

Selfless Service and Sacrificial Giving Philippians 4:14-23

¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Introduction

In a recent survey of 1,000 American church attenders, people were asked, "Why does the church exist?" 89% of the respondents said that the church's purpose was "to take care of my family's and my spiritual

needs.” Only 11% said the purpose of the church is “to win the world for Jesus Christ.”

To say that American Christians are afflicted with unbiblically self-centered perspectives regarding the church and their proper role in it would be a severe understatement. Many Christians view the church no differently than how they view stores. If you like a store, go there. If you don't like another store, leave and go somewhere else. If you previously liked a store but today don't like it anymore because of whatever reason, consider never going back. There are at least a couple problems with this kind of perspective though: 1) The church isn't a store, and 2) Christians aren't supposed to be consumers of churches.

Stores exist for you, but the church doesn't. The church exists for Christ. True, Christ wants to do something with you and for you, but fundamentally, the church exists so that you can serve Christ, not the other way around. Let's not be so naively selfish as to think that the church exists for us. Christ is to be at the center of the church, not you or me.

Today's Western Christian is generally very selfish and self-centered. It's all about "me." Many Christians today are focused on how God can build up their finances, or how God can heal any physical ailments they may be experiencing, or how God can otherwise improve their life here on earth. They're generally not interested in studying and learning deeper doctrine; they only want to hear feel-good, positive-thinking messages that give them warm and fuzzy feelings. They're more interested in learning about healing or about some new way to manipulate God into blessing them, rather than about the deep doctrinal truths taught in such books as Romans. The god they have created for themselves is like a giant teddy bear in the sky, who only wants to love everyone, and holds out his arms desperately to people, looking for people to love him back. Or like a giant slot machine in the sky which, if you just know the right formula, will bless

your life with abundant riches. Or like a magic genie in the sky who will grant your every wish.

It's understandable if those who reject Christ have a consumeristic attitude towards the church. But those who call Christ Lord and Savior should not dare be like that.

Lesson

I. Pauls selflessness

¹⁴ Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Nevertheless (4133) (plen) is a marker of contrast, implying the validity of something irrespective of other considerations. Paul uses **plen** here to restrict his previous statement. In view of Paul's complete reliance upon Christ in him, continually strengthening him in every circumstance, the Philippians might have wondered if they should have even bothered to send him the gift

Vincent concurs writhing...

Lest, in declaring his independence of human aid, he should seem to disparage the Philippians' gift.

Share with me (4790) (**sugkoinoneo** from **sún** = with + **koinoneo** = to partake, share [word study on related word **koinonia**]) means to participate in something with someone.

Vine references as support for his interpretation the passage in Galatians where Paul commands believers to...

Bear (present imperative) one another's burdens (extra heavy loads, which here represent difficulties or problems people have trouble dealing with), and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

([Gal 6:2](#))

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Affliction (2347)(**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) ([Click in depth study of thlipsis](#))

Thlipsis originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**.

John MacArthur writes that...

"**Thlipsis** (tribulations) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice...In Scripture the word **thlipsis** is perhaps most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress." (MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Moody)

Thlipsis pictures one being "crushed" by intense pressure, difficult circumstances, suffering or trouble pressing upon them from without. Thus persecution, affliction, distress, opposition or tribulation, all press hard on one's soul. **Thlipsis** does not refer to mild discomfort but to great difficulty. In Scripture the **thlipsis** is most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress and sorrows which "weighs down" a man's spirit like the sorrows and burden his heart. **Thlipsis** then includes the disappointments which can "crush the life" out of the one who is afflicted.

The English word "**tribulation**" is derived from the Latin word **tribulum** (literally a thing with teeth that tears), which was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the corn or grain. The **tribulum** was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff. As believers experience the "tribulum" of tribulations, and depend on God's grace, the trials purify us and rid us of the chaff.

Constable has an interesting note here...

"We know that God loves a cheerful giver, but I believe we also need to stress that God loves a cheerful receiver. Cheerful receivers make giving and receiving a joy. It is especially important that the called workers of the church learn to be gracious, cheerful receivers. This is not necessarily an easy task. The art of being a gracious, cheerful, thankful receiver may be even more difficult than being a cheerful giver. If we learn to accept the compliments and the special personal gifts which we receive in a gracious, cheerful manner, we will help make giving and receiving a joy for ourselves and for our people." ([Philippians Notes](#))

15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

Shared (2841) (**koinoneo** from **koinos** = common, shared by all) means literally to share one's possessions with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest. This Greek word was used in a marriage contract where the husband and wife agree to a joint-participation in the necessities of life.

There are 8 uses of **koinoneo** in the NT and is rendered (in the NAS) as contributing(1), participates(1), share(4), shared(2)...
Romans 12:13-note **contributing** to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Romans 15:27-note Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have **shared** in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

Galatians 6:6 And let the one who is taught the word **share** all good things with him who teaches.

Philippians 4:15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church **shared** with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

1Timothy 5:22 Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus **share** responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

Hebrews 2:14-note Since then the children **share** in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through

death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

[1Peter 4:13](#)-note but to the degree that you **share** the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

[2Jn 1:11](#) for the one who gives him a greeting **participates** in his evil deeds.

