

# APPRECIATION: FOR A CHURCH THAT REVIVES ITS SACRIFICIAL GIVING PHILIPPIANS 04:10–19

## *Introduction*

This passage deals with stewardship, in particular the giving of money to meet the needs of ministers and missions or the spread of the gospel to the world. Remember: Paul is in prison facing the false charge of insurrection against the government. He is facing the death penalty if convicted. The Philippians had heard about his plight, and they had heard how Paul was standing firm and continuing to preach the gospel to everyone who visited him. The church was stirred to do two things: to take up a love offering and to send a man, Epaphroditus, to minister to Paul's needs. (See Ph. 2:25-30.)

This passage is Paul's appreciation for a church that is stirred to revive its interest in missions — stirred to begin giving *once again* to the support of God's ministers worldwide.

- I. Their giving was revived (v. 10).
- II. Their giving was not necessary, but it was needed (vv. 11-14).
- III. Their giving was distinctive: they were the only church that gave and they gave consistently (vv. 15-16).
- IV. Their giving was sacrificial and it was seen and rewarded by God (vv. 17-19).

## **I. *Philippians 04:10 Support of Ministers***

The church revived its giving. Note the word *renewed* (anethalete): it means to revive again. It is the picture of plants and flowers sprouting, shooting up and blossoming *again*. When the church had been founded, the believers had supported Paul and his mission work on a regular basis. But for some reason they had dropped their mission support. That had probably been over ten to twelve years before (*Strauss*). Why they had stopped sending support to Paul is not known. However, the point to see is the glorious revival of mission support that took place in the church. They picked up the support of Paul once again, and they renewed their giving and blossomed anew. The joy and rejoicing of Paul's heart can just be imagined. He says, "I rejoiced greatly in the Lord."

**Thought 1.** Why had the church dropped its mission support of Paul? As stated, the reason is not known. In his gracious and kind way, Paul just passes over the issue by saying that he knew they cared for him, but they had just lacked opportunity to support him. Was their lack of support...

- legitimate: that is, due to persecution or poverty?
  - illegitimate: that is, due to neglect and unconcern for the spread of the gospel and missions worldwide?
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Being honest about the matter, it is difficult to conceive of a legitimate reason for dropping mission support, it is especially difficult to see a reason that would last as long as the ten to twelve years that the Philippian church had failed to support Paul. Whether legitimate or not, we all need to search our hearts about our own personal support of God's ministers and missions worldwide.

The gospel must be supported.

=> The gospel must be carried worldwide.

=> The need of the hour is for churches to awaken to the *worldwide mission* of Christ.

=> Preachers, that is, ministers, missionaries, teachers and evangelists — all of God's appointed preachers and teachers — must be supported as they carry the gospel to the world.

Note this: it has been centuries heaped upon centuries since Jesus Christ came to die for the sins of men and to give them life. Yet, look at how little has been done — at how many have still not heard or believed.

=> Where are the labourers to carry the message? Where are those who actually pray for labourers as He instructed? Look at how many stay at home and then look at the few out in the communities and fields of the world ministering and witnessing to the lost. Is this God's method? His will? Thought and honesty give us the answer. The problem is not that we don't know the truth. We know the truth: we know that we are to go. The problem is that we do not go. We are just unwilling to commit ourselves to go. We are unwilling to leave the comfort and security of our homes and offices, jobs and families to go into the communities and nations of the world.

The need of the hour is for workers — labourers who will do exactly what Christ commanded: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). And if we cannot go, then we must commit ourselves to support those who are willing to go!

*Mat 9:37* Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

*Luke 10:2* He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

*Luke 14:33* "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

*John 4:35-36* "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together."

## II. *Philippians 04:11–14 Care of God's Servants*

The church's giving was not necessary, but it was needed. Very simply, what this means is that God will take care of His dear servant even if churches do not adequately care for him. Down through the centuries most churches have not adequately cared for their ministers. This has been part of the sufferings most ministers have to bear in order to carry the gospel forth to a world reeling in desperate need. Yet, God's dear servants have gone forth despite whatever suffering they have had to bear. Note three significant points.

