

Giving and God's Provision (Philippians 4:14-19)

Please turn in your Bibles to Phil 4 and for our study today it's good for us to remember the 3 rules of Bible study: context, context, context. Today we come to two of the greatest promises of God's Word that are often taken out of context. Phil 4:13 *'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.'*

Maybe you've seen that reference in the black under football player's eyes. I used to have those words on a weightlifting T-shirt with a guy shoulder-pressing hundreds of pounds. But the point in context we saw last time isn't 'physically I can do anything,' it's 'all things He spiritually strengthens me to be able to do contently. I can be content in all things by His strength.' It's not a verse about our ability to win, it's God's strength to be content in loss.

One writer says it's 'one of the most popular verses...printed on millions of key chains and t-shirts, cellphone cases and coffee mugs...also one of the misunderstood, misused, and misinterpreted ...For [Joel Osteen's theology] the "all things" that Christ empowers... includes fulfilling [your] dreams, climbing to new heights, and embracing [your] destinies. Paul isn't telling Christians that they should dream bigger dreams; he is reminding them that they can endure the crushing feeling of defeat if those dreams aren't realized. He's not encouraging Christians to go out and conquer the world; he's reminding them that they can press on when the world conquers them'¹

Phil 4:19 is another promise with a specific context in mind: *'my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.'* Health and wealth preachers latch onto the '*riches*' part or '*God will supply*' part, especially if you send the televangelist money! But in context this isn't a prosperity promise. If you look back at v. 12, the context includes poverty. Paul didn't write this in health and wealth, but God supplied all he needed. That's the flow leading to v. 14-19, today's study, let's start back in v. 11.

(if using ESV pew Bible p. 637): ¹¹ *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.* ¹² *I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.* ¹³ ***I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*** ¹⁴ *Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.* ¹⁵ *And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.*

¹⁶ *Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.* ¹⁷ *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.* ¹⁸ *I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* ¹⁹ *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

In v. 10-13 we saw in all things Paul could have contentment through Him who strengthens. This week in v. 14-19 we'll see principles for giving and God's provision. When I use the word 'giving' I want you to think of time, talent, and treasure. Paul uses the word '*giving*' in v. 15 and equates it with '*help for...needs*' in v. 16. Those needs there and in v. 19 include financial needs, but needs include time and talent or gifts you have that you're called to share. v. 19 is a promise only to those in Christ. As they give to supply needs (v. 18), God will give to supply their needs, physical and spiritual (v. 19). Paul didn't write this *to us*, but the Spirit inspired it *for us* who put into practice these principles. As we work and give to the work of the Lord and needs of ministry, we can trust the Lord is at work to give to meet our needs

1. Giving is sharing and caring

¹⁴ *Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.* [NAS '*Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction*'; NKJV '*distress*' and in v. 10 '*care*']. Paul was in need, and they did well by showing kindness and care as they shared his trouble. Remember the background: he's in a Roman prison, and in those days taxpayers didn't fund food to prisoners, they depended on support of family and friends to stay alive. The Philippians had heard of his situation and according to v. 18 they sent Epaphroditus with a love offering they took up for him. Paul now writes this letter as a thank you note and he commends them for doing well in sharing their gift and in their kind caring. Epaphroditus didn't just give from a treasurer, he gave of his precious time.

At the start of v. 14, that '*Yet/Nevertheless*' points back to v. 10: '*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.*' He wants to be clear he wasn't rejoicing in the love offering by itself, he was rejoicing in the Lord. His joy wasn't in the given money, his joy was in the giver's motive. He wants them to know his appreciation for the care package, but he adds in v. 11 he wasn't discontent before. He says in v. 12 he could be content if he went hungry or in need, he could get by with less by God who strengthens in all things, but v. 14 commends their kind help. To Paul it truly was the thought that counts, the heart more than the amount.

Non-Christians write checks to charities, but these Christians had concern as they checked on Paul. It wasn't an automatic deduction, out of sight, out of mind; Paul was on their mind and heart. Their giving wasn't impersonal going through the motions, there was a personal emotional going to him by Epaphroditus, who Paul says in chapter 2 is *'your messenger whom you sent to take care for my needs...when you see him again...be glad...he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me'* (NIV). The Philippian church couldn't help Paul in person, so they sent a church member to help take care of Paul's needs in person. They didn't just send a mail courier, they sent a messenger of their own on a long risky journey that almost cost him his life. He truly shared in Paul's trouble.

Giving is sharing with others, not just treasure, but time spent to share in the trouble. If we care for the Lord's work, we'll share in it. We'll give and be willing to give up comfort and precious time. Some say 'give till it hurts,' but Paul would add 'be with those who hurt, share your time with them, too.' One of the most precious gifts you can give to a hurting person is your time, a listening ear, your cares and prayers. That's real ministry as much as what I'm doing at the pulpit. Give of your talents/spiritual gifts as well in serving.

