

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES MY GIVING MAKE Philippians 4:14-20

Today is COMMITMENT SUNDAY for our BACK TO THE FUTURE capital campaign. We are prayerfully seeking to raise \$10 million – above and beyond our regular giving – over the next three years. These funds will permit us to retire the mortgages on our **DOWNTOWN** and **ORANGE PARK** campuses and position us to walk through doors of opportunity the Lord is opening for us. Each member or family of our congregation is asked to make a giving pledge today.

To reach this goal, we need God to raise up some who are able and willing to give an extraordinary gift to this campaign. Others will only be able to give what seems to be a widow's mite. But remember the Lord claimed that poor widow gave more than those who cast in much. The four Gospels record how Jesus fed more than 5,000 people with a lad's lunch. Jesus instructed the disciples to inventory their resources. In John 6:8-9, Andrew reported: "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" I'm sure some of you feel the same way about this BACK TO THE FUTURE campaign. The need is great. Your resources are limited. What difference will your giving make?

I want to answer that question from Philippians 4:14-20. Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest in Rome, as he awaited trial with an uncertain outcome. The church at Philippi heard about Paul's situation and sent a love offering to him through Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus himself was also a gift. He was to serve Paul on the church's behalf until this ordeal was over. But Epaphroditus became sick. The Lord had mercy on him. And when he was well enough to travel, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter to deliver to the church. But Paul does not address the offering they sent him until the end of the letter. In our text, Paul talks about their financial gifts from a spiritual perspective. This is more than a report of what happened to the money. It is theology that explains the significance of Christian generosity. The point of the text is this: Giving always benefits those who give more than those who receive.

The theme verse of Back to the Future is 2 Corinthians 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." This 140-year-old congregation has a rich legacy. But our dreams are even greater than our memories. My pastoral vision is that in the coming years half of income will go to local outreach, Christian education, and world missions. I trust God that we will be a fully-resourced church. And I want you to know that what you give to this church is about more than a balanced budget, mortgage payments, or even debt-free living. Every dollar you give to Back to the Future matters for eternity. It matters when you give with a loving heart, generous hands, and steadfast hope.

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### **I. IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU GIVE WITH A LOVING HEART.**

Paul was grateful for the generosity of the Philippians. But he did not want them to feel he was buttering them up to ask for another gift. With this concern, Paul testifies in verses 10-13: "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. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Paul's contentment in Christ freed him from manipulating God's people for money. But he was truly grateful for the gift from the saints. Verse 14 says, "Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble." The word "share" translates the Greek word for fellowship. Some people bailed out on Paul when trouble arose. According to Philippians 1:17, some preached Christ thinking to afflict Paul in his imprisonment. But when the Philippians heard about Paul's imprisonment, they shared his trouble. They could not travel to Rome. There was nothing they could do to help, fix, or change his situation if they could. But they did not allow what they could not do to be an excuse to do nothing. They sacrificially gave a love offering. They sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul on their behalf. They shared in his trouble.

This is true Christian generosity. The amount you give is never more important than the attitude with which you give. The Philippians gave with loving hearts. Verses 15-16 says: "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. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once again." The Philippians gave sacrificially to share in Paul's troubles. They gave when other churches did not support Paul's ministry. They gave consistently as long-term partners in the gospel. This is the kind of giving that makes a difference. It is giving that comes from a big heart, not a big account. 2 Corinthians 8:12 says: "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have."

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## **II. IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU GIVE WITH GENEROUS HANDS.**

The Philippians gave with loving hearts. Their generous hands evidenced their loving hearts. The two must go together. A generous hand does not matter if it does not flow from a loving heart. A loving heart does not matter if it does not result in generous hands. There are two reasons why it makes a difference when you give with generous hands.

### **A. CHRISTIAN GENEROSITY PRODUCES FRUIT.**

Pastors have lost credibility because too many of us seem to care about money more than people. But Paul seemed to always be thinking of others rather than himself. His Christlike unselfishness is indicated in this verse 17: "Not that I

seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.” There was a need. The need was met by the generosity of the Philippians. But Paul was not primarily concerned that the gift met the need. He desired to show the Philippians how to put more credits in their accounts with God through generosity.

Paul uses financial terms here. It is the picture of one that makes a deposit in a bank that accrues interest. Paul wanted the Philippians to be fruitful. In Philippians 1:11, he calls this “fruits of righteousness.” But here we see that righteous fruit is about more than evangelism and discipleship. It’s also about generosity. Giving to the Lord’s work is fruit that increases to your credit. R. KENT HUGHES comments: “The truth is, the only money that we will see again is that which we give away. And that money will return with compounded interest!” Christian generosity makes a difference because it produces fruit. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus says: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

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## **B. CHRISTIAN GENEROSITY PLEASAS GOD.**

Verse 18 says, “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.” In this verse, the generosity of the Philippians is audited from two perspectives. First, the gift if reviewed from PAUL’S PERSPECTIVE: “I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.” Paul continues to use financial language here. He has “received full payment, and more.” This is Paul’s official receipt. The Philippians felt a sense of debt or duty to Paul. But they no longer owed Paul anything. In fact, they overpaid. He now owes them. In the most gracious terms, Paul tells the Philippians not to send him any more money. He was well supplied because of the gifts they sent through Epaphroditus.

