**The Church That Remembered**

**Philippians 4:10-20**

**READING THE TEXT**

**10I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

**14Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15Moreover, 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 the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18I have received full payment and have more than enough. 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. 19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

**20To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Today we come to the end of our Philippians series. We have ten verses that cover the same theme. Sometimes we wonder how much we should give to missionaries and how much we should give to the church. We have tight budgets and still want to give. And Paul addresses people who were generous with them.

**PREACHING THE TEXT**

**Philippians 4:10 NIV**

**10I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.**

This church had supported Paul in the past, but their support had been paused for some reason. Either their communication was cut off, or the money was so tight that they could not support Paul. They were concerned about Paul, but for a season they did not have the opportunity to show their concern in a practical manner.

I think of my dear brother and friend Cyrus in Africa. I was involved with him in church planting and training pastors in Liberia. This was a beautiful season of life. But after a few years I switched ministry positions and moved several times and faced my own hardships. I was not able to call him or check in with him. But he would often come to mind, and I would pray for him.

Recently he contacted me, and I felt the urge from the Lord to once again renew my support and investment in his ministry. Life circumstances stood in the way of me being able to support him. But we just committed as a family to begin supporting him financially.

We know of people in the mission field that are doing excellent work that can be very challenging. They are bringing the gospel of Jesus to the world. But if they are out of sight, sometimes, they become out of mind, and we forget about them for a season. I love that Phyllis reads letters from missionaries in our church service. We cannot forget people who are in the mission field. We can not support every missionary. But through prayer God will instruct us as to who shares our values and those whom God has given us to care for and support.

**Vs 10** Paul is describing their brotherly love and sharing concern for him. Brotherly love leads to generosity and the gift benefits the giver also. When we truly love people, we will be generous with them. And this goes for missionaries like Paul and those we have been given. If we say we love and support missionaries but do not financially support them we are not in line with the kind of love that God wants. God always calls love to be put into some kind of action. Whether it is prayers or letters or financial support, love turns into action.

GIVING

Misplaced desires

One of the things that will stand in the way of being generous is our misplaced desires. Many trust the accumulation of wealth rather than God. If only I can store up so much money, then I will be generous. But it is never enough. One more promotion or one more bill paid off and then I will be generous. After I get my next car, I will be generous. The thing we often miss is that God is calling both the poor and rich to be generous.

Paul was not harassing people or emotionally manipulating them to give. Paul was content. And he makes sure he includes that in his letter.

**Philippians 4:11-13**

**11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

CONTENTMENT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

**Vs 11** Paul said he had learned to be content in all circumstances. This verse reminds us that we can either be content with God’s plans and God’s calling for our lives, or we can chart our own course. That is the first thing to settle in our minds and hearts once we come to faith in Jesus Christ. Will we be content with God’s plans and God’s calling? This verse is about being content with God’s calling and the supply that God will give us along the way.

 Paul is content because he knew the cost of following Christ. Paul had a brilliant mind and Im sure he could have gone into business and made a lot of money. He was content with God’s plan and the riches he stored up were in heaven and not earth. Still, ministry takes money.

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO GIVES ME STRENGTH

 This is one of the most misquoted passages in the bible. People quote this passage to reach their personal goals. Or the word-faith heresy says that if we claim this passage God will give us whatever we want. But many never check in with God to see if their personal goal is what God wants them to do. But they quote this verse. “I’m going to make enough money this year to buy the fancy range rover I have been longing for; I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!” Well, maybe God wants you to support 6 missionaries this year for the hard-earned money, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength!

 This verse is about God calling Paul to do something that was almost impossible. Apart from God’s intervention Paul could not have gotten the gospel to all parts of the known world. From Spain to Asia and all parts of the Roman empire Paul and the apostles planted churches and advanced the gospel. He was put in chains and beaten with rods and nearly drown and beaten and left for dead. And yet all things, even this, even the calling of God was possible because God gave him the strength and God put generosity in the hearts of his believers to support Paul’s calling.

 If you are willing to follow Christ, even when it is hard, then this verse is for you. You can do all things; the things God is specifically calling you to do because he will give you the strength. And if your goal is personal holiness and devotion to Jesus then yes, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength.

Tithing was part of the law

Now let’s talk about giving since it comes up in this passage. Grace is part of giving in the era of grace. Grace based giving is the higher standard than the law of tithes from the Old Testament. In the era of grace, we have a higher standard of giving than 10%. If you follow the Old Testament law of giving, then you would have to give about 24 percent. That is what all the tithes add up to. Our higher standard is that we are called to approach the Lord as if all that we have belongs to him. And we ask not how much we should give, but we ask how much he wants us to keep. It all belongs to him and is there to advance his kingdom and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our hearts must be engaged, and idolatry confronted, if we have a change to truly give out of grace. It requires heart and prayer. It takes great intention to approach God in prayer and ask Him to tell us what we should give.

Now the bible is clear that we are called to support those who teach us and mentor us. So a first portion of what we contribute should go to our local church. And we should be intentional about that.

**1 Timothy 5:17-18 ESV**

**Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”**

**Galatians 6:6 ESV**

**Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.**

**1 Corinthians 9:14 ESV**

**In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.**

 So the first portion of what we give should go to the place where we are fed the word of God each week and where we find mentoring and people laboring for our good.

 We also know there were missionaries like the Apostle Paul that we are called to support. And in this era of grace, we must pray and discern and ask God to give us a heart of generosity and blessing.

**17Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18I have received full payment and have more than enough. 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. 19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

CREDITED TO YOUR ACCOUNT

 The works we do and the sacrifices we make in this life store up riches and rewards in heaven. How does that work? Well, perhaps the gift you give allows a missionary to print one more packet or buy one more bible that wins one more soul to faith in Jesus Christ. You just took money out of your pocket that you could have used to buy a new gadget or tool and that turned into a soul that is now in heaven. That is how in a practical manner our riches are stored up in heaven. Can you imagine meeting that person in heaven that came to Christ because you funded the bible that was used to share the gospel?

MY GOD WILL MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS (according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus)

 I have heard story after story of people who were generous with the Lord’s work and surprisingly, they ended up with more funds than before they began to give financially. Some of this might be due to taking control of finances and being responsible and more careful. But some of it is miraculous where God gives favor and blessing and changes hearts and minds so that our needs are met.

 God is telling those who are generous that not only will you store up blessings in heaven, but God will make sure your needs are met as you are generous with the Lord’s work.

One last word. The idea of giving God a gift and then demanding that he owes us a financial return on our investment is a pagan idea. It is treating God like the stock market. We put in some money, and we demand a percentage back. When we give God will decide whether it comes back to us financially or if we are blessed in some other way, like a clean conscience.

 Those who teach that you give the seed money so that you can get rich are teaching demonic things and are evil and fueled by greed. They brag about their 10,000 watches and jets and fancy cars. They have fallen prey to the love of money. Do not support these evil people. They will be rich, and you will be used for their demonic schemes.

 Sow into ministries that advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and get the word of God to their mission field. Sow into ministries that put the word of God into action in the name of Jesus Christ. Sow into that and not into Jackasses who live in mansions.

**SUMMARY / APPLICATION**

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. If everyone did what I did would the church and missions be well funded?