2. Giving is spiritual partnership

v. 15: *And you Philipians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into **partnership** with me in giving and receiving, except you only.* Other translations have 'share' here but it's the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning sharing in fellowship, partnering in a 2-way relationship of support. If you give prayer support or financial or physical support to a ministry, even giving of yourself to serve, it increases your connection. You're connected as partner. Some giving is spontaneous or one-time (think love offering or mission project or just a need you know about and help). A spiritual partnership concept also can include systematic regular giving (think monthly giving to a church or missionaries you partner with monthly or sponsoring a child [ex: Mexico mission]). In v. 16 he says even in Thessalonica they sent help for his need on more than one occasion.

Paul was thankful, 1:3. Why? **1:5** *'because of your **partnership*** [same word] *in the gospel from the first day until now.'* Same word Paul uses for their giving-and-receiving relationship in chapter 4, it was a gospel partnership or fellowship or participation. From day one, they were spiritual partners with him and their support continued for years. But notice it was centered on the gospel, and whoever churches partner with must center on the same gospel.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor 9 ‘*those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel*’ (v. 14 HCSB). And in chapter 16: ‘*regarding your question about the money being collected...On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned*’ (v. 1-2 NLT). Other versions say ‘*set aside a sum in keeping with his income*’ (NIV), or ‘*as he may prosper*’ (NKJV). The idea is on the first day of the week or the Lord’s Day, we’re to put the Lord first by setting aside a first portion of whatever money we earn. We’re to give in keeping with our income. If God prospers us, increase isn’t just for raising our level of living, but our level of giving. 2 Cor 9:11 *You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way...*

Ps 67:7 *God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him* (NAS). Whenever God blesses us or enriches us, it’s not just for us, it’s for mission, in the local church and God’s global work, as we give from what He gives. Some churches pass a collection plate, our offering box is in the lobby by stairs. We don’t make a show of giving like the Pharisees, but God sees it. However it’s done, the heart motive is key. Jesus said ‘*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you... where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*’ (Mt 6:1-4, 21). Jesus brings it back to where our heart is. What we treasure or give is a heart issue

In Luke’s gospel right before Jesus said where our treasure is our heart will be, He said ‘*give to the needy*’ (Lk 12:33-34). Giving to needs shows where our heart is. Our giving patterns shows what our heart treasures and values. 2 Cor 9:7 is the key: ‘*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*’ Is your heart involved in your decisions to give, and is your heart in it as you give?

Is your heart cheerful to give or fearful you won’t have enough if you give? God loves givers who love to give, not giving out of routine or reluctantly, or because we’re under compulsion or pressure or a guilt trip. Do you think on these truths as you give and do you thank God in your heart as you give? Do you just look online to see how much balance is there to spend, or do you try to balance what you have to spend with what you see in scripture? It’s good to look at checkbooks as a heart check. How is your heart doing? I ask myself these questions. Am I honoring God with my lips or gifts but my heart is far from Him? I’m convicted I can do things like this by habit but my heart needs to give as sharing and caring and as a spiritual partnership.

3. Giving is sacrificial worship

Phil 4:18, at the end of the verse Paul talks about the monetary '*gifts you sent [as], a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*' That's language of OT worship starting in Genesis where Abel brought as a gift to God an offering from the first of his flocks, an animal sacrifice God accepted and was pleased with. Or as Noah came off the ark, he sacrificed 1 out of 7 of all clean animals as burnt offerings and it says God '*smelled the pleasing aroma*' as He accepted Noah's gift (Gen 8:21). It was a costly gift, that's what a sacrifice was. King David understood that when he said '*I will not...offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing*' (1 Chron 21:24). Offering is a NT term for giving, but it's rooted in the OT concept of sacrificial worship

Paul says in v. 18 as this church gave an offering to pay for and supply his needs sacrificially and abundantly, he saw it as OT priests in the kingdom of Israel giving an offering on an altar God saw as fragrant, sweet, pleasing. NT giving is based on the ultimate love offering by Christ. Eph 5:2 '*walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*' (NKJV 'a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma'). I think of aroma of BBQ. Or some of you put on fragrances and we can smell you coming as you walk. There's a sweet aroma we exude in Christ's love that others should notice. But ultimately how we live and give is for God.

And in Eph 1 we who trust in Christ's sacrifice, it says God for '*His good pleasure...made us accepted in the Beloved*' (v. 5-6). Giving of time, talent, and treasure to the Lord's work is pleasing to the Lord and His people. Paul told the Corinthians '*we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved...a fragrance from life to life*' (2 Cor 2:15-16). And he told the Romans: '*offer your bodies as living sacrifices...pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.*' That's Romans 12, and it goes on to include in our sacrificial spiritual worship things like '*contributing to the needs of others...give generously....Share with God's people who are in need*' (NIV).

