

Joyful Reflections On Financial Sharing

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 4, we'll start at verse 14. And you'll notice in our scripture reading, it's Paul thanking this church in Philippi for the gifts that they had sent him.

And maybe it seems a little strange in our culture. Why would he wait to the very end of the letter if that's one of the occasions for writing it? Well, every culture and custom has certain etiquettes. My grandma taught me the etiquette of if you get a gift, you don't get to use or enjoy that gift until you've written that thank you note.

You've got to say thank you for the gift you received. It was interesting for me to learn how in this ancient Greco-Roman world, this was it was customary that if you do receive a gift, you have two options.

If it's a formal relationship, like a patronage, then you ought to send something back. It's almost like a transaction. They purchase something that you ought to give now back to them. But then on the other hand, the other option is if it's a gift among family or friends, it's almost too formal to say thank you for the gift.

And because we're friends, we're family. It's almost just like like why wouldn't we provide for one another's needs? And so I think you can pick up like the fact that he leaves it till the very end of the letter and even the way he words it.

[1 : 10] It sounds a little foreign to our ears. It's not how we would say thank you. This was the custom. And as you'll see, this was Paul's way of reassuring the church in Philippi. We are family. I'm not going to give you this formal thank you.

But this is what our passage is for today. So I'll read for us, trusting as God's own word says in Philippians 3, that the word of God is spirit breathed. Hebrews 4, the word of God is living, powerful and piercing.

Our passage is Philippians 4, verses 14 through 23. It's God's own word for his people. And if you receive it with faith this way, then you can say thanks be to God.

Verse 14. I'll start at verse 13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress.

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.

[2 : 14] For even in Thessalonica, you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet smelling aroma and acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

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

Amen. 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. The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

[3 : 15] You may be seated, please. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. Isaiah 40.

In Luke 1, no word from God shall be void of power. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this passage, this word of God for your people today.

I pray that you will minister to your people with your power, to your purpose in our lives, in our hearts, in our minds, and in us as a church, as a congregation.

We pray that you will shape us, that your word, the will of God, will shape this church, Reformed Heritage Church, for your glory we ask, Father. Amen.

Well, part of a Greco-Roman education would have included learning about the different myths. So, some of you have read Greek mythology even today, and some of you students, maybe you really enjoy learning about these ancient myths that the Greeks would have believed.

[4 : 26] One of the myths is that of King Midas. King Midas is written about by several Greek historians and philosophers.

One of those is Aristotle. Let me make the connection for you. Do you remember, Aristotle is from Athens in Greece. And it was Philip II who brought Aristotle up to Macedon, Macedonia, same region of Philippi, to be the teacher of his son, Alexander, who went on to become Alexander the Great.

So, these Macedonians would have known very well these Greek myths. They would have learned it from Aristotle himself. And the myth of King Midas was this, a short version.

There was a king, and he saved this fictional creature. And as a gift, one of the fake Greek gods said, you can have any wish that you want.

And the king said, I want that anything I touch will turn to gold. That's where you get that expression from. And he thought this was wonderful until then he touched his food, and he couldn't eat it anymore because now it was gold, and it needs food to live.

[5 : 32] And it got even worse when his little daughter came running up to greet her father, and in hugging his daughter, she turned to gold. So, it's a cautionary myth about where true satisfaction can be found.

Well, this would have been very familiar to the Philippians. And even the pagans like Aristotle could point out that true satisfaction does not exist in worldly things, even in your finances or your wealth. How much more now for a church like that in Philippi? They have this opportunity to see what is very pagan, very worldly, what the Bible calls unrighteous, which is mammon or worldly wealth and money.

And the love for wealth means you can't be a servant of God. You've got to choose one or the other. Which do you truly love? And so, for Paul, he's not silent on the topic.

He says, yes, money is toxic, and it can lead you away from the true God. But the Bible is also not silent on this topic. And it's really tricky because throughout church history, even today, and maybe some of you, you've seen the sacred be mixed with the profane.

[6 : 41] You've heard someone misuse a Bible verse and manipulate people for their money, showing what they truly love. But yet, Jesus was very direct and taught very clearly about money.

