

October 14, 2018

Give! Because God Will Supply.

Philippians 4:13-23

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8)

LTS: 1 Pet 1:13-25

I don't know what your experience has been as we have worked our way verse-by-verse through Paul's letter to the Philippians, but I have found it to be one of the most engaging and encouraging studies I have ever done. There is so much here to delight in and be challenged by that I can hardly bear see it come to the end. Nevertheless, today's message will likely prove to be the last in our study before we move on to another part of God sufficient word.

If you have your Bible this morning I would ask you to join me once again in looking at Philippians 4:10-19

Read Phil 4:10-19

As I mentioned last week, this part of Paul's letter is a little different than what we normally find in the writings of Paul. He is not attempting to crush some false doctrine or warn of any false teacher. In fact, he really isn't offering any commands at all. He is simply writing a very gracious note of appreciation and thanksgiving to this dear church whom he loves.

In case you don't recall the back story here, Paul is writing from his Roman incarceration. He may be under house arrest or languishing in some jail cell awaiting the trial that will decide his fate – life or death. In either case, however, the important thing to note is that Paul had recently received a surprise visit from one of the brothers from the little church of Philippi which Paul had planted with his own hands. The brother's name is Epaphroditus, and he came bearing gifts.

Needless to say, Paul was more than a little happy to receive this unexpected visitor. He says (4:10) "I rejoiced greatly that at length you revived your concern for me." It had apparently been some time since Paul had last heard from this church.

Some have suggested that it had been upwards of 10 years. Even so, he was elated that they had once again made contact and that they had sent some material support.

Nevertheless, he wanted them to know that he really didn't need their gift. He was content in the Lord with what little provisions he had. In fact, he takes the opportunity here to model for them, and us, a heart of contentment. A heart that is at peace with little and does not covet what it doesn't have. He famously writes (13) ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

The phrase "I can do" is Lit., "I have the power to do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me."

That is, I have the power...

- to rejoice in the Lord always (4)
- to defeat anxiety with prayer (6)
- to love the Lord with my mind (8)
- and to be content with what I have, no matter how much or how little (11-12)

What was true of Paul is true of you and me. Because we have the Spirit of Jesus, we have the power to do everything God calls us to do no matter how challenging.

It's important for us, however, to observe that while it was true that he was content without the money and supplies they sent him, he was grateful just the same. And this is where we pick up in the text where we left off last week.

The remainder of this message is really about giving and sharing. Occasionally, someone will ask me, "Why don't you ever preach on giving?" My answer is simply that I will preach on it whenever the text of Scripture addresses it. The nature of expository preaching is that the point of the message should always be dictated by the point of the passage. And this morning, the point of the passage is that God loves a cheerful giver and it is more blessed to give than receive.

I have four hooks to hang our thoughts on this morning, and they are very simple:¹

¹ This outline is not my own creation. I have borrowed it from a series of messages preached by Alister Begg on this passage.

- I. Partnership
- II. Perspective
- III. Pleasure
- IV. Prospect

I. Partnership (14-16):

Read 14-16

1. It seems here that Paul is mitigating against the possibility that the Philippians may think him ungrateful for the gift. After all, he just told them that he didn't need what they sent. But in fact, he was grateful. He says, (14) "It was kind of you to share my trouble."

- A. The word Kind means commendable, honorable, or beautiful. In Paul's eyes it was a beautiful thing they did. I can imagine them sitting together as the church that met in Lydia's house praying for the Lord's work everywhere and especially for the labor of their beloved Apostle. Someone in the body is led by the Spirit to bring up the fact that Paul is in jail and that he surely would have significant needs.
- B. So, they begin to brainstorm and strategize about how they might share in his trouble. You should know, by the way, that the word for "share" (14) comes from koinonia - fellowship. A similar word comes up again (15) when Paul recalls that they alone entered into "Partnership" with him. Again, the word "partnership" is also rooted in koinonia.
- C. So the members of the church hatch a plan to gather whatever money and supplies they can scrape together and make arrangements to have them delivered some 800 miles away at the hand of their own Epaphroditus.

2. Paul is writing about their willingness to generously give and he portrays it in the context of partnership, or true fellowship. It had been a long-standing partnership between he and the church at Philippi. It started in the early days of his Gospel proclamation [ESV – "beginning of the gospel"]. You can read about it in ACTS 16 where Paul and Silas show up in Philippi for the first time and bring the message of the gospel to some women who gathered for prayer by the river. Paul speaks to them and the Lord opens Lydia's heart to what Paul was saying, and she believed.

