

# Missions Giving: An Investment in the Eternal

**Text:** Philippians 4:10-19

## **Introduction:**

1. Context and background: The theme of Philippians is joy which is significant considering Paul's situation. He was undergoing his first imprisonment in Rome. Acts 28:16 & 30 give us some insight into the conditions of his imprisonment. He was under a form of house arrest, guarded by a single Roman soldier. Despite these restrictions, he was still at some liberty to preach the Gospel to those who came to visit him. In fact, Paul testified earlier in the Epistle that his trial had been used of the Lord for the furtherance of the Gospel (Phil. 1:12-14).
2. Paul was a living testimony and example of the theme of the Epistle. His joy was not dictated by his circumstances.
3. In this concluding section of the Epistle, the Apostle takes the time to thank the Philippians for their faithful financial support of His ministry. Not only had they contributed to the needs of the poor brethren in Judea but they had also been generous in their support of the Apostle Paul. They had sent Epaphroditus to give Paul some financial assistance. The example of the Philippian church serves as a powerful challenge to us as we seek to be a channel for the Lord to use for the support of missions.

*Observe firstly...*

## **I. THE RENEWAL OF THEIR SUPPORT (VS. 10-14)**

### **A. The Apostle's Commendation (Vs. 10, 14)**

1. The Rejoicing from their Giving (Vs. 10a)
  - a. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly" = their renewed support brought great encouragement to the Apostle in His difficult situation. Sending financial aid and support is one way we can encourage men and women of God on the front line of the battle.
  - b. 'care' = (phroneo) to think, regard, to exercise the mind. It means "your thought for me" (Robertson).
  - c. "flourished again" = horticultural term describing a plant flowering again. The word was used "of trees and flowers which sprouted, shot up, and blossomed again in the spring after a dormant winter." (Gromacki)
2. The Regard of their Giving (Vs. 10b)
  - a. "wherein ye were also careful" = the word 'careful' comes from the word meaning "to think." The needs of the Apostle had been on their hearts and minds.
  - b. "lacked opportunity" = the problem was not a lack of heart to help the Apostle but rather the lack of a practical opportunity to do so.

3. The Reassurance of their Giving (Vs. 14)
  - a. 'notwithstanding' = after sharing his personal testimony of how God had taught Him contentment, Paul moves to reassure the saints of the value of their gift lest they misunderstand and think he was disparaging their gift.
  - b. "well done" = means good, something noble or beautiful in character. It is "beautiful goodness". The expression would be something like our present-day phrase "you did a beautiful thing."
  - c. "communicate with" = means to have fellowship with, be a partaker with one, to share in company with. The same Greek word is translated 'fellowship' (Eph. 5:11) and 'partakers' (Rev. 18:4). They entered into the Apostle's burden and made it theirs. "The Philippians made themselves fellow-partakers with Paul in his needs. They made themselves responsible for the satisfying of his needs." (Wuest)
  - d. 'affliction' = tribulation. Think of the pressures on the Apostle at this time? An impending trial before the Emperor Nero, the attacks of the Judaizers and the burden of the churches. Are we there for the missionary in his trial or only when the headlines are exciting and things are going well?

#### **B. The Apostle's Contentment (Vs. 11-13)**

In the process of thanking the Philippian church, Paul shares how the Lord had taught him contentment.

1. The State in which he knew Contentment (Vs. 11-12)
  - a. 'want' = a falling short, poverty.
  - b. 'learned' = contentment isn't something we are born with nor does it come naturally. It must be learned.
  - c. "**whatsoever** state I am" = Paul had learned contentment whatever the circumstance was. He didn't let his circumstances dictate his joy and contentment.
  - d. 'content' = means "to be independent of external circumstances. The word was used by the Stoics of self-sufficiency. In Paul's case it was Christ-sufficiency, not self-sufficiency. He was independent of circumstances because he was dependent upon Christ." (Wuest)
  - e. He expands on this in the next verse. He had learned:
    - i. Contentment in times of Need – "abased...hungry...suffer need". The word 'abased' means "humbled, made low".
    - ii. Contentment in times of Prosperity – "abound...full...abound"
    - iii. Paul had learned how to live content with little or much. There are seasons of abundance and seasons of lack in the Christian life and ministry.

