

# Gaining By Giving (1)

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Date: 02 August 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Philippians chapter 4, let's read beginning at verse 15. Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only.

For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity, not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound.

[ 1 : 12 ] I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God our Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Let's just say another quick prayer and ask for the Lord's help as we come to the word today. Lord, we do ask once again that you would help us now as we focus in on this passage. Lord, that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear. As Jeremiah prayed that you would take our hearts of stone and you would give us a heart of flesh that can respond to your word.

That you would do that work in us today. That you would speak, Lord, through your word. Help us now in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Paul's letter to Philippi, as we've studied over and over, was a response to the generosity of the congregation.

[ 2 : 23 ] They had sent Epaphroditus, as we see once again in verse 18, and we refer back to chapter 2 as well on this. They had sent Epaphroditus as their messenger. He was to check on Paul to see how he was doing as he was in his fourth year of imprisonment in Rome, or at least in Roman imprisonment.

And he was also taking a gift, a collection, material collection that the church had taken up in order to help Paul and help him meet his even basic needs as he was there in prison under house arrest in Rome.

So what we see now in this section, really the second half of Philippians chapter 4, is really Paul's thank you note to the church. Thanking them for this gift and expressing how grateful he was to the Lord for them and for their concern.

The first paragraph in this section, which is verses 10 through 14, we studied it last week, reveals the example of Paul's personal contentment and how challenging of a passage that is for us as we come to understand how discontent we often can be.

Yet in the most difficult of circumstances, Paul wrote that he had learned the secret of contentment, that contentment ultimately is found in Jesus, that the strength and the encouragement that he finds actually comes from the hand of God.

[ 3 : 45 ] And it's the ordinary means of churches like the Philippian congregation that the Lord was using to encourage Paul as he was there. But he wanted them to know that he had learned contentment and he was encouraging them in that.

As we get to this second paragraph here, we see that the attention is turned now to the church itself. And the focus of our study today becomes the congregation's example rather than Paul's example.

And it's their example of giving and generosity. Indeed, the churches of Macedonia, which were really led by the congregation in Philippi, are noted all throughout the New Testament for their giving spirit and their sacrificial offerings that they took repetitively in order to encourage the work of God.

And we typically view our instruction in these New Testament letters as coming from the apostles that the Lord used to write them. But here in this part of the passage, the instruction that we gain doesn't actually come from Paul.

It comes as we acknowledge the example of the church itself, as he commends them, and as he thanks them for what they had done, we actually learn from them.

[ 4 : 59 ] In fact, as we study the New Testament, often the Philippian church was the only church that was actually committed to faithfully giving to the work of Paul. There were even times in the Corinthian letters that Paul had to prod the more wealthy Corinthian church and Corinthian congregation to actually fulfill a commitment that they had made a year before to actually help other churches that were in need.

And he was having to prod them and encourage them to fulfill that commitment. He never had to do that with Philippi. They led in the way in this. And here we find a great example of their giving.

And we can't help but think about, as we come to the issue of giving and generosity in the Scriptures, that there are many believers, many Christians, that do not faithfully give.

And why is that, I ask myself this week? Why is it such a struggle for us sometimes to be generous in our giving, to be faithful in our giving to the Lord and our giving to the ministry?

And I think there's a lot of reasons for that, but I've kind of grouped them into three basic explanations, really three categories as to why we often struggle with giving. The first category is this, is really just an inward focus, an inward focus.

[ 6 : 16 ] Selfishness is endemic to human nature, as we studied last week. Contentment is a foreign concept in our society. And many Christians don't give because they're more concerned about pleasing themselves.

Their inward focus prevents them from seeing the need to give, and it leads them to even rationalize why they can't or shouldn't give. It's not a matter of, will I obey the Lord?

It's a rationalization on, I have all of these other things in my life I'm trying to do, and surely God wants me to be happy, and so he would rather me fulfill my happiness through these things than he would me sacrifice those things in order to give.

