

Lesson 20**The Joy of Giving**

Philippians 4:14-19

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Today's message is on money, not how to make it but how to give it. Money is such a sensitive topic but it is absolutely necessary we learn to give if we are going to be effective Christians. Money is a very touchy subject, not just in the religious realm but also in the secular. There was a college student in need of money who wrote home to his father. He said, "Dear Dad. No Mon. No fun. Your Son!" The father promptly wrote back, "Dear Son. Too bad. I'm sad. Your dad!" Money is always a sticky subject but one which should never embarrass a Christian, for when a Christian loves Christ, it ultimately affects his pocketbook. Someone has said, "It is better to have your bank in heaven than to have your heaven in a bank."
- B. In this present life we place so much emphasis upon temporal things. Yet, within a few short years at best, each one of us knows we shall stand naked before God. At that time we will have no wealth, no money, no titles, no influence. Everything will be left behind at death and all material values for us will be suddenly worth absolutely nothing.
- C. Did you know that undertakers are sometimes called on to provide suitable clothing in which the corpse may be buried? There are special suits made for such occasions which look like ordinary suits except they have no pockets. They need no pockets for there is nothing to put in them. This is a very graphic way to illustrating the biblical truth that we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it (1 Tim. 6:7). We have all heard the expression, "When you die, you can't take your money with you." Well, the practical joker said, "If I can't take it with me, I'm not going!" But the fact of the matter is that we are all going to die and we cannot take our money with us. As responsible Christians, we are to make our money work now so as to have eternal results. It is important that we all know why we give money, how to give money, where to give money and to whom to give money.

Do your givin'

While you're livin'

Then you're knowin'

Where it's goin'.

- D. God not only wants us to give of our money but He wants us to give joyfully. The Lord Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). There is a spiritual joy in giving which is difficult to describe until one has had the experience.
- E. In Philippians 4:10-19, the Apostle Paul is writing about the privilege of giving as well as the benefits which accrue to those who give faithfully to the Lord's work. Paul was rejoicing in the gift he had received from the Philippian Christians, but he was not just rejoicing in the gift given but the effects which resulted from the gift which was given.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING 4:14: *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*

- A. The Philippian Church had sent the Apostle Paul a financial gift in order to aid him while in prison and to help with his ministry in any way they could. Paul had just told them that his sufficiency and adequacy were in Christ. He said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." In essence, he told them he did not need their gift. If they had not met the need, Christ would have met it some other way. It was almost rude. But now he thanks them for their interest in him and the gospel, for they were God's vehicle to meet his need. NOTE. While Christ will meet every need we have, it is still a nice gesture to thank someone either verbally or in writing when a gift is received. Sometimes it is hard to write a thank you note because it is more difficult to be a gracious receiver than a gracious giver.
- B. Notice Paul said they "shared" in his troubles. Paul was rejoicing because they fellowshiped or shared with Paul in the ministry. They were partners with him in the gospel. They considered it a great privilege to give to Paul and the cause of Christ. They wanted to give. They were excited about giving. They were honored that God had given them the grace to give. It was a noble and beautiful thing for these Philippians to share their material things with Paul. These folks were anxious to give. They did not have to be begged (**2 Cor. 9:7: *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***). They were motivated by love for Christ and love for Paul. Someone has said, "You may give without loving, but you can't love without giving." NOTE. Our willingness to give as Christians may be used as one thermometer to test our true spirituality.

A farmer once went to hear John Wesley preach. The great leader was dealing with the question of money, and was examining it under three divisions. His first thought was, "Get all you can." The farmer nudged his neighbor and said: "That man has got something in him; it is admirable preaching! Wesley reached his second thought. "Save all you can." The farmer became quite excited. "Was there ever anything like this!" he said. The preacher denounced thriftlessness and waste, and the

farmer rubbed his hand as he thought, all this have I been taught from my youth up. What with getting and with hoarding, it seemed to him that "salvation" had come to his house. But Wesley went on to his third thought which was, "Give all you can." "Oh, dear, exclaimed the farmer, "He's gone and spoiled it all!"

Getting without giving makes only stagnant pools of men and women.

III. THE PLEASURE OF GIVING 4:15-16: ***Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in matters of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.***

- A. This young, vibrant local church had a missionary vision for the whole world, and were ready, when other churches were not, to give to this cause. NOTE. No local church is on a biblical foundation without a strong missionary emphasis. A local church must sacrifice to see the Great Commission filled in any given generation. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). NOTE. There is a sense in which it is not enough to pray for the lost. We must also pay for them by sending missionaries, if we are going to reach them and win them to Christ.

