

Message #25

Philippians 4:15-20

In my office looking straight at me are pictures of five men: John Walvoord, J. Vernon McGee, C. I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer and John Miles. John Miles was the most humble, faithful man of God I have ever or will ever have known.

He studied under Dr. Chafer; he started a ministry to service men; he planted a church; he developed a curriculum and became President of a theological school for over 40 years; he pastored three churches; he was interim pastor at several churches and he started Tent Makers Bible Missions. I watched this man. I traveled with this man. I loved this man. God used him to change my life.

I personally knew him for 30 years, from 1979 to 2009, when he went home to be with the Lord. In all the years I knew him, I never once heard him ask or beg for money. One time I asked him how much money have you handled over the years, and his answer was several million dollars.

Now when you met him, you would never know by talking to him that this man had been responsible for generating several million dollars for God. He did not own a big house; he did not drive a fancy car; he did not own a yacht. Money never seemed to be important to him. What was important to him was the will of God.

When people gave money to the school, he would give other people raises and not give himself a raise. The thing that drove him was his desire to do things for God. He dreamed of having a theological school that could train people for nothing. I have often thought perhaps in some small way our internet ministry that features those doctrines and book studies is fulfilling part of his dream.

When I was in school, we used to take an offering at chapel once a week. I heard him say, the reason we take this offering from students is not so we get money, in fact we get very little. The reason we take the offering is so that students will learn to systematically give so they will learn this is a key to the blessings of God.

Paul was glad that people supported him and gave him money. But we need to understand the reason why. Paul never believed that the success of his ministry depended on a church supporting him. **The reason he was thankful that people gave money to him was because he knew that this did earn the giver eternal rewards.**

In the course of Paul's life and ministry, he knew what it was like to have abundant poverty and also abundant prosperity. No matter what Paul had, it didn't change him. Regardless of his financial situation, he was focused on the will of God. **Paul taught on the subject of money; he defended his position on the subject of money; but he never begged for money. He never wrote letters telling people that if they did not support him, his ministry would collapse.**

What Paul taught the Philippians here was this:

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TO SACRIFICIALLY GIVE THEIR MONEY TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFULLY DOING GOD'S WORK AND PREACHING GOD'S WORD, NOT FOR THE MINISTER'S SAKE, BUT FOR THEIR OWN ETERNAL PROFITABILITY SAKE.

When God's people consistently give to support God's work, they are laying up treasures in heaven and they will see God do some wonderful things for them. If we faithfully give to God, a faithful God will give to us.

Now the vast majority of believers in the early church were not wealthy. Many especially from the Macedonian church were very poor (II Cor. 8:2). There were a few who had a lot of money (I Tim. 6:9-10, 17-19), but there weren't too many.

But giving to the Lord is part of a faithful N.T. Christian life. It has been calculated that there are in the Bible 500 verses on prayer; 500 verses on faith and 2000 verses on use of money and possessions. It also has been calculated that 16 out of 38 parables have to do with money and possessions. So obviously this is a key matter when it comes to God.

Paul wanted these believers to give their money. He wanted this church to realize that their sacrificial giving was not unappreciated, it was not unnoticed and it would not be unrewarded. God would give both temporal and eternal blessings and rewards to those who use their money for Him and His work.

There are two financial points that Paul communicates to these Philippians:

FINANCIAL POINT #1 – Paul praises the Philippians for their giving. **4:15-16**

In these verses Paul praises the church for their faithful giving. **Now carefully observe what Paul's ministry was that they supported—it was a preaching ministry (v. 15).**

The Philippian church faithfully supported Paul for his preaching and teaching ministry of the Word of God and the Gospel of God. There were not too many on earth who could unravel God's Word like Paul and no one had a better grasp of God's grace than Paul. These Philippians knew this was a rare communicator and preacher of God's Word and they fully supported him.

There is something to see here because all kinds of people are supported in religious settings for all kinds of reasons. There are many who go on deputation to get money. I truly think one of the things that must be carefully analyzed is whether or not this ministry is about faithfully communicating and teaching God's Word. I cannot imagine Paul going anywhere and saying well my goal is to go to an area and try to befriend people so maybe I can share Christ and then disciple them. Paul said I go to preach. That is what God has called me to do. The Philippians recognized that and they supported him.

Since the inception of his preaching ministry in Macedonia they financially supported Paul and they continued to support Paul when he left Macedonia. They knew the power of his preaching ministry. They were the only church that did that.

In fact, according to **verse 16**, on at least two occasions, they sent an offering to Paul while he was in another Macedonian city, Thessalonica, some 75-80 miles from Philippi. To put this in some practical perspective, this would be like me going to a church in Ann Arbor and this church financially underwrites this even though I am preaching in another church. This shows you how generous this church was and it also shows you how serious these people were about God's Word being preached.

This was a very generous church and a very solid church and Paul was praising them for their generosity to him and his ministry.

Without a doubt Paul had needs. In fact, the word "needs" (**v. 16**) indicates he had real needs and necessities of life and business, which the Philippians met. Paul had made a profound impact on the people of Philippi. God had used him to plant this church and then instruct this church.