And Paul does this here as well. So, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I want to simply walk through this passage and help us to make about eight observations on financial sharing.

Why the word sharing? Well, in verse 14 and 15, that's what Paul calls it. He says, you shared in my distress. Verse 14, you shared. And in verse 15, he says, no church shared with me, but you only.

So, it's financial sharing, to use the word from the passage itself. You know, often when money comes up, especially in a religious setting, it can feel like begging.

It can feel like arm twisting or false promising, all of which are irresponsible and not pleasing to God. But really, what we see in this passage that we just read from Paul, these are joyful reflections.

[7 : 47] Joyful reflections. It's God exalting. It's gratitude soaked. And it's content. Contented reflections. So, I invite you with me to ponder eight joyful reflections on financial sharing.

Joyful reflection number one. Financial sharing is an expression of Christ-like care. Financial sharing is an expression of Christ-like care.

Paul has already said in this letter how most Christians and most churches are not genuinely concerned for the interests of others. Philippians 2.

He said, I have no one like Timothy who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. That's unusual. Most churches, like most Christians, were not concerned for one another or even for Paul. But he says this church in Philippi, they were one of the rare churches that weren't only looking to their own interests. And that's why in verse 10, Paul says, I rejoiced in the Lord.

[8 : 54] This is Philippians 4 verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again like like a plant that was turning yellow. But now it's full of life again.

It's flourishing. Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. So Paul rejoices because their care was expressed by this financial gift that they sent for him.

Their care was expressed by the financial gift. Think of how much Christ cares for his church. Christ cares for his church so much that he generous, generously shared of his own glory.

He shared his own life with the church. So when the church receives so much from Jesus Christ, it's merely a reflex of gratitude to share financially with those Christ loves.

We sing of this glorious, self-giving, generous love of Christ in almost every song in him we sing. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand.

[10 : 01] How do you know that, Christian? For I am his and he is mine. Why is that? Because I am bought with the precious blood of Christ. He bought me.

He took of his riches and purchased me for himself. When Christ grows a congregation to share his mind, have the mind of Christ, then their financial sharing expresses Christ's own care for others.

The joyful reflection number two is this. Financial sharing is a response of obedience to Christ.

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In verse 13, he says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. One of the vehicles of Christ's strength to Paul is the giving of the church in Philippi.

In verse 14, he says, yet or it could be translated as still or moreover. There's more I need to say about this. You, church, have done well that you shared in my distress.

[11 : 06] You have done well. You've shared in my distress. It's surprising. He says, not that you did well by pulling me out of my distress.

He didn't say you did well in eliminating my source of distress. He says, you did well by sharing in my distress. Why?

Paul has accepted that the distress in his life is God's good, loving, fatherly providence over him. The distress is not the problem.

It's what God's using to give Paul more and more of this mind of Christ. Turn back to Philippians 1.13. Do you remember how Paul spoke of this distress?

Philippians 1.13. Paul says it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard into everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

[12 : 05] His distress, he summarizes it as chains. But those chains are squeezing out of him like you would take a lemon and squeeze it out. Squeeze the juice out of it.

That's what the distress is doing to Paul. It's squeezing Christ so that all can see. And Paul tells this church in Philippi. Church, you shared the money that God put in your hands with me.

Well, God put a ministry in my hands. And I'm sharing this ministry with you. You share in my distress. You share in my ministry. Look at Philippians 1.6.

Both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

In his distress, Paul gets to identify very closely with Jesus Christ. And in sharing financially with Paul, the church of Philippi now gets to share in identifying with Christ.

[13 : 09] We are sharing in the grace of Christ together. By sharing financially. Churches do well. Churches obey Jesus Christ.

That's what it is. Financial sharing is a response of obedience to King Jesus. Joyful reflection number three. Financial sharing ought to be through your local church.

Financial sharing. This pattern we see in scripture is that it ought to be through your local church.

Look at verse 15. So Philippians chapter four, verse 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 you only meaning this church, this congregation. Who had Paul expected to share with him for ministry?

[14 : 11] He could have said no individuals shared with me or no families shared with me. But he says in verse 15, no church shared with me.

Let's turn also to Second Corinthians eight. Second Corinthians chapter eight. Verses one through five. And as you're turning there, I'll remind you.