Boy and Father. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells of visiting the home of a very wealthy Christian man and on one occasion, at family prayers in the morning, the man prayed tenderly and eloquently for the missionaries and the heathen. When he had finished, his teenage son said to him, "Dad, I like to hear you pray for missionaries." His dad said, "Well, son, I am glad to hear that." And the boys said, "But do you know what I was thinking while you were praying? I thought, 'If I had your bank book, I would answer half your prayers.'"

- B. Notice the Philippians were a unique church even for the first century. If you took one-hundred churches which call themselves Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans or whatever, ninety of them would not be uniquely mission-minded. It is unique to be a part of a church which is committed to world evangelism.
- C. These Philippians sent several gifts to Paul, showing their interest and eagerness in missions. They were repeatedly involved in seeing the gospel go all over the world.
- D. Again we see how the Philippians "shared" with Paul. This means "fellowshipped" or "became partners." They were partners with Paul in the ministry. NOTE. By giving to missionaries who are in Africa, Europe or South America today, we are partners with them in the gospel. This is a fantastic motivation for giving to missions and missionaries. This may sound a warning to us that we should be

partners in missionary endeavors with those who truly believe and preach the gospel of Christ. We need to align ourselves with those who believe the fundamental doctrines of the Faith. We must never become partners with the liberals and unbelievers in world evangelism.

- E. It should be pointed out that this gift was from the whole Philippian Church. Individuals did not support Paul but it was a total effort by the local church. The biblical principle seems to be that local churches not individuals are to carry out giving to missions and missionaries.

IV. THE PROFIT OF GIVING 4:17: ***Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.***

- A. When Paul says, “Not that I am looking for a gift, he wants to assure them that he is not begging for their money, or that his ministry would have folded up if they had not sent the gift. His ministry was based squarely on Christ and His ability to meet Paul’s need. No one could accuse Paul of being “money-mad” in the ministry.
- B. The real motive behind Paul’s receiving the gift was that there might be spiritual fruit or profit; that is, that people might be saved. This could better be translated, “But I am looking for the profit which increases to your account.” To see people trust Christ and living for Him is the ultimate end of all Christian missionary effort. There is no sacrifice too big to even see one person trust Jesus Christ. NOTE. What Paul is saying is that every gift to the Lord’s work results in many spiritual dividends. This is laying up treasure in heaven. When we give to the Lord’s work, it is like depositing money in God’s bank and that money is going to draw interest in the salvation of souls. Each time we give to the Lord’s work, we are making a spiritual investment which should bring in spiritual profit. Therefore, beloved, invest wisely in the Lord’s work. Put your money where it is going to earn the most spiritual profit.

V. THE PRAISE OF GIVING 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.

- A. Paul again commends them for the gift and said it was payment in full. In essence, he is saying, “you have met your obligations and then some.”
- A. These gifts to Paul were an act of worship on the part of the Philippians. These gifts were “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.” These sacrificial gifts were given out of a pure heart that loved God and wanted to see His kingdom furthered in this world. NOTE. In the Old Testament, believers offered up physical,

animal sacrifices. In the New Testament, believers offer sacrifices but they are spiritual in nature. As a believer-priest, the Christian is to offer his spiritual sacrifice of money to God (**Heb. 13:15-16: Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**). Only God knows the true motive of the heart in giving. God always wants us to give as an act of praise and worship. Someone has said, “Some people give according to their means and others according to their meanness.”

There was this farmer who discovered that his favorite cow had given birth to twin calves, one white and the other black. He said to his wife, “You know, dear, I think we ought to give one of these calves to the Lord. We will raise one for ourselves and give one to the Lord who has given us this unexpected blessing.” She said, “Which one are you going to give to the Lord?” “Well,” he said, “I haven’t decided yet. We’ll treat them alike and feed them the same and when it comes time to market them we will then decide which one to give to the Lord.” So he fed the calves, took care of them, and they grew through the summer. Then one day he came into the house looking miserable, and his wife said, “What is the matter?” “Oh,” he said, “A terrible thing has happened. The Lord’s calf has died.” She said, “But I thought you hadn’t chosen yet which one it was.” “Oh, yes,” he said, “All the time I was thinking that the white calf would be the Lord’s, and it was the Lord’s calf that died.” POINT: It is easy to rationalize our financial commitments to the Lord when it is really going to cost us something.