1. Giving is not necessary because God teaches His servants to be content, no matter the circumstances (vv. 11-12). The word *content* (autarkeia) means to be self-sufficient; to be completely detached from circumstances. Note the word "learned." It was a learning experience. Paul had to learn to conquer circumstances and not to let circumstances worry him. But note: he had learned contentment. He says three descriptive things:
  - => that he knew what it is to be in need (to live humbly with little) and what it is to have plenty (to live with plenty and prosperity).
  - => that he knew the *secret* to facing every situation, whether being full or going hungry.
  - => that he knew how to live in plenty and how to suffer need.

Lehman Strauss says:

*In those early days of my Christian experience I could not see how some Christians I knew could be content with so little of this world's goods. I sincerely trust that I am learning the secret. From what I see about me I do not hesitate to say that it is a secret many Christians have yet to learn. Paul needed to learn it. He said, 'I have learned....' The lesson of contentment was one he learned by degrees in varying circumstances. As a young unbelieving Jew, he had no want insofar as this world's possessions are concerned. He did not always know the divine provision of satisfaction, but after he was saved he came to learn it, not in the academic classroom, but as the result of a lengthy experience of trials and discipline, 'I have learned' is the language of a good student. Have you learned to be satisfied with your place and position and possessions in this life? (Devotional Studies in Philippians, p. 321.)*

What was the secret Paul had learned? It is the next point.

**Phil 4:11** *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

**1 Tim 6:6-10** *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

**Heb 13:5** *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

2. Giving is not necessary because the minister can do all things through Christ who gives him strength (v. 13). Note the verse:

**Phil 4:13** *I can do everything through him [Christ] who gives me the strength.*

God’s servant (minister) can be content in all circumstances no matter how severe they are — through Christ — but he cannot be content in any circumstance apart from Christ. Note exactly what the verse says:

=> “*I can...* through him [Christ] “

=> “*Christ* who gives me strength”

Christ does not do everything for the believer; neither does the believer do everything for himself. Both Christ and the believer have a part in conquering circumstances. The believer declares, “I can,” and he gets up and faces the circumstances head on. It is then that Christ steps in and strengthens the believer. Christ infuses strength into the believer *while the believer* is tackling the problem.

Facing reality, there is no need for strength unless the believer is facing and struggling against the circumstance.

=> The believer does not need extra strength to arise and face the circumstance.

Any believer, no matter who he is, has the strength himself to arise and face any circumstance that confronts him.

=> The believer does not even need strength to begin struggling to conquer and solve the circumstance. He has the strength himself to fight against the circumstance that confronts him.

It is only when the believer has exhausted what he can do that a special infusion of the strength of Christ is needed. Christ steps in when our strength is no longer sufficient. It is then that He is able to demonstrate His wonderful love and care for His dear servant. Note something else as well: all praise and glory is then due Christ and not man. Giving is not necessary; God will provide and care for His dear servant.

**2 Cor 12:9-10** *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

**Rom 8:37** *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

*2 Cor 9:8* And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

*Eph 3:16* I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

*Phil 4:13* I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

*Heb 13:6* So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

*Psa 28:7* The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

*Psa 40:17* Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.

*Isa 41:10* So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

3. However, giving is needed, and giving is a good work (v. 14). The minister needs daily provision and the gospel needs to be supported so that it can be carried around the world. Money and support are greatly needed. They are not necessary; God can take care of His dear servants and the gospel with or without any church. But His will is for every single church to become involved in supporting His servants and worldwide missions. God can do the job without us; God can bypass us and put us on the shelf just like a useless book. But He wants His people to give and give generously. When they do, they perform a work that is well done, that is commendable and noble.

*Acts 20:35* “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

*Gal 6:9-10* Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

### **III. *Philippians 04: 15–16 Distinctive Giving***

The church’s giving was distinctive — they were the only church that gave and they gave consistently. This is a point that desperately needs to be heeded by churches everywhere. When the Philippian church was founded, it underwrote the ministry of Paul and it was consistent in its support. But note: it was the only church that was supporting Paul. The unfaithfulness of the other churches cut Paul’s heart. This is clear from his words that no church supported him — none except the Philippian church.

It was while he was in Thessalonica that the Philippians had been consistent in their mission support. And how he had needed their support in Thessalonica, for it was there that he had faced severe persecution (see Acts 17:1f).