Paul says when I departed from Macedonia, you know, in the beginning of the gospel, when I first brought the gospel to your region, the beginning of the gospel in you, among you. And then I left Macedonia.

This region of Macedonia, not only is where Philip the second and Alexander the Great are from, but it also includes three churches that we are familiar with.

The other churches in Macedonia are the Bereans. They're wonderful. We love the Bereans. They're the ones who are always searching everything against the scripture. Paul is preaching and they're examining the scriptures for themselves.

[15:11] The other church in Macedonia were the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians endured extreme persecution. And Paul encouraged them about the second coming of Christ and the resurrection, the glorious promise.

And the third church in Macedonia are the Philippians. So these Macedonian churches are some of the best. Paul has hardly anything negative to say to them compared to others. And we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, a reference.

Paul wrote, We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

They gave according to their means, as I can testify beyond their means of their own accord. We just read how God did this among the Israelites in Exodus.

He brought them out of slavery and bondage and they joyfully brought these freewill offerings because it was the Egyptian slave masters that said, take it all and leave with it. God put it in their hands to begin with.

[16:25] They joyfully and willingly brought it back to God. Now God's doing this exact same thing among the Greeks, among the Gentiles and all the other nations that will believe. Now, Paul was assessing the means of the church.

He says these churches had poverty, but they gave according to their means. And I even witnessed beyond their means. It was these Macedonian churches.

So organized, orderly congregations that experienced this test of affliction and extreme poverty. God in his providence made these early churches suffer persecution and were tested in that way.

And these congregations decided to give even beyond their means. Why is that? Because it was the overflowing wealth of generosity flowing from the abundance of their joy in the Lord.

Now, that's the type of church we all want to be and be part of. A church that is so overjoyed by the love of the Lord in the face of persecution. We're reminded that anything God's put in our hands as a church is God's already.

[17:36] We give it back to him joyfully. A few practical conclusions. Up to this point. Christians ought to give generously.

At least according to our means. And if God stirs your heart even above our means. With his help. Number two. Christians ought to give in proportion to the abundance of joy that we have in the Lord.

Number three. Christians ought to give through their local church. As we read in these two examples in Philippians and 2 Corinthians 8. And we've seen in Acts 11:30 that it's under the oversight of the elders that these gifts were exchanged among churches.

So it's in an orderly way. To be very specific. Christians ought not to be burdened or nickel and dimed by parachurch organizations or individual ministers or missionaries.

Christians ought to give through their local church in an orderly way with the Constitution, the division of roles and the oversight of a local church. So much of the abuse that's gone on in ministries because that's not happening.

[18:42] Basic. Fundamental. Fourth conclusion is that churches then ought to give generously. With their ministers, partner churches and missionaries.

Their needs on our hearts and minds. So to put it another way, if churches would do a better job with their part as an organized congregation, it would support those biblical missionaries that welcome that type of oversight.

It would eliminate all of those parasites on the visible church. And therefore, Christians are freed up. I give to my local church. No more, no less.

That's I give to God through the church and the church. Then we have a process and we decide how that will be strategically allocated as the Lord leads each congregation. So financial sharing

ought to be ordinarily through your local church.

I say ordinarily because there are also exceptions. It's great for Christians to be generous. But in terms of a clear biblical pattern, that's what I see. Joyful reflection. Number four.

[19 : 46] Financial sharing supplies the necessities for ministry. Financial sharing is what supplies the necessities for ministry. Look at verse 15.

So Philippians chapter four, verse 15 again. Paul says no church shared with me. Again, he's expecting it of a church. Concerning giving and receiving.

But you only congregation in Philippi. Here's another reason why this is a good term for us to use. It's sharing. Paul says it's giving and receiving.

When you do give to God through your church, God blesses you. He shares with you the ministry that he's doing. You care. You're giving.

You're knowing. You're staying in tune. You're providing that oversight as a congregation. You're interested. To put it negatively, when churches don't share financially, then churches are the ones missing out on ministry partnership.

[20 : 54] There is a blessing and a sharing, a giving and a receiving. Think of our own experience. We have four missionaries, four missionary families.