And so there's an inward focus in a lot of people's hearts that actually prevents them from faithfully giving to the Lord. I think a second category for this, at least among believers, is that worship and ministry aren't always the priority.

Worship and ministry aren't always the priority. For some, it's not always a lack of giving as much as it is a disregard for giving to God.

[ 7 : 27 ] This type of person may be very generous to their friends and their family. They may be captivated even by a local charity that just is involved in something that they're passionate about, and they see that they want to partner in this passion to help this specific need in their community, but they never sense that same kind of passion in the work of God.

And so worship and the giving of worship on a Sunday morning or giving of regular worship to the church is not so much a priority of theirs. The passion for the ministry of the gospel isn't so much of a passion for them as many other things that they have going on in their life.

So sometimes it's just an inward focus. Sometimes it's not so much an inward focus as much as it is worship and ministry just aren't a priority. And then the third category, I think, is where most Christians who are not faithful to give fall into is the category of fear.

They're just afraid to give. It's not that they don't want to, and it's not that they haven't prioritized ministry and worship. They could be faithful in every other area of their life.

But they're afraid that if they give, they'll lack what they need to meet their basic needs in life. And we all understand that fear. We all have dealt with that fear before.

[ 8 : 42 ] The problem is, is that kind of fear leads us to disobedience, and that's the issue with it. It essentially says, I will be better to me than God will be to me.

I will take better care of myself than what I trust and believe that God will take care of me in. Well, the example of the Philippians in verses 15 through 20 covers all three of those explanations, or all three of those categories.

It is interesting how the topic of giving will arouse all kinds of theological interest in the hearts of people that otherwise couldn't care less about digging too deep into the doctrinal things of the Bible, right?

If you bring up a message or bring up the issue of faithfully giving, all of a sudden, they want to get very, very technical. And they want to hear, well, what is it exactly that God wants me to give?

Like, tell me exactly the amount that God desires for me to give. They want to get very technical in that. Or perhaps they'll ask the question, does God desire that I tithe on the gross income or on the net income?

[ 9 : 48 ] And we've all asked that question, haven't we? I don't know how many times I've asked that question, and especially as a college student, when you're just broke all the time and you really don't want to eat college food this week, you want to go to Bojangles instead or Chick-fil-A, and you're just thinking, maybe I can adjust some things here.

What is it exactly that God wants me to give? Rarely a simple answer satisfies those questions. We want to dissect those scriptures just to make sure that we're really, somebody's really being honest with us in this because it would be a shame for us to be bad stewards and actually give too much to the Lord.

We don't want to do that. We're the same people that we meticulously review our end-of-the-year statements and contributions, right? Because we're going to make sure that the IRS gives us credit for everything that we gave to the church this year.

And we end up becoming consumed with giving in a way that we shouldn't be consumed with. We get very technical on things that we don't otherwise get technical on at all. And I wrote in conviction that how rarely we seem to determine the minimum amount that we can live on in order that we can give the most possible to the Lord.

Instead, we often determine the minimum that we can give to appease the Lord in order that we may keep the most possible for ourselves. And unfortunately, that's the way most of us think.

[ 11 : 14 ] And that goes back to that issue of contentment and that inward focus and not making worship and ministry a priority and sometimes even fear.

The discussion of money and giving has for some reason become taboo among Christians these days. We don't like to talk about it. It can be uncomfortable. But I think the Bible says a lot about this.

And the intent of our study today is not to get into those technicalities about what we're supposed to give and when we're supposed to give it and to who we're supposed to give. Because that's not what this passage deals with.

The passage really deals with and meditates on the spirit of our giving. Why do we give? And how are we to give in regards to our character and our spirit in doing so?

That's really largely the difference in the topic of giving and generosity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament we see many more passages that designate this is how much to give and this is when to give it and this is how to give it and where you take it and all these kinds of things.