We have seen some of the doctrines he taught right in this letter:

- 1) He taught them about eternal security - he who began the work will complete it. **1:6**
- 2) He taught them about justification by faith apart from any works. **3:9**
- 3) He taught them about religious law-keeping dogs who tried to influence them. **3:1-3**
- 4) He taught them about prayer. **1:19**
- 5) He taught them about heaven. **1:21-23**
- 6) He taught them about a Christ-like humility and mindset. **2:5-8**

Paul had taught this church well and they knew the value of that teaching and preaching ministry. This is why they supported him.

This letter was written about 10 years after Paul's first contact with the Philippians and yet they had supported him for over 10 years. Paul is basically saying thank you so much.

Before moving on, we want to make four observations about this:

(Observation #1) - Paul was supported because of the personal and pastoral contribution he made to this church through his preaching/teaching ministry.

Many who want support have no connection to the church other than they want the money. Hardly anyone in the church can testify of the person's calling and gifts or faithfulness because there has really been no connection whatsoever.

When a church chooses to support someone, it should not simply be based on deputation or a slide show.

(Observation #2) - Paul did not get this support because he asked for it or begged for it.

Paul did not put on some emotional presentation that showed the hungry children of Thessalonica. God laid it on the hearts of these Philippians and the Elders and Deacons to support Paul. He did not write them monthly support letters or monthly needs letters.

(Observation #3) - This Philippian church is the only church that continually supported Paul **(Phil. 4:15)**.

This was the only church that truly cared about the financial needs of Paul after he left it. “No church shared” in this matter of giving and receiving except “you alone.” How would you like to have been part of this church in heaven with this reputation?

(Observation #4) - The Philippian church collectively supported Paul as a church.

This was not some individual support, this was church support. This church collectively supported Paul. We know from Philippians 1:1 that this church had Elders and Deacons and it is clear that this was a church decision to support Paul for his preaching and teaching ministry. In every church there are individuals who support all kinds of things and causes. This church supported Paul collectively.

FINANCIAL POINT #2 – Paul gives reasons for praising the Philippians for their giving.
4:17-20

Now these Philippians had just sent Paul a substantial sum of money and it brought Paul great joy (4:10). There are four reasons why Paul praised the Philippians:

Reason #1 - The eternal profit reason. **4:17**

The words used in this verse are real accounting terms. These were terms used in the banking world. Paul is talking about investments, accounts and profits.

Now when it comes to financial investments here on earth, no matter how safe the investment appears to be, there are no guarantees. Most people have their “investment portfolios” and they meet with their advisor to make sure everything is secure. But the fact is, only one investment is absolutely secure.

Recently, we watched a program about a grandfather who moved his family to the United States in the early 1900’s because of war in Turkey that took everything from them. They lost their house, land and job. So they came here and became citizens and started working, thinking the United States will give them security. Then the depression hit and they lost everything again. There is no such thing as a totally secure investment because things can go wrong. But there is one investment we can make that is forever secure and that is the investment of our money in the work of God. That investment lasts forever, including in eternity.

Paul praised the Philippians for their giving, not because he was seeking another gift, but because he knew that their gift to him did have rich eternal ramifications for them. When they supported Paul, when they cared about him and his needs, God put that on their eternal account.

This is a critical point to see. When we support faithful ministers who are preaching and teaching God's Word and bearing fruit, it goes on our eternal account. This is why it is critical that we support solid preaching and teaching ministries that are bearing fruit. Supporting heretics or religious causes does not increase our eternal account.

Reason #2 - The acceptable sacrifice reason. **4:18**

The size of the offering we give is important. In fact, when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, he said that the size of the offering would determine whether or not they traveled with him (I Cor. 16:2-4).

However, more than that, the sacrifice behind the offering is that which determines how pleasing it is to God. In fact, the words "fragrant aroma" are the exact same words Paul used when referring to the personal sacrifice Jesus Christ made for the church (Eph. 5:2).

God knows what people give and God knows the sacrifice behind what people give. When you give to a ministry that is communicating truth, that offering you put in the plate is a sweet fragrant aroma to God.

Reason #3 - The practical supply reason. **4:19**

When I meet with couples and we discuss money, I present to them the Biblical philosophy that says: Give some; Save some; Spend Some. John Wesley used to take a different slant to this. He used to say, "get all you can; save all you can; give all you can."

There is a Biblical truth taught in both the O.T. and the N.T. which says God will practically give to us in direct proportion to how we have given to Him. Although these principles are often misused today by self-seeking, prosperity gospel religious frauds, there is truth to the principles:

- 1) Proverbs 3:9-10 - "Honor the Lord from your wealth...so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine."
- 2) Proverbs 11:25 - "The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered."
- 3) Proverbs 19:17 - "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed."

- 4) II Corinthians 9:6-7 - “He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- 5) Galatians 6:6-9 - “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.”

What Paul knew is that when the Philippians faithfully supported him, it practically meant God would do good things for them. They would actually see God provide for them and supply things for them because they were faithful in giving.

Now there is one key point to see here and that is the context. The context is this—these believers generously supported the ministry of Paul who was preaching and teaching the truth of God. This is the reason Paul said what he said in **verse 19**. He would not have said that if they had been supporting false or fickle religious organizations.

Reason #4 - The God-glorifying reason. **4:20**

When people of a church sacrificially give and support the work of God, it glorifies God.

When you generously give your money to support a true work of God, you basically are saying to God, “I believe your Word about the value of accurately understanding your Word and I believe one day I will spend eternity with you.” That brings glory to God.

Paul says you Philippians have the right investment portfolio. You have invested in the Word and work of God. That goes on your account forever.