All of them are devoted 100% to Bible translation and church planting among the least reached peoples of the world. This congregation has been very generous in our little two and a half years. We want to be all in. And with these four missionaries, we want to know everything we can about them. We want to read their newsletters. We want to stay current. We want to pray for them. When we're praying for our needs, we're remembering them.

And just think what a return that's been. What a blessing. Yeah, it's been a little bit of giving on our part, but it's been so much receiving. We feel it with our missionaries in northern Africa, a country I'm not allowed to publicly mention.

But they're waiting on this container to arrive. And as their parents are walking their daughters to the local school, these teenagers are picking on them and bullying them, including the parents.

[21 : 56] And we're praying for them, that they'll have a love for these people that need to know the Lord. We share. We receive just as much when we think of Aaron Shryock.

He came and spoke to our church a couple years ago. And he's translating a portion of the Bible for the Tokoko people in Chad, also in northern Africa. We read recently that his wife was diagnosed with cancer.

And while that's happening, this extreme trial and affliction, the Gospel of Mark is completed, the first draft. Can you imagine being this people group where a church gets planted in Chad, an unreached people group with their own dialect.

And now you have the entire book of Mark, the Gospel, the life of Jesus. I mean, we could organize an entire worship service on the Lord's Day just using the book of Mark.

For your call to worship, let's read from Mark. In our own heart language, confession of sin, assurance of pardon, it's all coming out of Mark. The sermons in Mark. Our benedictions from Mark.

[22 : 57] We're going to soak everything out of this book of Mark because it's in our heart language. We're sharing in that because this church gave a very small percentage of the total project, but it's our sharing, giving and receiving.

What a joy. We don't want to miss out on that ministry opportunity. And doesn't it just make you want for that people in that church more books of the Bible? There's more than just Mark.

Mark's wonderful, but let's give them more and more and more. And we need to channel our resources to be part of this ministry. We don't want to miss out on the blessing of partnership with missions like that.

In verse 16, Philippians 4, 16. For even in Thessalonica, you sent aid once and again for my necessities. The Philippian church provided what was necessary for Paul to fulfill his ministry.

His ministry was to plant this church in Thessalonica. There's a real labor that goes into this work.

[24 : 00] Paul clarified, look, one plants, another waters, but it's God who does the miracle of growth. No one can do that. But it is a real labor that goes into planting and watering and cultivating and pulling weeds and tending what God miraculously does in the life of a church.

So what is this labor? This labor that the church has helped support? Would you turn now to 1 Timothy chapter 4?

Because Paul says a similar thing to the next generation. And remember, Timothy was not an apostle. Timothy was a delegate and an elder, just a pastor.

Paul tells Timothy, fulfill your ministry, fulfill this labor. So what is this labor that goes in to ministering? What is necessary for such ministry?

As you're turning to 1 Timothy 4, 13, I'll also read for us Acts 6, 4. This was the pattern set by the apostles that we will devote ourselves continually, continually to prayer, to the ministry of the word.

[25 : 09] And so in 1 Timothy 4, 13, Paul wrote, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

Timothy is to be set apart, devoted to that. Look two verses down, 1 Timothy 4, 15. Paul tells Timothy, be diligent in these things.

Devote yourself wholly, completely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. In verse 16, he tells them, keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching and persist in this.

See, this is long-term ministry. You're going to persist in these duties, devoting yourself wholly to them. Well, Timothy could not fulfill the charge that was given him unless churches, specifically the local church, would provide what was needed to support him in that calling and in that labor.

If a church does not provide for this labor, then the necessities are not supplied in the way that God ordained. That would be the ordinary way of God helping ministers to fulfill their calling would be through the provision of the congregation, the local church.

[26 : 31] Does that mean God can't do it? Of course not. God is doing this in ways that blow our mind around the world. But these are the extraordinary ways or the scrappy ways that God gets it started so they mature and grow in to what God has ordained.

God ordains the financial sharing of churches to supply what is necessary for long-term ministry.

Joyful reflection number five. Financial sharing is evidence of spiritual fruit.

Financial sharing is evidence of spiritual fruit. Look at verse 17. Philippians 4, verse 17. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Paul's main concern is not the financial gift itself, but that the church may know this fruit. That they may enjoy the fruit of maturing in their faith.