[ 12 : 23 ] And there were all kinds of instructions in the Old Testament for that. But the New Testament really deals with giving in a very different way. To the best of my knowledge there's no passage in the New Testament that says you're supposed to give this amount or this percentage or this thing and you're supposed to give it on this day and in this place and there are things that we can deduce from all of that but there's no direct command in that.

What the New Testament deals with and what our passage in Philippians 4 deals with is the spirit behind our giving that we give sacrificially to the Lord that we give cheerfully to the Lord that we give with ministry in mind and the Lord's work in mind and that we do that with a grateful spirit in worship.

In these verses nothing instructional is given. There is no direct command. Paul's not telling the Philippian church to give. He didn't have to because they were already giving.

He was simply commending them on how faithful they had been and they again become the premier example for us of how a congregation is to view generosity.

There's three individual words that I've used just to help my own study. Perhaps it'll be helpful to your study of this passage as well. We're only going to get to the first one today. We'll get to the other two next week but the first one that I have for a heading in verses 15 to 17 is the word share.

[13:42] The word share. Look with me again at verse number 15. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but you only.

For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire gift. I'm not saying this because I want you to give more. I just desire fruit that may abound to your account. He says no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving except you. You only. And we've noted before several times actually in the book of Philippians what this word communicated means.

It comes from that Greek word family from koinonia. It means fellowship or partnership active participation sharing in.

It's the same word we find in chapter 1 and verse 5 when Paul thanked them for their partnership in the gospel. Their fellowship in the gospel. It's the same word used in chapter 2 and verse 1 when he talked about having fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

[14:58] It's the same word he uses in chapter 3 and verse 10 when he says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto Christ's death.

And then again as we saw last week the conclusion in verse 14 he uses it again that they did communicate with him in affliction. Paul's once again referring to their partnership in the gospel but this time it's with an emphasis on sharing in and being an active participant in the gospel work. Given the context of the passage it's not difficult to make the connection. He was specifically referring to how they had participated with him in the ministry through the sharing of their resources. And he said that they had shared in giving and receiving. Those are technical accounting words in the Greek. It could literally read credits and debits. You have shared with me in crediting and in debiting this sharing back and forth of the gospel work and of gospel resources.

Not only had they shared their resources for the gospel but they had shared in the blessings that came from that gospel work. And verses 15 through 17 I think share with us or give us three ways that they did share through their giving and that we can also share as a church in our giving.

[16:28] First they shared in the work of the gospel. They shared in the work itself. Look again at verse 15. He says now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel you only gave.

Philippian church wanted so much to be a part of the work of the gospel across the world that it actually became the motivation for their giving. They weren't giving to Paul because Paul demanded it.

They weren't giving in order that they may earn some type of favor with God. They weren't giving in order to earn their salvation. They were giving because they were passionate about the work of the gospel and they wanted to partner in that work in whatever way they could.

In fact Paul clearly says in this from the very beginning of the start of their church in Acts 16 they invested financially in this work even when nobody else was investing in helping Paul and his team. In the beginning of the work in Philippi that is. They began to give and for a time they were the only congregation giving. They believed in what he was doing.

[17:38] They were passionate about that work just like we are in the ways that we give. We give to certain things with our kids as they grow up because we're passionate about our kids. We're passionate about them pursuing certain things in their life that will help them and so we give to that and we invest in that.

We have other ways outside of the church that we give and that's important. We're generous to other people and other causes because we're passionate about those things but then we get to the Philippian congregation. Why did they give even out of poverty?

They gave because they were passionate about the work. They were passionate about the gospel and they wanted to partner with Paul in whatever work he was doing in taking the name of Christ across the world.

There's a lot of good causes out there but none of them are as significant as the work of the gospel of Jesus and for us the greatest investment we can make in a material way is an investment in the gospel and in the work of the gospel around the world.

