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Compensation For Ministers

Biblical Ministry

The Crosses and Blessings of Ministry

Service in the kingdom of God has always brought with it sacrifice.

Luke 9:23, “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

Accordingly we are not surprised that when Peter received the call to “feed God's sheep” Christ warned him speaking of Peter's death:

John 21:18, “thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.”

When Paul was converted and commissioned into kingdom service, God said, “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:16).

Job's calling brought him to the dust.¹ Jeremiah spent many countless days imprisoned.² It is believed that Isaiah was sawn in two.³ Church history records that every apostle lost their life to martyrdom except John. Christ said, “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). Paul said, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

Ministry in the Kingdom of God will bring hardship.

Yet as difficult as it may be to serve the Lord in a world that hates Christ, that is not to say that there are not great blessings that accompany our service! Speaking of the natural mind, Paul said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

¹ Compare Job 1-2

² Compare Jeremiah 32:2; 37:21; 38:13-28

³ Compare Hebrews 11:37

Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB), “For I know the plans that I have for you,` declares the Lord, `plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”“

When Isaiah spoke of the blessing that awaits a wounded people he wrote “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11).

As we continue to study Biblical Ministry, we are going to examine a passage that describes the incredible blessing that accompanies ministry. The ministry of need will cost us much. Yet let it be known that all its ministers are richly compensated!

Compensation

Philippians 4:17, “Not because I desire a gift⁴: but I desire fruit⁵ that may abound to your account.”

The term *fruit* (variously rendered *profit*, *credit*, *reward*) is a business term used in the context of the interest accrued on a loan. This interest *abounds* or increases to your *account* or ledger. When a child of God participates in the ministry of need with the right motives and the Biblical end in view, a transaction occurs in which the Christian's net worth increases! Literally, “I long for your ledger to super-abound with interest.”

When 1 Timothy 6 was written Paul had just been released from the prison from which he penned these words to the Philippians. In the meanwhile, Timothy has been charged with the pulpit at Ephesus — which turned out to be a pastor-eating congregation. And Paul wrote 1 Timothy to encourage Timothy as the pastor and preacher to exhort the body at Ephesus. Paul gives this final exhortation directed to the wealthy believers in Ephesus.

1 Timothy 6:17, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

In this great passage Paul uses multiple puns to exhort the wealthy. In essence he says “Rich people! Don't trust your riches but God who richly supplies all our needs!”

What then should they do with their wealth?

1 Timothy 6:18 (NASB), “Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous⁶ and ready⁷ to share⁸.”

Again making use of the pun, Paul says “If you are going to be rich, be rich in good works.” This means that they needed to be generous. The idea here is sharing well or generously with; readily imparting their

⁴ δομα doma

⁵ καρπος karpos probably from the base οραραζω harpazo

⁶ ευμεταδοτος eumetadotos

⁷ κοινωνικος koinonikos

⁸ κοινωνικος koinonikos

possessions to others. Here it is in the emphatic position.

They are to be ready to share which denotes a participation or sharing in something. As the wealthy Christians share their money, they must also share their lives! They must be ready and apt to participate in the salvation of the ones to whom they have been called to minister.

When they do this — when they invest in other people with their wealth — do you know what will happen?

1 Timothy 6:19, “Laying up in store⁹ for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Once again Paul uses the terms of banking. He says, “Brothers and sisters, to invest in people is to make a deposit in eternity.” When we live to bring the face and affections of Christ to those in need we literally are making an investment in eternity which is enjoyed both now and in the life to come. This is the point of Philippians 4:17. When we participate in the ministry of need, we receive much by way of compensation. Literally, “Our eternal ledger super-abounds with interest!”

We see this throughout Scripture. When a person labors for the food which does not perish — when he pours his life into Christ and His kingdom — he receives by way of spiritual benefit and growth in grace far more than he has given up.

Proverbs 19:17, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”

Proverbs 22:9, “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.”

Luke 6:38, :” Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

2 Corinthians 9:6, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

Essential, Not Physical

But you say, “What specifically are we talking about here? In what form do the promised blessings of this passage take? What does it mean to 'reap bountifully'?”

Philippians 4:19, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

With this verse, Paul gets very specific when it comes to the nature of the compensation when it comes to kingdom ministry. The first characteristic of compensation is that it is not physical, but essential, “But my God shall supply all your need.”

