

Philippians 4:10-20 – Grace Gives Us Joy in our Giving

The Philippian Christians were partakers with Paul in God's grace, and they had learned the secret of joyful, liberal financial giving. The church in Philippi had taken up an offering to give to Paul. They were the only church to give Paul a financial offering while he was in prison. You see, the prisoners in the Roman prisons were responsible for providing their own food. The book of Philippians is a thank-you letter from Paul to the Philippian church. This short letter references Paul's joy nearly 20 times. Paul was filled with joy that the Philippians had joined together with him to spread the Gospel.

The people in Philippi experienced the grace and joy of giving. The question we are asking today is: "Have you discovered the joy of giving?" Perhaps too many of us view giving as an occasion for grief or dread rather than an occasion for joy.

We are going to look at ways that giving can make us joyful people.

The first point is that giving revives our concern for others. In Philippians 4:10 we read, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity." The word revived suggests a picture of something that was dead but is now coming to life. The word pictures a tree or plant that is barren in the winter, but, when spring comes, the tree or plant blossoms with new shoots and flowers. The Philippian Christians had been barren in expressing their concern for Paul, but now, with the gift of money they sent him, they were blossoming anew with concern for Paul's welfare.

Giving takes the focus off ourselves and puts it onto someone or something else. Giving becomes a tangible way we can express concern and love for other people. As we focus on the needs of others and give to help meet those needs, we experience joy. Giving revives our concern for people.

The second point is that giving teaches us contentment. In verse 11-12, we read, "Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content ... I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."

Paul did not want this church to think that his joy rested on whether he had money. Paul had schooled himself to be satisfied with whatever he had. He had joy in his life, not because his purse was full, but because he had learned contentment. The Greek Stoics used the word content to describe self-sufficiency. Paul believed his sufficiency was in Christ. Paul believed that whether you were naked or clothed, hungry or filled, rich or poor, if you had the Lord in your life, you had everything you needed.

Our consumer-oriented society pressures us to place too much value on material things, to the point that our joy is based on how much we have. This approach to life results in chronic dissatisfaction. We never seem to have enough.

There is a story of an elderly man, who had learned to live off little. He watched as his new neighbor moved in one day. After all kinds of modern appliances, electronic gadgets, plush furniture, and costly wall hangings were carried into the man's house, the older man called over the fence and said, "If you find you are lacking anything, neighbor, let me know, and I will show you how to live without it."

How do you define contentment? Contentment is not trimming down your desires. Contentment means living with a sense of God's adequacy, a conviction that God is adequate for any need we face. Therefore, we can give joyfully, knowing God will supply our needs.

Can a Christian really attain joyful contentment, especially in our materialistic world? By ourselves, we can't learn to be content. But in verse 13 we read, "I can do all things through

Him Who strengthens me.” Yes, from our union with Jesus comes the strength to learn contentment.

The third point is that giving makes us partners in ministry. In Philippians 4:14 Paul wrote, **“Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.”** The word share is the same word often translated as **“fellowship.”** The word denotes partnership. Each time we give to the Lord’s work, we partner with other Christians to help advance the kingdom. That exciting thought puts joy in our hearts.

The fourth point is that giving pays spiritual dividends. In verses 17 and 18 Paul wrote, **“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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.”**

Paul made clear he was not looking for monetary gifts for his own benefit. Giving blesses the one who gives more than the one who receives the gift. The phrase **“increases to your credit”** implies that giving to the Lord is like investing in kingdom matters. Kingdom work pays spiritual dividends. As we just read, giving from the right motives and for the right reasons is acceptable and pleasing in God’s sight.

This great joy of giving is captured in Psalm 4. We read in verses 5 and 7. **“Offer great sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord ... You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.”** Giving becomes an act of worship and devotion to God. Sacrifices to God fill our hearts with great joy.

Knowing that giving fills with us with joy, it is unfortunate that approximately 75 percent of what churches receive come from only 25 percent of the people. Many people are not participating in supporting God’s mission through their churches, and they are missing out on God’s special blessings.

The fifth point that our text in Philippians 4 makes is that giving deepens our faith in God. In verse 19 we read, **“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”**

Perhaps some of the members of the church at Philippi had given to Paul’s ministry but were worried they might not have enough money left to meet their own needs. Paul gave them a great promise to stand upon.

Many Christians sit at the kitchen table or at a desk each month with their bills, and they conclude they have no or little money to give to the church. Putting braces on the kids’ teeth, paying for college tuition, buying new tires for the car, and replacing the roof on the house loom as larger priorities than faithful financial stewardship.

Verse 19 encourages us to take the step of faith and to give, trusting God to meet our needs. We see three parts to this verse:

1. **God meets our needs personally. Do you see the reference to “my God”?**
2. **He meets our needs liberally (“every need”).**
3. **He meets our needs gloriously (“according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus”).**

I was told about a primitive tribe located in the South American jungles. Anthropologists learned that the most important role within the tribe was the **“keeper of the flame.”** Fire is a precious commodity to this tribe, and one member of the tribe is entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the flame alive. During the night, the flame-keeper adds wood to the fire. His task is vital.

In the same way, by God’s grace, we become keepers of the flame, as we give faithfully and generously. We help spread the gospel message. We meet people’s needs. We assist people in growing spiritually. We enable our churches to shine as God’s lights in the world. Such privileges fill our hearts with joy.

As we end this message, we remember that giving begins with God Who is the greatest giver of all. God gave us what we needed the most, a Savior. He gives and keeps on giving. He gives us what we need both physically and spiritually. Filled with grace and joy in Jesus, we have new hearts that give to honor and glorify the Lord. May God help us all grow in the grace of giving.