

## A Beautiful Thing: The Value of Christian Giving — Philippians 4:14-20

### *Introduction, outlines*

- Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 8:9-15; 9:6-15; Philippians 4:10-20.
- Teaching scripture text:

Philippians 4:14-20 14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction. 15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

- There are two common attitudes toward the topic of money. Some get very excited and others don't care at all. Some people basically see money as their life, while others never seriously think about it, for they never lack the supply of money. Which kind of person are you?

### **Outline:**

Title: A Beautiful Thing — The Value of Christian Giving

1. Giving is a way to share in the gospel work (v14)
2. Giving is a way to meet the saints' need (v15)
3. Giving is a way to make ministers more effective (v16)
4. Giving is a way to store up treasure in heaven (v17)
5. Giving is a way to offer up God-pleasing worship (v18)
6. Giving is a way to experience God's rich provision (v19)
7. Giving is a way to ascribe more glory to God (v20)

### **Giving is a way to share in the gospel work (v14)**

- “you have done well”: Paul gives them a thumb-up for their giving. The meaning of “well” is not the basic moral concept of right and wrong, but something of greater value that deserves admiration and praise, like a beautiful piece of artwork. So, their giving is a beautiful thing. Why? The following verses give us the rich value of Christian giving.
- “share...in my affliction”: Take joint-stock companies for an illustration. When a shareholder joins in the stock through investment, he becomes part of the company and is involved in all company operations. In original Greek, this word “share” is an enhanced form of what's usually translated as fellowship, signifying the relationship of participation and involvement together. “Affliction” is because Paul is in prison for the sake of gospel. Furthermore, Christians participate in the entire gospel work through their giving, not just in afflictions. All the labor, joy and gospel fruit are shared among every Christian who has given to the cause.

- “with me”: It emphasizes personal relationships. Their giving is to Paul personally, not to an organization, for they know him, love him, trust him, and they know that God will continually use him to proclaim the gospel of His kingdom, so they participate through their giving.

I believe one of the reasons Paul can endure so much suffering for the gospel is because many saints share in the suffering with him. 1:29 says “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Are you suffering for Christ’s sake? The grace of suffering is granted to every believer, and you can receive this grace through giving.

### **Giving is a way to meet the saints’ need (v15)**

- “in the matter of giving and receiving”: Give earthly possessions, receive heavenly profit (v17).
- “shared with me”: Same word as in v14. Here Paul does not focus on his own needs, but looks at church giving on a much broader scale. He is here talking about their participation with Paul in giving to all the saints in a global sense. (cf. Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:10)

God’s will for His people is “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack” (2 Corinthians 8:15). The means to accomplish this goal is through Christians’ giving.

### **Giving is a way to make ministers more effective (v16)**

- “in Thessalonica”: The giving of the Philippian church has a very special significance for Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica, so Paul mentions this point specifically.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 tells us that some among the Thessalonian believers “are... doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.” Paul intentionally did not exercise his just right of receiving wages for the purpose of their spiritual growth, so “with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day”, not be a burden to any of them, in order to “offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our examples.”

- “you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs”: Paul was able to do this not only because of his own work day and night, but also because of the giving by the Philippians. Otherwise, Paul would have to either take wages from the Thessalonians or reduce the hours of gospel work and put more hours into making tent. Either way, it would’ve hurt the effectiveness of his ministry. So one value of giving is to help the gospel workers to minister more effectively and not have to spend too much effort meeting their own needs.

### **Giving is a way to store up treasure in heaven (v17)**

- “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for ... your account”: You are what I really care about. All I want is your profit. And, not physical profit, but spiritual; not temporal profit, but eternal. Giving produces eternal profit for your own soul.
- “the profit”: Literally, “fruit”. The focus is not money, but fruit. Money will perish, but fruit is eternal. God is the One receiving the fruit, who saves us in order that “we might bear fruit for God” (Romans

7:4). Paul prays that the Philippians would be “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ” (1:11). Giving is a way for Paul to see the fruit that they bear.

- “which increases to your account”: Accounting term. Here’s how your heavenly account works —— For every fruit you bear, you get profit in heaven. Our Lord Jesus asks us to store up treasure in heaven, how? By bearing fruit! Each and every offering a Christian give by faith is a fruit that stores up treasure for him in his heavenly account. In the end, God will reward every believer according to that account.

### **Giving is a way to offer up God-pleasing worship (v18)**

- “But I have received everything in full”: This functions as a receipt. And, “have an abundance” doesn’t mean Paul is rich, but is a statement of humble contentment, for he has learned to be content in all circumstances (vv 11-13).
- “a fragrant aroma”: An OT term for offering sacrifice. It’s as if Paul had smelled a fragrant aroma right from the altar. The key isn’t what Paul gets, but that God is well pleased.
- “an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God”: “well-pleasing” focuses on the emotion, for God has emotions; while “acceptable” focuses on the standard, for God also has standards. Not every sacrifice will He accept. (cf. Proverbs 21:27) Only through the atoning sacrifice that Jesus has offered can we now offer our sacrifice of worship as a fragrant aroma acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

V17 focuses on the future, v18 focuses on the present. They are well-pleasing to God even now.

Christian giving is a worship well-pleasing to God.

### **Giving is a way to experience God’s rich provision (v19)**

- “And my God will supply all your needs”: This is a promise, not merely a beautiful wish. God will supply all your needs. Why do we still see needs? 1. People like to define needs as anything they lust for (“I need abalone lobster soap!”); 2. This promise is conditional, and not everyone meets its conditions!

What are the conditions? 1. The text says “in Christ Jesus”, so it’s only for Christians; 2. Note that “you” here refers to those Philippians who give faithfully! Sacrificial giving is one of the conditions that Christians can expect to have God’s rich supply.

**Proverbs 11:24-25** “There is one who scatters, and *yet* increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, *and yet it results* only in want.

**25** The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.”

**Proverbs 19:17** “One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, And He will repay him for his good deed.”

**2 Corinthians 9:8** “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;”

## Giving is a way to ascribe more glory to God (v20)

- “to our God and Father *be* the glory”: God supplies all our needs “according to His riches in glory” in order for us to give all glory to Him. The reason we can have anything to give is because God has given it to us in the first place. The purpose for which God created all things is to display the riches of His glory, and one of the ways He displays His glory is through supplying the needs of His saints, and especially of those who give willingly and joyfully.

**Theological expansion:** Three aspects of glory—— *Essential* glory, *manifested* glory and *ascribed* glory. God’s essential glory has infinite riches that can’t ever increase or decrease. God shows part of His essential glory to us according to His own will, and this is manifested glory. When God shows His glory to you, you are under moral obligation to give glory to Him through worship, and that’s ascribed glory, for all glory is His to begin with.

Ascribing glory to God is the ultimate value of Christian giving!

**2 Corinthians 9:12-13** “**12** For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. **13** Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,”