⁹ αποθησαυριζω apothesaurizo

We clearly see a distinction in this text between needs and wants. As I consider life in this age, I have a host of wants. Some are Biblical. Some are pseudo-Christian. Others are out-right pagan. Yet as I consider the kingdom of God, I have a host of needs. I have the need to know Christ more intimately.¹⁰ I have the need to grow in my trust and reliance upon Him.¹¹ I have the need to be useable in His hands.¹² I have the need to be refined by fire¹³. I have the need to be content only with the grace of God.¹⁴ And I have the need for food and covering.¹⁵

It is our needs in Christ that is promised here in Philippians 4:19. If we give ourselves up for the kingdom of God, we may not get what we want, but God always will provide what we need! And hence we see the first benefit by way of compensation: The Fulfillment of our Needs!

Not in Part, But in Whole

Philippians 4:19, “But my God shall supply all your need **according to his riches in glory** by Christ Jesus.”

What is the difference between these two statements: Bill Gates has supplied me out of his wealth. Or Bill Gates as supplied me according to his wealth.

If Bill Gates supplied me out of his wealth that could mean he just gave me a dollar.

If Bill Gates supplied me according to his wealth that would mean that he gave me a sum equal to the amount that he himself possesses.

In light of this, do you see the significance of the statement that Paul makes here? He is saying that as we minister in God's kingdom, God will pour out upon us spiritual riches equal to all that there is in glory!

Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Psalms 34:10, “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”

That is the nature of the compensation promised to the child of God. Not only will it address our needs, but it will be more than we could ever imagine.¹⁶

Intimately Associated With Christ

Philippians 4:19 (NASB), “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory **in Christ Jesus.**”

¹⁰ Compare John 17:3

¹¹ Compare Proverbs 3:6-6

¹² Compare 2 Timothy 2:21

¹³ Compare 1 Peter 1:7

¹⁴ Compare 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

¹⁵ Compare Matthew 6:33

¹⁶ Compare Ephesians 3:20-21

Notice the final element, Paul uses an expression which speaks of the “in Christ” relationship.

When the Bible speaks of “in Christ” it is referencing a mystical union that we have with Christ! It is a relationship in which the believer literally is a member of Christ's body.¹⁷

While we have discussed this before, yet there are some who have never heard about this truth. Accordingly, what is the “in Christ” relationship? Notice that Scripture teaches that because of the “in Christ” relationship God chose to redeem us.¹⁸ There was never a time in eternity past that God contemplated you outside of Christ. It is only because God saw us in Him — as part of His body — that He chose us according to the kind intention of His will!

Secondly, we have been redeemed.¹⁹ Your forgiveness was, is, and will forevermore be predicated NOT upon your avowing to “try harder,” your promises, your determination, BUT upon the fact that when God considers you, He considers you “in Christ!”

Thirdly, our future glory is secure.²⁰ The future that each and every child of God anticipates as a Christian is one of Co-reigning with Christ in the New Heavens and the New Earth upon the streets of gold. This is the realization of our inheritance! It is housed “in Christ.” It is not in our sacrifice, perseverance or will but in the fact that we are a part of Christ.

From all of this I hope you see that the compensation promised to the servant in God's kingdom is intimately associated with our relationship with Christ.

How is it that our compensation addresses our needs? How is it that our compensation is given not in part but in whole? It is because in its most essential form the compensation we receive from Christ is not corporeal, physical, or touchable. RATHER, it is spiritual and eternal housed in our relationship with Christ!

That We May Know Christ

In Christ's high priestly prayer He made this statement:

John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

From this we have seen that the essence of eternal life is a love-relationship with Christ. It is intimately walking with the Lord. It is growing in our love, trust, and devotion to Him. In light of this, listen to the ultimate by way of “compensation” promised to the child of God. When Peter asked Christ “what about us?” “What’s in it for those of us who have sacrificed so much for you?”

Matthew 19:28-30, “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁷ Compare Galatians 2:20

¹⁸ Compare Ephesians 1:3-5

¹⁹ Compare Ephesians 1:7-8

²⁰ Compare Ephesians 1:10-11

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”

I want you to notice a very important truth in this context, while the apostles and all of God's people will receive countless blessings in glory nevertheless the implication of this passage is that the greatest and most wonderful blessing is eternal life!