3. In those early days this was a very small church. When they originally met together it would have hardly looked like anything other than a family gathering. There was Paul and Silas at the front of the room teaching and exhorting. Then there was Lydia, with all her elegance and poise as a successful business woman. There would have been another rough looking man of whom it was apparent that he had lived the hard life as the local jailer. His wife and children (his “household”) would have gathered with them on the Lord’s day as well. And then there would be a young girl whose name we’ll never know this side of heaven. It was she who had until recently been possessed by a demon but was now possessed - in a new way - by the joy of the Lord. We know Euodia and Syntyche, these two godly women with a zeal for the gospel and a propensity for strong opinions were also there. And Paul loved those women. And finally, we would have seen Epaphroditus, and anyone else who had bowed to the Lordship of Jesus since Paul was there last. But still it would have been a gathering smaller than some of our weekly small groups.

4. But Paul didn’t much care about how large the church was. He recollects with great fondness that this little church, invisible to the busy world around it, had a long history of generosity. Not long after the incident of their arrest and the earthquake that demolished the jail, Paul and Silas left Philippi for the larger region Macedonia to further gospel growth elsewhere. And when they left, their support dried up everywhere except in Philippi.

5. He recalls how even when He and Silas found themselves ministering in Thessalonica, a significant distance away from Philippi, they continued to send support. Paul was grateful for their history of faithfulness as well as their renewed concern for him.

6. Partnership, then, seems like the appropriate word to use for Paul’s relationship to this church. Partnership connotes the idea of a group of people who use their collective gifts, talents, and treasure in mutual concern to accomplish a single goal. In this case, the goal was to make sure everyone within their reach would hear the good news of the risen Christ. Those who gather for fellowship are actually partners in the gospel. As such, they go out of our way to help one another whenever someone has need.

By the way, at C.B.C there is almost always someone in the body who has financial or material needs and some of those needs are

overwhelming. This is true here even as I speak. If you would like to make an anonymous contribution to those needs, you need only talk with one of the elders and we will direct you from there.

7. We see this kind of giving and sharing in the early days of the church in Jerusalem before Paul's repentance. Acts 2 tells us that the people gathered together in homes and shared what they had with one another. Acts 2:44–46 reads,

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵
And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

8. When it comes to money and material goods, the presence of the H.S. makes Christians generous. We desire to meet one another's needs. We desire to support the work of the ministry. The gospel changes our view of money from something we see merely as a means of personal happiness to the means by which we can bless and help others for the glory of Christ. This is Christian partnership.

II. Perspective (17):

Read v. 17

1. This strikes us as an odd, almost disingenuous, statement. At first blush it may sound like Paul is saying, "Listen, I am not so un-spiritual as to have to admit that I have needs. After all, I'm an apostle and apostles don't have needs. You, on the other hand, do have a need. You need to give. It's for your good. And God likes it when you give to people like me.

2. But that's ridiculous! Paul was no money hungry televangelist. So, what is Paul actually saying? Well, he's saying, I am genuinely excited about the gift. I praise God for the gift. But What excites me is not the benefits I receive from your gifts, but the benefit YOU will receive from your gifts.

3. Now someone is saying, "Thank you very much pastor, but that doesn't clear anything up at all! Can you take another run at explaining that?" I know, right? It's confusing. It seems like a bona fide non sequitur. It just doesn't add up ... unless, of

course, you know where Paul is coming from. What is the basis of Paul's statement here? Well, he is getting his perspective from a source that many are unfamiliar with; namely, the O.T. Scriptures. That's right! Paul is making this confusing statement based on the teaching of a repeated O.T. promise. You ask, "What Scriptures? What Promise" And I'll say, I'm glad you asked.

- Deut. 15:10 God is speaking about how his people should take care of the poor, and he warns that they should "not look grudgingly on the poor and give him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord against you and you will be guilty of sin. Rather. "You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake."
- Proverbs 28:27 "Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes [from the poor] will get many a curse."
- Proverbs 11:24-25 "One gives freely yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."
- Proverbs 19:17 "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed."
- Isaiah 58:7-11 "Is not (the fasting God approves) to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday ¹¹ And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

4. Beloved, these were precious promises to every O.T. Jew. And guess what Paul was! An O.T. Jew – and a N.T. apostle of Christ. But when he became a follower of Christ he didn't forget or neglect God's promises of blessing for those who are generous with what they have.