A pastor from a previous generation named John Gill, he wrote, Paul had not, Paul had been God's instrument in planting this church.

[27 : 40] And to keep that same image, you know, Paul says that it flourished again. Well, Isaiah 61.3 refers to trees of righteousness. So that's how Paul is describing this church in Philippi.

It's the fulfillment of this great prophecy. This church in Philippi, planted, grown by God, is now maturing into a tree of righteousness. And Gill said, Paul's great desire was to see fruit, the fruit of righteousness now growing on this tree of the local church.

Paul used this language also. So you can flip back to Philippians 1.11. He prayed that they would be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. And Jesus himself reminded believers that God does not forget to recompense the acts of grateful obedience to his people.

In Matthew 10.24, Jesus said, if even a cup of cold water is given to a prophet or a minister of Christ on account of his being so, it shall be rewarded.

[28 : 50] So financial sharing is evidence of spiritual fruit, spiritual maturity. Another way of putting it is that a church that is not sharing financially, generously, is an immature church.

It's a sapling that needs deeper roots, deeper trust in God and needs to mature. It's evidence of spiritual fruit. Joyful reflection number six.

Financial sharing is a well-pleasing offering to God himself. Financial sharing is a well-pleasing offering to God himself.

Philippians 4.18. Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you.

So it's more than just money. It's a care package. They lovingly prepared something that Epaphroditus could take with him. We can only speculate what it might have been.

[29 : 51] Most likely some encouraging notes. Maybe a handmade, you know, tunic or blanket that he could wear. Maybe more blank parchment and ink.

I mean, how else is he going to get these supplies? Can you think of that? Like the Philippians caring so much about Paul and thinking, here's what Paul can do from prison.

He prays and he can write letters. How else would Paul be able to write all of these letters that we now have preserved as the New Testament? It might have been on the blank parchment using the ink that Epaphroditus carried with him for six months.

Sit by this little congregation in Philippi. That might have been God's providence to give us the autographs of scripture that have now been preserved and copied down. He rejoiced.

He's full. He has everything he needs. And he says in verse 18, it's a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. Christians want to please God.

[30 : 56] And so when Christians hear these instructions from the Lord, we want to do that. That's joyful for us to be able to offer back to God. Who are we to even be able to bring God anything? And he accepts it and he's pleased by it.

The God who needs nothing. So Hebrews 13, 6. Do not forget to do good and to share. There's that word again. For with such sacrifices, God is well pleased.

And Jesus said in Matthew 6, 3. Not if, but when you give. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. The reason you don't need to worry about it or make sure someone noticed. It's because God noticed. This was an offering to God himself. It was well pleasing to the Lord. He sees what you bring.

And it's not even about the amount. Remember when Jesus was watching people give in the temple. He said it was that poor lady with her mite like a penny. But she gave all she had.

[31 : 56] And that was pleasing to God. God sees. He savors your giving in Christ's name. Though he needs nothing, he accepts it as an offering, a gift.

A way of saying thank you to him. So financial sharing is not even ultimately for the recipient. It's an offering to God himself.

Joyful reflection number seven. Sharing financially exercises faith in God, the provider of all our needs. Sharing financially exercises faith in God, who is the provider of all our needs.

Look at verses 19 and 20. Philippians 4, 19 and 20. And my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now to our God and father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Paul's using an expression here. My God shall supply all you need.

[33 : 05] I learned that to comfort a person who had suffered a loss. Ancient Jews use that expression. God fulfill your need.

So someone loses a child in sickness. Or someone's house in the ghetto gets burned. You gather around that person. You weep with them. You mourn. And you just repeat this phrase.

God fulfill your need. And that's what Paul is doing for them. Well, also, this church had been the ones making it possible for Paul to survive in prison and also to have a ministry through letter writing.

And in a more formal relationship, when you receive a gift, like I mentioned, you're expected to give something back. I think this is a beautiful, humble, gracious, polite way of Paul saying, you know, I'm in poverty.

I have nothing I can give back. But may God bless you according to his riches. His riches are kept up in glory.

[34 : 10] And may he bless you spiritually in Christ. That's what I can offer back to you. May God keep channeling blessings to your church in Christ.