- f. 1 Tim. 6:6-10 “But godliness with **contentment** is great gain. (7) For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. (8) **And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.** (9) But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. (10) For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
  - g. Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. **Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**” (See also Vs. 26-34).
  - h. The culture and society we live in pushes us in the exact opposite direction to what God’s Word commands. We become obsessed with the temporal rather than the spiritual and the eternal.
2. The Strength behind His Contentment (Vs. 13)
- a. This is one of the most famous and oft quoted verses in the Bible but what is its context? The context is a man of God, serving faithfully in the Gospel ministry, going through the trials associated with that ministry.
  - b. “all things” = whatever he faced in the will of God; he could rely on God’s enabling grace.
  - c. “through Christ” = His strength came from his union with Christ.
  - d. ‘strengtheneth’ = to make strong, endue with strength.
  - e. Isaiah 40:29-31 “He giveth **power to the faint**; and to *them that have* no might he **increaseth strength**. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall **renew their strength**; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

*Observe secondly...*

## II. THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR SUPPORT (VS. 15-16)

The support of the Philippian church was not something new. They had been faithful to the Apostle in the past and he now recounts that. Approximately 10 years had passed since Paul founded this church and yet the need to support the Apostle’s mission work was still in their hearts and minds.

### A. Their Support was Rare (Vs. 15)

1. ‘now’ = “marks the transition to his first experience of their generosity. In effect he says, “But this is no new thing, for you have always been generous.” (Wuest)

2. “ye Philippians” = the Philippian church had a couple of members who stand out in our minds such as Lydia, the seller of purple, and the Philippian jailer.
3. “the beginning of the Gospel” = a reference back to Paul’s early mission work in Macedonia about 10 years previously. The word ‘beginning’ here means “commencement, origin.”
4. “departed from Macedonia” = When Paul departed from Macedonia he went into Achaia to the cities of Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:14-15). Paul would later remind the Corinthian church that he had ministered among them, supported by other churches (2. Cor. 11:8-9).
5. “no church...but ye **only**” = they were the only church which had supported Paul in his mission work. This speaks volumes for a church which was only newly planted.
6. “communicated with me” = they made it a point to stay in touch with the Apostle as to what his needs were. Communication with missionaries is important so that we can stay informed as to their needs.

#### **B. Their Support was Repeated (Vs. 16)**

1. “even in Thessalonica” = even when he was still in the Macedonian region, ministering in Thessalonica, they had supported him.
2. “once and again” = they had sent support twice to help the Apostle with his needs.
3. Paul reminded the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 11:8 that he has received financial support from other churches in order to minister to them freely. “I robbed other churches, **taking wages of them**, to do you service.”
4. “Today Christians spend more money on dog food than missions.”— Leonard Ravenhill. What an indictment! While your pampered pooch lives in luxury and comfort, the preacher on the field lives on next to nothing, distracted from Gospel ministry while he wonders how the next bill is going to be paid.
5. We could probably add to that and say that Christians today spend more on their hobbies than on missions, more on their take away food than on missions, more on their treats and trinkets than on missions, more on entertainment than missions and the list goes on.

