospel of Christ. It's about sharing in the grace of Christ. Christ. It's about our contentment in the sufficiency of Christ.

And it's about trusting in the riches of Christ. We need to align ourselves to these four priorities and to live our lives in response.
Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father God, you are incredibly generous.
There is not one of us here this morning who is hungry. There is not one of us who is needing a home because we all have one. You have blessed us and given us so much.
and we want to thank you for every gift that we have received from you. Every euro and every cent.
[35:08] All signs of your generosity. We ask and we pray that you would help us to be a people who are partners in the gospel.

That we share generously of your grace. That we find ourselves daily content with all that Christ is. Never wanting more, never wanting less, but being content with what he gives us. And that you would enable us to be a family who trust you and trust your promises promises that you will provide according to our need.
We thank you for your goodness, for your blessings. We thank you for your faithfulness to us as a church family. Thank you for all that we have been able to do over 2010 or 2011.

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Please help us to be a people who go on generously giving, not just to the needs here at home, but to the needs around this world.
[36:26] Father, we thank you for your faithfulness, for your love. Please help us to be good stewards. Please help us to be honourable with all that we do. we trust you for the future as we look back in thankfulness for all that you have done.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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