The early church in Acts was marked by sacrifice in their giving to meet the needs of others, generous sharing of what they had, and if they didn't have enough to help others, some were selling what they had to give to others in need in the body. It says they didn't see what they had as belonging to them. It was the opposite of the American entitlement mentality, they saw all they had was all God's and were willing to give it up for others. Heb 13:16 NIV '*do not forget to...share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*'

If even the early church could forget that, we can forget that what God gives to us we need to be willing to sacrificially share with others. That pleases God. Do we think of our giving as what we offer sacrificially and worshipfully? Do we give our first and best to please God? Does it cost us something? In OT times they offered precious lambs at times, regular tithes, free offerings.

Boice: ‘Perhaps someone is going to ask at this point, “Well, what about tithing?...Doesn’t that mean that we are only required to give a tenth of all earned income?” The answer to that is that the Bible does speak about tithing...for Jews under the OT laws. “Well then,” [others] say “doesn’t that mean [as NT Christians not under OT law we] are released entirely from the requirement to give?”...for we are not under law, but under grace. But if you understand what it means to be under grace rather than under law, then you also understand that under grace the standard does not go down... Instead of owing God 10 percent...we are now told that all that we have belongs to him. We are not under [OT] law as regards percentages, but we do have a high level of responsibility for the support of other Christians and Christian work. We are responsible...stewards...Just be sure you know that [100%] belongs to him and that he has the final word on how you spend it.’²

Grace is God's unmerited favor and generous giving to us, we're to live and give under that power, generously. The law wasn't bad, like training wheels to help us learn how to start and balance out. OT laws on tithing can do that, but don't make them a limit or legalistic. It's good as kids and young people doing summer jobs as you make money, get in the habit now of giving first to the Lord of whatever He gives. Training wheels are good to keep us from falling, and in time riding becomes second nature. But the more we know of grace, being under grace powers further givers to think above and beyond.

4. **Givers will be spiritually blessed** (look back at Phil 4, and v. 17)

¹⁷ *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.*

That word *fruit* is often used of spiritual blessing or benefit. Paul knew what the Proverbs said: ‘*He who is generous will be blessed...*’ (22:9 NAS) and ‘*A generous man...who refreshes others will himself be refreshed*’ (11:25 NIV). Paul wasn’t seeking a financial gift for his sake, he was seeking the gift's fruit for the giver’s sake. Paul trusted they would be blessed, refreshed ‘*It is more blessed to give than to receive*’ (Acts 20:35). Right before ‘*God loves a cheerful giver,*’ Paul compared giving to sowing seed to bear fruit: ‘*he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully...may He who supplies*

seed to the sower...multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness...this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while ... they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ ...because of the exceeding grace of God in you' (2 Cor 9:6-14 NKJV).

So this is a God-glorifying gospel-centered grace-increasing fruit of giving. As God blesses us financially, when we give this way, He blesses spiritually even more. Like a fruit farmer sowing seed, if you sow little, you can expect to reap little fruit. If you're sparing or stingy with a clenched fist only letting a little seed trickle out here and there in the soil, to keep more to yourself, it won't bear much fruit for yourself or others. But he says sowing bountifully will reap bountifully, increasing fruits of righteousness (not riches, spiritual fruit like abundant thanksgiving, exceeding grace, gospel fruit to His glory).

Hebrews talks about '*fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*' (13:15 NAS). In other places Paul talks about '*fruit [that] leads to sanctification*' or '*fruit for God*' (Rom 6:22, 7:4). When we think of spiritual blessing of the Spirit's fruit, it's things like '*love, joy, peace...*' and so on. If we're led by the Spirit in our giving, fruit of the Spirit will grow (kindness, goodness, faithfulness). Hendriksen says the fruit includes 'enriched fellowship with other believers, a broadened outlook into the needs and interests of the church universal, increased joy and love (both...imparted and received)...glory in heaven.'³

The end of v. 17 '*increases to your credit*' has a footnote in the ESV: '*Or the profit that accrues to your account.*' That's accounting language for a return of investment that grows over time. F.F. Bruce says Paul 'emphasizes that he is grateful not simply because they sent it to him but also because their sending it is a token of heavenly grace in their lives and, so to speak, a deposit in the bank of heaven that will multiply at compound interest to their advantage. They meant Paul to be the gainer from their generosity, and so indeed he is; but on the spiritual plane the permanent gain will be theirs.'