Matthew 19:29, “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall [as the climax of it all] inherit everlasting life.”

Truly, the greatest and most glorious reward of heaven is not the streets paved with gold, or the thrones upon which we sit²¹ or the promised mansions but eternal life. John 17 clearly defines eternal life as walking, knowing, fellowship with, and gazing upon Christ! It has “promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8).

That is the “Compensation” that is granted to all servants of God. A deep and abiding drinking from Christ, the “fount of every blessing.”²² It is an intimate communing with the Lord. It is fellowship so deep that it plunges the depths of eternity.

All of this accompanies service in the kingdom of God. In our context it comes as we participate in the ministry of need!

Looking for a Donation?

And yet I am mindful that some will receive this message with skepticism.

You mean to tell me that if I use my resources to advance God's kingdom that I will grow when it come to Christ? I'll be more content? My love will be more passionate? I will grow in my devotion to the Savior? It just sounds as though you're looking for a donation!

This is clearly the accusation that Paul himself is addressing in this text. Peter O'Brien wrote this:

“In recalling their past generosity Paul might be thought to covet their gifts. So to correct any possible misunderstanding he at once adds a disclaimer and points out that his heart was not set on the gift as such but on the heavenly interest that keeps on accruing to their account.”²³

In Paul's day there were numerous people who publicly spoke that they might bilk their listeners for money. They were known as the pleaders with a cause. They were the philosophical hucksters who used flattery as a cloak for greed!

Being mindful of this, Paul goes to great lengths in this text to emphasize that he did not want nor need

²¹ Compare the Heaven Series of April, May 1998

²² It was this for which Paul vigorously prayed when it came to the Philippians, Philippians 1:9-11!

²³ Dr. Peter O'Brian, NIGTC, Commentary on Philippians, page. 536

the gift that the Philippians sent.²⁴ So, Paul wasn't looking for a donation. However he was after this:

Philippians 4:17, "Not because I desire a gift: but **I desire fruit that may abound to your account.**"

And so herein we derive a very important principle for the Christian life. When we spend our time, effort, and/or resources to advance God's kingdom, we lose nothing. Rather we gain eternal riches in glory! As Jim Elliot put it, "He is no fool who gives us what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Ah but what about the one listening who says, "It doesn't work!"? I lived for God's kingdom and got nothing in return. I poured my life into another individual and got slapped in the face. I tried it God's way — now it's my way.

First of all — and I realize that this is going to sound harsh — I question whether you truly did do it God's way. My personal experience as well as Scripture²⁵ testify that everything I have ever done in the name of the Lord has been fraught with selfishness, pride, inconsistency, and doubt. So when someone says, "I followed God and He let me down!" immediately my eye-brows raise.

But secondly, let's suppose that you did do it God's way. What were you looking for? Was your service in God's kingdom so that you could live happily-ever-after? Did you serve expecting God to give you a decent life? Was all that you did so that — in the words of the prodigal's brother — you might have a goat to roast with your friends?²⁶

You say, "I'm not looking to be wealthy or famous. But how about just a little security?"

To all of this and more Christ would say this:

John 6:27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

See it is my experience that most disillusioned Christians have set their hope and focus on something other than exalting God and enjoying Him such that when God grants us this in full, we are dissatisfied — for we want a life "like the nations."²⁷

If you get out of this life nothing more than death, you haven't been gypped.²⁸ Yet if you spend eighty years faithfully serving God and all you have to show for it is a closer walk with Christ, you are rich indeed! Georg Neumark put it this way back in 1641: "God never yet forsook at need the soul that trusted Him indeed."²⁹

Family of God, let us take our eyes off of the childish toys of this world — security, the good life, length of days, pleasure, companionship — and let us become mature men and women of God.³⁰ Let us place as our greatest passion and desire the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us walk with Him, commune

²⁴ That is why throughout his ministry, Paul never asked for support from those to whom he was ministering, 2 Corinthians 11:9!

²⁵ Compare Romans 7:15-24

²⁶ Compare Luke 15:29

²⁷ Compare 1 Samuel 8:5; 8:19-23

²⁸ Compare Romans 6:23

²⁹ The NewTrinity Hymnal 670

³⁰ Compare 1 Corinthians 13:11

with Him, grow in Him, and live for Him.

Make this your passion, and you will be amply compensated as you participate in the ministry of need!

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About the Preacher

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