5. Then again, Paul didn't need to rely exclusively on O.T. promises, Consider this:

- Luke 6:38 Jesus picks up on this O.T. theme and declares, “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”
- Luke 6:38, Jesus said, give and it will be given to you.”
- 2 Cor. 9:6 Paul taught this to the Corinthians when he wrote, Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly. Whoever sows bountifully and reap bountifully.”

6. This is the principle of the harvest. That which you sow you will also reap, and the more you sow, the more you will reap.

7. The reason Paul said what he said to his friends in Philippi is because he knew and believed these Scriptures. He earnestly believed that because the Philippians gave so generously to him, God was sure to pour out his blessing upon them so that they will be more blessed than the one who received!

8. Are these promises still valid today? Of course, they are! Sometimes the blessings are material and tangible. Sometimes they are spiritual and eternal. In fact, we know for certain that no matter what, these dear saints were “laying up treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves cannot break in and steal.” In the end, when we see Christ, he will NOT neglect to reward those who were happy to spend and be spent for God.

9. And by the way, its no use making the excuse that you don’t have anything to give. Let me show you this in 2 Corinthians 9

- Read v.8
- Read context, v. 7
- Read v. 10-12

10. So Paul was excited about their gift NOT because it was going to meet some great need of his, but because it was going to result in great blessing that would be theirs.

11. Is that the way we think giving? Is that what we think whenever a new missionary is presented to the church for support? Do you look forward to the part in the worship service where we get to worship Jesus by giving away our hard-earned money? Do we have a biblical perspective on giving and sharing? Paul did. And it was how he was teaching his beloved friends at Philippi to think about money and resources as well.

III. Pleasure (18):

Read v. 18

1. In case someone is still put out because Paul seemed unthankful for the gift, now he makes it clear.

- I have received Full Payment (it is enough)
- I have an abundance. (It is more than enough)
- I am completely supplied (What more could I ask for?)
- In short, Paul is saying, I am overwhelmed by your generosity.

2. And then notice how he describes their gift. He pictures it not merely as a transfer of funds and goods but as an O.T. sacrifice offered to God with a pure heart. He says, the gift you sent through Epaphroditus is “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”

3. Time will prevent us from digging very deep here, but I want to show you that this is the language of the O.T. sacrificial system.

- Gen. 8:20–21, Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man...”
- Ex. 29:18 The instruction is to “burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD. It is a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.

4. When you study the O.T. you discover that God didn't accept all of the offerings made in his name. Some of them were a stench in his nostrils. But when a sacrifice is made in obedience to the word of God and with a joyful, worshipful heart, it is a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

5. Listen, the Philippians didn't just give. They gave sacrificially. And these were not wealthy people! Listen to how Paul describes those who lived in Macedonia when he was taking an offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. He writes, 2 Cor. 8:1–5.

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² 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. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

6. No wonder their gift to Paul was viewed as a “pleasing aroma” to the Lord. It was a sacrifice. It was offered to God as a willing, worshipful, sacrifice. It cost them something. It was not easy, but they did it to the glory of God and the good of His needy people.

7. Is that how you give?

This is Partnership, Perspective, Pleasure, and now the

IV. Prospect

Read. 19

1. Paul is still teaching his beloved Philippians about God. And notice he calls Him “My God.” The God of whom he is speaking is the one with whom Paul is intimately acquainted. It’s as if He is saying, “I have staked my whole life on Him from the beginning and I can tell you this – He has never once let me down. “My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory.” You will never need to worry about running out of what you need to be faithful to the gospel and faithful to Christ. The supply that God has access to is an infinite supply! And he will freely give it to you, so you will have all sufficiency to do his will and to share with others. So, give freely! Give generously! Give sacrificially! Spend and be spent! Give your all!

2. I remember as a child in church singing with the congregation a hymn that I think perfectly reflects Paul message when it says of God,

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

3. The benediction in verse 20 seems especially appropriate. “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

4. O beloved, this is the great grace of our awesome God. Paul says He is “My God.” And so many of us here can say with Paul, “My God.” But I must ask, dear friend, do you call Him, “My God”? Is He real and living in You? Do you love Him? Today, this very day, you can become a child of God if you will repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ, God’s only means of salvation. Surrender your all to Him and he will become your great and glorious Savior, and you His dear child.

4. Well, this has been a marvelous study. We started it together 11 months ago, and we have covered it 28 messages. It’s bitter sweet to come to the end, isn’t it? And yet, I can’t wait to see what the Lord has for us next!