5. God gives to supply His child's needs. ¹⁹ *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

That's the context, not a standalone promise, it stands or falls with v. 14-18. It's one of the precious promises of God's Word. Meditate word-by-word:
And – this is a continuation of the subject, connected with what he just said
My – this isn't impersonal or general, this comes from personal relationship

God – He’s the Giver of all, the sovereign source and sustainer and supplier **will** – not ‘might,’ not ‘would if He only could,’ He **will** because He’s God **supply** – that means provide in the sense of filling, fulfilling, accomplishing **every** – not ‘a few,’ not ‘some,’ not even ‘most,’ but each and ‘**every**’ or all **need** – not ‘every greed,’ not every *want* or *desire*, the promise is for *needs of yours* – this is personal, individual, He’ll accomplish what concerns you **according to** – not just *from* (billionaire giving a buck), but in proportion to **his riches** – God has infinite riches and resources that have no lack or limit **in glory** – I take that as heaven, treasure untouched by moth, rust, or thieves **in Christ Jesus** – the promise is in Him, only for us who give our life to Him

The great motive for us to give graciously instead of sparingly isn’t the law, it’s the gospel. Rom 8:32 ‘*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*’

Jehovah-Jireh, my provider, His grace is sufficient for me (2x)

My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory

If that’s not you, if this passage isn’t describing you, this promise isn’t for you. If you don’t give and haven’t received the gift of Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, your *need* is to know *my God*. Giving in the offering box can’t earn for you the salvation you need. No one ever paid their way to heaven by giving to the church. You can’t buy grace, it’s unearned. You could give all you have to the poor but if you have not love of God and from God, that profits nothing. Your need is something only God can supply by His riches.

Paul said in Romans: ‘*do you presume on **the riches** of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself...*’ (2:4-5). What’s the only hope for sinners? Eph 2: ‘*But God, being **rich in mercy**, because of the great love with which he loved us...made us alive together with Christ...so that in the coming ages he might show the **immeasurable riches of his grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God, not a result of works...***’ (v. 4-9). If you come to God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, not trusting your works, He will supply your need for salvation, ‘*there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom*’ (1 Pet 1:11).

Jesus began His ministry with ‘***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven***’ (Mt 5:3). It’s when you see your spiritual poverty and bankruptcy and inability as a beggar crying ‘Lord, have mercy on me!’

‘know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor...’ (2 Cor. 8:9). He set aside riches in glory and heaven to come to earth in poverty, no place to lay His head for your sake. In Christ are all the treasures but He opens His vault to supply your needs.

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.⁴

If you turn from sin and trust Jesus giving Himself on the cross to pay your way, you have *‘redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished...’* (Eph 1:7-8). For you who believe, the prayer of Ephesians is *‘that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit’* (1:18, 3:16 NAS).

God grants or supplies according to His riches in glory, and in that parallel, that clearly includes spiritual needs like strength, power, enlightenment. We need Christ most of all. When kids would say ‘I need this, or I need that,’ a great theologian would say, ‘no, you need the Lord, you want...’ That great theologian was my wife. And that’s our great need. Christ said to Martha she was *‘troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen the good part’* (her need to be with Christ, Lk 10:41-42 NKJV).

This word *need* is also used in the NT for your need for teaching and *‘need for endurance’* (Heb 5:12, 10:36). Paul uses it for words the build others up *‘according to their needs’* (Eph 4:29 NIV). Whatever the need, He supplies.

When we have exhausted our...endurance, our strength...failed...the day is half done,

When we reach the end of our hoarded resources Our Father’s full giving is only begun...

more grace when the burdens grow greater...more strength when the labors increase;

To added afflictions He addeth His mercy, To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.⁵

Christ also used this same word *‘need’* for things like what we eat or drink, wear or worry about the future, He said *‘your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you...’* (Mt 6:32-33 NIV). He gives or supplies these things we need as we seek Him first, that includes putting Him first in our giving, investing in His kingdom. Hudson Taylor said ‘When God’s work is done in God’s way for God’s glory it will not lack God’s supply.’⁶ Spurgeon: ‘The Lord will supply without fail; let us trust without fear.’⁷ I remember TMC graduation, singing ‘all I have needed Thy hand provided’

Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision...His resources to share;

Lean hard on the arm everlasting...The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.

All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you;

Trust Him, and you will be satisfied, God will take care of you...
 Lonely or sad, from friends apart, God will take care of you;
 He will give peace to your aching heart, God will take care of you
*Refrain: God will take care of you, through every day, over all the way
 He will take care of you, God will take care of you*⁸

¹ <https://religionnews.com/2014/01/16/philippians-413-many-christians-misuse-iconic-verse/>

² James Boice, *Philippians*, p. 253-54.

³ Hendriksen, *Philippians*, p. 208.

⁴ Annie Johnson Flint, "He Giveth More Grace."

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Thielman, *Philippians*, p. 241.

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "Filling the Empty Vessels," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 29 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883), 176–177.

⁸ Civilia D. Martin, "God Will Take Care of You."