One of the significant blessings of giving faithfully to the work of the gospel is that it makes you a partner in that work. You literally share in the work of God when you cheerfully give for its advancement.

[ 18 : 51 ] You literally koinonia partner with communicate with God in that work. You become a participant in it. Now think about it. Most of the people in Philippi were incapable of going with Paul to Thessalonica.

They couldn't just uproot themselves and their families and go. Maybe there were other hindrances. Perhaps some of them did maybe make some trips from time to time to try to help in the work that was going but most of them were incapable of doing that.

So how could they partner? They gave. They found a way to finance the work. Found a way to finance the ministry and in that they became partners and participants in the work itself and the same goes with us.

You may never be called to go to a specific place around the world to start churches or preach the gospel but you can partner in gospel work by giving to the Lord in that way.

What a glorious way we have of stewarding the prosperity that we have and being citizens of the richest nation on the planet than taking that prosperity and giving it back to the Lord and his work across the world.

[ 20 : 01 ] So they shared in the work of God. Why did they give? They had to share. They communicated with in the work itself. Secondly, they shared in the needs of others. They shared in the needs of others.

Look with me at verse 16. For even in Thessalonica or as Julie and I would argue sometimes I want to say Thessalonica. She wants to say Thessalonica. I'll let you guys correct us later after the service.

For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. In verse 16 the Philippian church sets the example for faithful repetitive giving.

It wasn't a one time offering. Once and again he says over and over you sent to my need in Thessalonica. Even after Paul had left Philippi Acts 17 tells us that he continued on to Thessalonica and he stayed there for a few months and in his months there multiple times this church invested helped gave to what he and his team were doing.

So in verse 15 Paul commended them for sharing in the work of the gospel but in verse 16 he commends them for ministering specifically to his need. He says you sent unto my necessity he said.

[ 21 : 20 ] This further reveals the spirit of the Philippians giving. They had a passion for gospel ministry but they also had a great passion for meeting the needs of others.

Even if it meant stepping into the realm of poverty themselves they had a completely outward focus in giving. It wasn't about what they could get. It wasn't about what they could build up for themselves.

It was about what they could give not only the gospel work but to help meet the needs of other people. And this wasn't the only time that the Philippians cared for others' needs. It's a pattern throughout the scripture.

In fact in Romans chapter 15 Paul's writing to the Roman church about how he desires to come to them and visit with them but he couldn't write then because he was taking a gift from the church in Philippi to the poor church in Jerusalem.

Here's what he said in Romans 15. At present however I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

[ 22 : 24 ] For they were pleased to do it and indeed they owe it to them Paul said. For if the Gentiles have come to share in the spiritual blessings they ought also to be a service to them in material blessings.

They had a passion to meet the needs of others specifically to meet the needs of other believers and of other churches and we ought to have that same passion. there's three ways I wrote down this week that our giving our regular faithful giving as a church helps to meet the needs of others. First our giving helps to meet the needs of the poor. It helps actually go to meet the needs of people in our church and people in our community that need help and we have a heart for that and we want to continue to have a heart for that.

One of the consistent descriptions of the church in the New Testament is this realm of meeting needs for one another. Flip with me just quickly over to the left to Acts chapter 2. I'm sure you're familiar well with the, very familiar with the passage itself.

It's a fantastic description of what the character of the church is supposed to be. Acts chapter 2, look with me at verse 44.

[ 23 : 37 ] Luke writes, all that believed worked together. There's a unity here. And they had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had a need.

One of the primary characteristics of the early church was that they were willing to take their excess and do away with it in order that those less fortunate in the church could actually have the basic necessities of life.

This wasn't communal living in the sense that they pulled all their stuff together and everybody had the same exact thing. There were still some people that had more than others but those who had excess were willing to give up that excess in order to meet the needs of those that didn't have a lot. That should be our heart as a church. That should be our heart. We give through the church in order to help others in the church or even we give just personally to other people in the church that we see have a need.