He is Jehovah Jireh. God, the provider. That's who God is. When the Israelites brought offerings to be used for the building of the temple, David prayed in First Chronicles 29, 14.

Who are we, God, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from you and of your own. Have we been given?

We're simply giving back to God, our provider, while he's entrusted into our hands. So sharing financially is a way of exercising that truth, that faith.

God also gave us muscles. And if we know that if we're sitting around on the couch eating potato chips, we're not exercising those muscles, we lose them.

[35 : 15] It's attrition. But God gave us muscles to use. And so as we use them, they grow. They're strengthened. And this is what I see here as well, that we're confessing all things come from God.

He'll supply all our need. Let's exercise this muscle by sharing financially and trusting God is our provider. Well, joyful reflection number eight, the last one for today from this passage, is that financial sharing celebrates the ever advancing kingdom of God.

Financial sharing celebrates the ever advancing kingdom of God. Philippians 4, verse 21, Paul wraps it all up and he says, greet every saint in Christ Jesus.

Every single one. Keep a list. Know who are the saints of the church at Philippi. Greet every single one of them in Christ Jesus.

Can you imagine being able to do that? You know, it's like it's like grandma wants me to give you a hug from her. So come here, you know, give him a big hug. That's from grandma. Paul wants a greeting for every single saint.

[36 : 29] And to greet a saint is to celebrate Christ's kingdom has advanced in this place. These are enemies of God, sinners, rebellious that would hate God.

And God has lovingly drawn them to himself and organized them into a church. So a greeting like this is a celebration of Christ's advancing kingdom.

And look what he says next. This is so interesting. The brethren who are with me greet you. Well, it might be Timothy, Epaphroditus, maybe other Christians that were traveling back and forth across this Aegean way, this road doing commerce.

But they're also believers. And then in verse 22, he says, all the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. Well, we know that those those guards, the praetorian guards and those who are of Caesar's household, you know, rotating through and keeping a watch on Paul.

They have never met the church in Philippi. Why are they sending their greeting? Especially make sure to tell them that these guys are greeting you, too. It's celebrating that these are believers here in Rome, a ministry of the trains of the distress.

[37 : 39] They believe now and they feel this bond with you, even though they've never met you. Well, the only way they would know these guards in Rome would know about this church in Philippi is if Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus tell these guards about them.

These are your brothers and sisters. And we actually have language from Scripture of how Paul described these churches in Macedonia. Second Corinthians 8 for this Macedonian church begged earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

And this not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. See how Paul honors them and commends them so highly.

So then these Praetorian guards, these tough guys that got saved, they're saying, man, tell those saints hi from me, too. And I'll pray for their church. I'm encouraged by their example of maturity. Well, Paul's ministry to the Philippians in this letter, you remember how it began? It began with a wonderful, powerful word. Philippians 1.1.

[38 : 50] Grace. Grace to you. And peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, do you see how his letter to the same church ends?

It ends as it began. Verse 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. That's the gospel kingdom that we belong to.

We enter by grace. We enter by grace. We remain in Christ's kingdom by his grace. And grace one day will bring me home. The grace of the Lord be with each saint, with each soul, because everyone is precious and an important member of the body.

Greet every single one that the grace of Jesus has touched. We sing of this too. Every single one of those that God saves are his delight.

If you know this wonderful grace of God, you are the delight of God. You are precious in his holy sight because you were bought by him at such a price.

[40 : 01] We sing. We sing. Let the glory of the Lord forever be our joy. May redemption be the theme of our song. For by grace we have been saved.

And by grace we shall proclaim to the corners of the earth that Christ has come. That's what happened in Philippi. That's what happened in Rome.

And we too, Reformed Heritage Church, we have this opportunity. In part through sharing of the finances God has shared with us to celebrate the ever advancing kingdom of Christ.

With his help and by his grace may we do that joyfully for his glory. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your grace. Thank you for drawing us into your kingdom.

Thank you for maturing us as individuals and as a congregation. We trust the promise to the church in Philippi for ourselves that you who began a good work among this congregation, you will see it through to completion for your glory and for our good.

[41 : 11] Amen.