Verse 18 also reviews their gift from GOD’S PERSPECTIVE. In the middle of the verse, Paul shifts from the terminology of accounting to the language of worship: “I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” In heaven’s record, their gifts were not payments to Paul or support for the gospel. They were acts of worship to God. By giving to a human need they were offering divine worship. It was “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” This is the way the Old Testament described sacrifices to God. But Paul is not talking about sin offerings here. These are offerings of thanksgiving. This is an important New Testament distinction. We are sinners who must answer to the holy God who created us. Nothing we give can make us right with God. Salvation from divine judgment only comes by faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and arose from the dead. Redeemed sinners do not give to pay for salvation. We give to offer grateful praise to our Savior. We not give to the church but through the church to God.

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### **III. IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU GIVE WITH STEADFAST HOPE.**

Some of you are hesitant about making a pledge today because you are worried about tomorrow. This is always the challenge of Christian generosity. But generous Christians live with steadfast hope. This hope is twofold. It involves both your needs and God's glory.

#### **A. GOD WILL MEET YOUR NEEDS.**

JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE called Philippians 4:19 "perhaps the greatest promise in the entire Bible." It is so because it includes all of the other promises in itself. The promise is this: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The Philippians were in need. Yet they supplied what Paul needed to advance the gospel. Now Paul assures the saints that God has not forgotten their needs. Generous Christians live on the promise that God will meet your needs.

**THE SOURCE OF THE PROMISE.** The verse begins with Paul speaking of God the Father in the most personal terms: "And my God." God is not just a God. And God is not just the God. The Christian boldly declares that God is my God. God is so personal that Paul spoke of him possessively. Yet every Christian can call the Father "my God." Nothing is impossible if God is your God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 18:29 says: "For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall."

**THE SCOPE OF THE PROMISE.** Verse 19 says: "And my God will supply every need of yours..." This promise is all-inclusive. God himself will meet every need the generous Christian has. Yet sometimes God meets needs through other people. In Philippians 2:25, Paul says, "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow minister, and your messenger and minister to my need." Philippians 4:16 says: "Even in Thessalonica you sent help for my needs once and again." But people are only channels. God is the all-sufficient source. Do not judge God's faithfulness by the fulfillment of our goals. God promises to meet your need, not our greed. There are times when God will snatch away the things or people you think you need to teach us that we need him not them.

**THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE PROMISE.** How is God able to meet every need? Verse 19 says: "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory..." God's glorious riches are inexhaustible. There is no limit to God's riches. He is totally sufficient to meet every need that arises in your life. In Psalm 23:1, David sings, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." God's glorious riches will meet your needs. God does not provide for your needs out of his glorious riches, but according to his in glorious. A millionaire buys a student's books for the semester out of his riches. But that millionaire builds a new dorm for students to live in out of his riches. This is how our God meets our needs according to his glorious riches.

THE SURETY OF THE PROMISE. Philippians 1:1 and 4:21 call believers “saints in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19 tells us what it means to be saints in Christ Jesus: “And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” This is the cashier’s check the generous Christian carries in the wallet of faith.

- **There is the sovereign Banker: “My God.”**
  - **There is the insurance policy: “shall supply.”**
  - **There is the check amount: “every need of yours.”**
  - **There is the account balance: “according to his riches in glory.”**
  - **There is check signatory: “in Christ Jesus.”**
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## **B. GOD WILL GET THE GLORY.**

I imagine Paul paused before writing verse 20, contemplating all he had written in this letter, culminating with the promise of verse 19. When Paul thought God’s faithfulness to meet every need of the saints, he burst forth into praise to the glory of God: “To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.” “Glory is essential to the Godhead, as light is to the sun,” said THOMAS WATSON. “Glory is the sparkling of the deity.” God is glorious because God is God. And the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. The ultimate goal of every thing we should be the glory of God. Psalm 115:1 says, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!”

**AMAZING GRACE SHALL ALWAYS BE MY SONG OF PRAISE  
FOR IT WAS GRACE THAT BOUGHT MY LIBERTY  
I DO NOT KNOW JUST HOW HE CAME TO LOVE ME SO  
HE LOOKED BEYOND MY FAULTS AND SAW MY NEED**

**I SHALL FOREVER LIFT MINE EYES TO CALVARY  
TO VIEW THE CROSS WHERE JESUS DIED FOR ME  
HOW MARVELOUS THE GRACE THAT CAUGHT MY FALLING SOUL  
HE LOOKED BEYOND MY FAULTS AND SAW MY NEED**