This is to be the heart of believers and of Christians. Our giving helps to do that. Our giving supports ministers of the gospel. The New Testament teaches that the regular giving of the church is to provide a living for pastors and missionaries.

[ 24 : 45 ] While not every pastor is able to survive on the income of the church alone, it should be the desire and goal for the church to provide a living for those who lead it. And the scripture is clear in that.

Our giving helps to do that. Not just for me. It helps to give to the missionaries that we love, the people that we want to help. It helps ministers of the gospel just like the Philippians helped Paul and his team.

Thirdly, our giving supports the needs of church ministry. It's through our regular giving of the congregation that we're able to rent a facility to meet in, to pay the rent and pay the bills, for us to have tools that help us to preach the gospel, to supply basic needs like outreach materials and church Bibles that people can use that won't have one, or service guides, other things that help us. All of these things go to meet the needs, and that's a part of it. They gave to his necessity. I was listening. You've heard me talk about often. Alistair Begg is probably my favorite preacher, and I listen to him preach a lot, and I listened to him earlier this week preach on this passage, and in it he talked about two different types of sharing or two different types of giving.

He used different words, but he said basically there's reciprocal sharing and there is necessary sharing. Reciprocal sharing is giving on the basis of reciprocity.

[ 26 : 07 ] For instance, you would have somebody over to your house, a family that's similar to yours. They come over and you share with them your home and your food and the material things that you have, knowing that at some point, maybe a few weeks later, they're going to invite you over to their house, and they're going to share in the same things with you that you have shared in with them.

You share with one another by reciprocating acts of kindness, and there's nothing wrong with this kind of sharing. It's actually necessary and good, and most of us are going to be involved with that a lot in our lives. That's a good thing.

That's what the church was doing, this reciprocal sharing. It's not that you share because it will be reciprocated, but it's not so much of a gift as it is kind of a trade-off.

You're helping one another. You're sharing with one another. Secondly, there's necessary sharing, and this is the other side to that. It's giving on the basis of no reciprocity at all.

For instance, you invite someone to your home who's less fortunate. You share your home and your food and your time with them knowing full well that they'll never be able to reciprocate that kindness.

[ 27 : 11 ] It's the kind of giving that should mark the church. We should be more than willing to help those that cannot help us and that cannot benefit us in any way.

And to be truthful, this kind of sharing is the most Christ-infused form of giving. Jesus sets the example in this. As we studied so often in Philippians chapter 2, who made himself of no reputation. He set aside the glories of heaven, and he shared himself with us, and he took on our sin, and he took on our punishment, shared in that with us, knowing full well that we could never reciprocate that kindness for him.

There is never anything we could do that could repay him for what he has done for us. He sets the tone for this giving for us, and we're to take that example of Christ in the gospel, and we're to demonstrate that to others.

Pick somebody in your life. Find somebody in the church. Find somebody in your community that you can bless with the gospel of Christ, knowing full well that they'll never be able to pay you back. [ 28 : 17 ] They shared in the work of the gospel. They shared in the needs of others, thirdly, and finally, they shared in the fruit of the gospel. They shared in the fruit of the gospel.

Look at verse 17. Paul says, I'm not saying this because I desire you to send more, but I desire that fruit may abound to your account.

Fruit may abound to your account. He wasn't manipulating them to send more money or to keep the checks coming.

He was reminding them that what they have done in their sacrificial, faithful giving will be rewarded with fruitfulness in gospel ministry.

It's not that they would be able to look back and think, okay, I gave a hundred bucks to the Lord this week. That means the Lord's going to give me a hundred bucks back in some way this week. That's not what this giving was about. That's not the fruitfulness of giving.

[ 29 : 15 ] The fruitfulness of giving is that as we give to the Lord, he provides gospel fruit in the places that this money goes and that it goes to support his work. I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

This is an expansion really on their share in the work. Not only could they participate in gospel work around the world, but whatever fruit God produced through that work would be credited to their account.