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

- A. ***And my God will meet all your needs*** – This is a great promise. It involves the reciprocity of sufficiency. These Philippians had undoubtedly given from their meager resources. They were not wealthy people. Paul is saying to them, “My God will reimburse you. He will supply all your needs. Since you supplied my needs, God will supply yours. NOTE. This verse makes it clear that God will supply the Christian’s needs. He doesn’t promise to meet our wants but our needs – food, clothing, housing and other things which are absolutely necessary for living. He does not say a Christian may not go through some hard times and have to skip a meal now and then. Needs and wants can often get all scrambled up in the Christian’s mind, especially in our materialistic society. Wants and needs deal with motivations. “People are funny; they spend money they don’t have, to buy things they don’t need, to impress folks they don’t like.” NOTE. Also it should be noted that while God always meets our needs, He often goes beyond those needs to lavishly meet our wants because He is a faithful, loving, concerned God (**Prov. 3:9-10: Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. Prov. 11:24-25: One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. 2 Cor. 9:10-11: Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.**). These verses do not

guarantee God will make every Christian, who gives liberally, rich, but they do indicate blessing for the faithful giver to the Lord. So, if you want, give! Why? Because you can't out give God! NOTE. The promise God will meet every need must be put into the context of Philippians 4:14-19. God does not meet the needs of every Christian indiscriminately but every Christian who is faithfully giving to God's work. Because the Philippians had been generous, had given liberally and even sacrificed greatly, Paul assured them God would meet every financial need they had. The promise to meet all needs is conditioned on obedience to faithful giving (**2 Cor. 9:6: Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.**).

Sometimes the best illustrations are those we have experienced ourselves. I have now been a Christian over 35 years and have seen God meet my needs or the needs of my family in hundreds of ways. I would like to pick out several cases for which I have no human explanation except God meets needs supernaturally.

The first case is when I went to seminary. I was a new Christian. My parents had rejected my Christianity and were antagonistic to me. My father said he would support me if I went and received a doctorate in Physical Education but if I went to seminary he would not give me a dime. He is a man true to his word. I trusted God to meet my needs and went to seminary by faith. Three months before I went to seminary, a very wealthy woman in Texas called me over to her home and said, "God has laid it upon my heart to start supporting men who feel the call to the ministry while they are going to seminary. God has indicated to me that you are one of these young men." She supplied monies for me to go to seminary and help me support my family for seven years while I received my education. God supplies needs.

The second case is when I was in seminary. Carol and I had two children and one week we ran completely out of money. We needed milk for the babies and gas to go to a church where I was teaching Sunday school. I went to my mailbox at the seminary just after it closed on Saturday sure God would supply my needs but there was no money. Sunday morning I got up and asked God to get me to this church for I knew we had no gas. I made it to the church which was about ten miles away on fumes. For some reason, I was about a half an hour early and this church was about two blocks from the seminary. I decided to walk and pray and God seemed to impress me that I was to go to my mailbox at seminary. I argued with God because I had been there just after the mailroom closed on Saturday and there was nothing in it. I went to my mailbox and in it were two one dollar bills. I took one dollar and bought gas to get home and took the other dollar and bought milk for the kids. What a fantastic need God met and such wonderful timing. I'm still convinced that God put that money in the mailbox because there is no human explanation as to how it got there. To me this event is just as significant as having my way paid thought seminary. God supplies needs!

- B. ***According to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*** – God meets the needs of Christians "according to" not "out of" His riches. God meets needs proportionately to His own riches which are infinite. The source of God's bank account is His own riches in glory. The God who owns the gold in every mine and the cattle on a thousand hills can meet the needs of all His children who dare to be faithful givers. NOTE. We have no guarantee God will meet our needs if we are not giving to Him

faithfully (although He may). But we do have the guarantee He will meet the needs of all who are faithfully giving to the Lord's work.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. For you without Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, the issue before you is not the giving of your money or your relationship to this church or any church. The issue before you is that you are separated from God because of sin; you stand under God's wrath and are headed for eternal judgment. Your only hope for salvation is Jesus Christ, who can give you the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

- B. You could have millions of dollars and give it all away but this would not make you a Christian. You could have your name on a hundred church rolls but this would not make you a Christian. A Christian is one who knows Christ personally through receiving Him into the life.

- C. What do you think of Christ? Was He merely a good man who was a brilliant teacher, or is He the God-Man who rose from the dead, and can save all who come to Him by faith? Your answer is important, for it will ultimately determine your eternal destiny.