**Thought 1.** Imagine! Just one church supporting Paul and his mission to the world! And that church was a church that had just been founded. Two questions desperately need to be asked by all of us.

- 1) What are we doing for the Pauls and missions of today?
- 2) Have we made a commitment to support any minister or mission and backed off the commitment?

**Mat 19:23** *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

**Mark 4:19** *"But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."*

**1 Tim 6:7** *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

**1 Tim 6:9** *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

**Psa 49:10** *For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.*

**Prov 23:5** *Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.*

**Prov 27:24** *For riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.*

**Jer 17:11** *Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool.*

#### **IV. *Philippians 04: 17–19 Sacrificial Giving is Rewarded***

The church's giving was sacrificial, and it was seen and rewarded by God. The gift cost the Philippian church. They were a church that gave, not just a percentage (so to speak) but sacrificially. This is seen in two points. Their gift is said to be a definite *sacrifice*, acceptable and well pleasing to God. Their gift is also said to have created a *need* among themselves. But Paul answers them, "God will meet all your needs...." (v. 19). Note three points.

1. God saw who sacrificially gave to support Paul and He deposited a reward to their account (v. 17). This was what Paul desired in giving: not a gift for himself, but a reward for the giver. Paul knew that God saw and rewarded the believers who gave sacrificially; therefore, Paul desired believers to give and to give sacrificially.

**Mat 6:20** *"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."*

**Mat 19:21** *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

**Luke 12:33** *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

**Luke 18:30** *“Will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

2. God was well pleased with the giving of the Philippians (v. 18). Paul compares it to an Old Testament sacrifice which a person offered up to God. The person’s sacrificial commitment to God was just like the *pleasant smell* of the animal sacrifice: it was acceptable. The sacrificial commitment was a sweet or pleasant smell to God. So it was and is with sacrificial giving. The commitment of the gift is acceptable to God just like the pleasant smell of an animal sacrifice.

**Phil 4:18** *I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*

**Heb 13:16** *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

**1 Pet 2:5** *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

3. God promised to supply all the needs of His dear people (v. 19). This is one the great promises of Scripture: “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches Christ Jesus” (Ph. 4:19).
  - a. There is the great Provider: *God Himself*. No matter what the need is, the need is not greater than God. God can and will meet the need. But note the pronoun “my.” It is “my God” who shall provide for the needs. A person has to make sure...
    - that the God who can really provide for needs is his God.
    - that he knows God personally — well enough that he can trust and depend upon God to meet his need.
  - b. There is the great assurance of provision: “*my God will meet.*” There is no question about the provision being supplied. God is God; therefore, He is able to provide and He will supply whatever provision His dear child needs.
  - c. There is the great provision: “*all your needs.*” This promise does not refer only to the physical needs for food, clothing and shelter. It refers to mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs. It refers to any need that arises, engulfs or confronts the believer. No need will be omitted or overlooked. No need is too big or too little. No need is unimportant — not to God, not if His dear child is really experiencing the need.

- => There may be a lesson for the believer to learn before the need can be met, some lesson such as more trust, endurance, love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness or control.
- => There may be some testimony that the believer needs to share as to the strength of Christ which carries us through trials.

But no matter what the trial or need is, God will supply all our needs.

- d. There is the great *resource*: “according to His glorious riches.” Take all the riches and wealth, glory and majesty of heaven — it is all available to meet the needs of God’s dear people. There is no limit — not even a fraction — to the great resources at God’s disposal. God can provide for any need.
- e. There is the great Mediator: “*In Christ Jesus*.” This is critical to note, for God does nothing apart from Christ. No person can approach God without coming to Him through Christ Jesus. This is the key to having our needs met: surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ, and asking God to meet our needs *in Him*. We must always remember that God has only one child: the Lord Jesus Christ. God loves Christ so much that He will do anything for the person who honours Christ by sacrificially giving to share the glorious news about Him.

**2 Cor 9:8** *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

**Luke 6:38** *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

**Eph 3:20** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

**Phil 4:19** *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

**1 Tim 1:14** *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

**2 Tim 4:8** *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

**2 Pet 1:11** *And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**Isa 41:10** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ■*