Here's what's so awesome about this. They not only shared in the work, they shared in the results of the work. How exciting is that for us as believers?

That as we give faithfully to the Lord week in and week out and we send this money to help reach the people in our area with the gospel and we send it across the world to various missionaries, we can rejoice and share in the results of that gospel work.

As people are saved, as people are baptized and added to the church, we can rejoice because we got to have a part in that, not in a prideful way, but in a humble way. We can rejoice with them and share in the results of that ministry.

[ 30 : 21 ] We'll be rewarded by God for the fruit that he bore even when we didn't know he was using us. How awesome is that? Many of us will go through life and we'll labor and we'll serve and we'll give and not just in material giving, but in other ways, our time and our efforts, giving to gospel work.

And we may rarely see the fruit of that ourselves, but it doesn't mean that the fruit of it isn't going out. The blessing is one day we will see the fruit of it. One day in eternity we'll rejoice with those people who came to Christ because we had a small part in giving or we gave them a church invitation or we gave them a Bible or whatever it was.

We will get to rejoice in that fruit even if we don't see it now. And Paul desired that for this Philippian church. They shared in the work, they shared in the needs, and they shared in the fruit.

And as we close, I want to take just a minute to reflect on how we as Lakeside Bible Church have experienced this blessing of sharing in the gospel.

It's because of the faithful giving of other congregations that we've been able to get started as a church. Every month there are 12 different churches that send our congregation financial support.

[ 31 : 41 ] And there are many more than that that gave gifts at some point over the last year, year and a half, in order to help us buy the truck and trailer that we use every week, that have bought the sound equipment that we have and the backdrops and all the things that you see.

They've helped us provide this. That was out of their generosity that we were able to do that. It's because of their generosity that we even have an opportunity to consider a potential lease agreement in a building.

We as a church have been the beneficiaries of this kind of giving. And it came from many congregations that know full well that at least in the immediate time, we're incapable of reciprocating that giving back.

Why do they do that? Because of the gospel. Because they're passionate about the work. They want to share in the work of the gospel that we're doing here in Cornelius. They want to share in the

fruit that God may provide in his own way and in his own purposes through our church. They want to share in the needs of other believers across the state and across the country and across the world that need basic supplies in order to take the gospel around the world. They're passionate about that.

[ 32 : 52 ] So it doesn't bother them to sacrifice of themselves. They give knowing that they'll never get it back in return. They give because they're passionate about the gospel.

It's an investment. But then we've also been able to share with others. And I love this. Even in the short life of our church, we've been able to help a lot.

We've been able to give a lot for a small church. And I want you to know this message and the context of it, especially as we get into next week, this isn't corrective on my part. I feel blessed to pastor a very generous church.

And I'm thankful for each of you that faithfully give. Some every week faithfully give generously to our ministry. It's because of your faithful giving that this year we've been able to send more than \$5,000 to other missionaries and other church planners.

Because you have given, you get to share in the gospel work of these ministries that we've been able to partner with. And we rejoice in that. It's because of your generosity that I'm able to fully commit my time to be your pastor.

[ 34 : 02 ] And I don't have to work a second job right now. That's because of your generosity. It's because of your generosity that we're able to save every week for the future of our ministry, whether it be at the place that's just down the road in Cornelius, whether it be in another place, we get to save right now because you are generous in giving.

So thank you for your giving. And like Paul, I want to encourage you to continue in that. Because I want to see that fruit applied to your account, to the account of our church, as we faithfully seek to partner with people in the gospel, as we seek to meet the needs of others, and as we seek to share in the fruit of the gospel as well.

I want us to care about meeting the needs of people. I want our church to share in the fruit of God's blessing. And I want all of this because I truly believe it's what God desires for us.

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[ 35 : 20 ] We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. We'd love to meet you.