*Observe thirdly...*

### **III. THE REWARD OF THEIR SUPPORT (VS. 17-19)**

There are three blessings they could expect as a result of their faithful giving:

#### **A. The Abounding of Fruit (Vs. 17)**

1. "Not because I desire a gift" = means "desire upon". "The Apostle did not seek to add one gift upon another." (Gromacki) Paul was not after their money in a carnal way. He seems to be defending himself against the slanderous accusation that he was using the gospel to fulfill his own financial ambitions. The word 'desire' means "to seek after." Paul was not pursuing his own betterment. His encouragements to them to give stemmed from a higher, nobler motive.
2. "desire fruit that may abound" = Paul desired spiritual fruit that would be credited to their account. The fruit of his labours would be souls saved and lives transformed by the power of the Gospel.
3. 'abound' = to increase, exist in abundance.
4. "your account" = "A phrase taken from commercial dealings. The apostle wished that it might be set down to their credit. He desired that when they came to appear before God, they might reap the benefit of all the acts of kindness which they had shown him." (Albert Barnes) Gromacki writes, "This mercantile metaphor shows that the Philippians had made an investment in Paul's ministry which would bring them heavenly dividends. They were laying up treasure in heaven by supporting his ministry. Paul's converts were, in effect, their converts. Their gifts enabled him to evangelize more people."
5. Isn't it amazing that the giving of temporal things in this life can result in eternal fruit? God views our giving to missions as a part of the process in bringing souls to Himself.

#### **B. The Approval of God (Vs. 18)**

1. "I am full" = perf/pass/ind. Means "I have been filled and at present am well supplied.
2. Paul uses imagery from the Old Testament sweet savour offerings to describe the gift from this church. Not only was it precious to the Apostle, most importantly it was precious to God. Israel presented 5 offerings to God: burnt, meal, peace, sin and trespass (Lev. 1:1-5:19). The first three were sweet savour offerings whereas the last two were not. "The first 3 were voluntary, given out of love, thanksgiving and dedication the latter two were compulsory, offered through confession of sin." (Gromacki)
3. In the church age we do not offer up animal sacrifices to God but spiritual sacrifices of Christian service and giving is one such sacrifice. Mission giving encourages the missionary and pleases God.

#### **C. The Assistance of God (Vs. 19)**

1. 'supply' = means to fulfill. Interestingly it is the same root word translated "I am full" in the previous verse. They filled Paul's every need to overflowing and God would do the same for them. "Note the connection between 'full' and 'supply'. The Apostle was full on

account of the gift sent to him. Now God would fill what they lacked.”  
(F.B. Meyer)

2. F.B. Meyer: “Lend your boat for a whole afternoon to Christ that it may be His floating pulpit, and He will return it to you laden with fish. Place your upper room at His disposal for a single meal, and He will fill it and the whole house with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost. Place in His hands your barley loaves and fish, and He will not only satisfy your hunger, but add twelve baskets full of fragments.”
3. By making the Apostle full, the church had created a financial need for themselves. “They had poured out of the container of their lives into the vessel of Paul.” (Gromacki) When you give to help the needs of those involved in Gospel ministry, it leaves a shortfall on your end. But we can rest assured that our God will provide for our needs. This would be one of the most frequently quoted verses by Christians but remember the context is a church that has sacrificially given to support missions. This promise is for those who create needs for themselves by giving to others.
4. Remember, the Philippian church wasn’t a wealthy church like Laodicea. They gave by faith even in their poverty. 2 Cor. 8:1-4 “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; (2) How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. (3) For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; (4) Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”
5. ‘need’ = Remember to distinguish between needs and desires/wants. Today, most of what we think are needs are actually just wants. God does not promise to make you wealthy if you give to His work like the prosperity preachers teach. He simply promises to faithfully supply your needs as you give to the Lord’s work.
6. Personal illustration: You cannot outgive the Lord.

## **Conclusion: The Story of Robert Arthington (1823-1900)**

Robert Arthington lived in a single room, cooked his own meals, and shared his friendship with students who were in need. Yet he gave tremendous amounts of money during his lifetime to Christian missions. When he died, his estate was worth about five million dollars which he willed to missions. After his death a letter he had received from a missionary was found in his belongings. It said, “Were I in England again, I would gladly live in one room, make the floor my bed, a box my chair, another my table, rather than the heathen should perish for the lack of knowledge of Jesus Christ.” Robert Arthington was determined to make that kind of self-denial the pattern for his life.

**What will your commitment to faith promise missions be in 2021?**