Giving (1394) (**dosis** from **dídomi** = to give) refers to a gift. **Today's English Version** renders it...
you were the only ones who shared my profits and losses.

Receiving (3028) (**lepsis** from **lambáno** = to receive) refers to a receipt or to the act of receiving.

Giving and receiving together picture a ledger with a credit and debit page. The implication is that Paul evidently was a careful steward of his resources and kept an account of his receipts and expenditures.

¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.

Needs (5532) (**chreia** from **chréos** = debt) refers to that which is a lack of something requisite, desirable, or useful. **Chreia** means to have need of someone or something ([Mt 3:14](#), [Mk 2:25](#)). It can speak of the necessities of life ([Acts 20:34](#)). In [Eph 4:29](#) (note) **chreia** refers to an individual's "needs" (more in a figurative sense or psychological, spiritual sense rather than a physical sense).

Chreia - 49x in the NT - [Matt. 3:14](#); [6:8](#); [9:12](#); [14:16](#); [21:3](#); [26:65](#); [Mk. 2:17](#), [25](#); [11:3](#); [14:63](#); [Lk. 5:31](#); [9:11](#); [10:42](#); [15:7](#); [19:31](#), [34](#); [22:71](#); [Jn. 2:25](#); [13:10](#), [29](#); [16:30](#); [Acts 2:45](#); [4:35](#); [6:3](#); [20:34](#);

[28:10](#); [Rom. 12:13](#); [1 Co. 12:21, 24](#); [Eph. 4:28, 29](#); [Phil. 2:25](#); [4:16, 19](#); [1 Thess. 1:8](#); [4:9, 12](#); [5:1](#); [Tit. 3:14](#); [Heb. 5:12](#); [7:11](#); [10:36](#); [1 Jn. 2:27](#); [3:17](#); [Rev. 3:17](#); [21:23](#); [22:5](#).

The **NAS** renders **chreia** as necessary(1), need(40), needed(1), needs(6), task(1).

Dwight Pentecost notes that...

The strange thing in this passage is that the apostle is not commending the Philippians because they met his need; he is commending them because they have satisfied a need of their own of which they seem to have been entirely ignorant. Since the apostle had nothing, we would suppose that he would thank them because of what their gift did for him. But he barely mentions that. His thanksgiving goes to God because through the gift they have satisfied a need which they have. The apostle points out that this is not the first time the Philippians contributed to his needs. They did so on at least two previous occasions. (Pentecost, J. D. *The Joy of Living: A Study of Philippians*. Kregel Publications)

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you.

Seek (1934) (**epizeteo** from **epí** = intensifies meaning + **zeteo** = to seek) means to search for or even to demand. Paul was neither inquiring about a gift nor demanding it.

Epizeteo - 13x in the NT - [Matt. 6:32](#); [12:39](#); [16:4](#); [Lk. 4:42](#); [12:30](#); [Acts 12:19](#); [13:7](#); [19:39](#); [Rom. 11:7](#); [Phil. 4:17](#); [Heb. 11:14](#); [13:14](#).

The **NAS** renders **epizeteo** as craves(1), eagerly seek(2), searched(1), searching(1), seek(2), seeking(3), seeks after(1), sought(1), want(1).

By declaring "**not** (absolute negation) **that I seek the gift**" Paul is apparently still defending himself against the slanderous assertion that he is using the gospel as a means of making a living. Note

that "seek" is in the **present tense** indicating one's habitual action. As Wuest renders it Paul is saying that it "Not that it is my character to be ever seeking the gift"

Gift (1390) (**doma** from **didomi** = to give) is a present or gift and the word lends greater emphasis to the character of the gift. In this case it is preceded by the definite article in Greek ("to" = the) indicating that this is a specific gift he is referring to.

Profit (2590) (**karpos** [**word study**]) is fruit, in this case speaking of the dividends the Philippians would receive from their grace giving to Paul. Paul is referring to the eternal dividend accruing in their spiritual account in the bank of Heaven. This fruit was the reward God would recompense to them for their generous support of Paul as their "church missionary". (cf [Pr 11:24, 25](#); [19:17](#); [Lk 6:38](#); [2Co 9:6](#)).

Karpos - 67x in the NT - [Matt. 3:8, 10](#); [7:16ff](#); [12:33](#); [13:8, 26](#); [21:19, 34, 41, 43](#); [Mk. 4:7f, 29](#); [11:14](#); [12:2](#); [Lk. 1:42](#); [3:8f](#); [6:43f](#); [8:8](#); [12:17](#); [13:6f, 9](#); [20:10](#); [Jn. 4:36](#); [12:24](#); [15:2, 4f, 8, 16](#); [Acts 2:30](#); [Rom. 1:13](#); [6:21f](#); [15:28](#); [1 Co. 9:7](#); [Gal. 5:22](#); [Eph. 5:9](#); [Phil. 1:11, 22](#); [4:17](#); [2 Tim. 2:6](#); [4:13](#); [Heb. 12:11](#); [13:15](#); [Jas. 3:17f](#); [5:7, 18](#); [Rev. 22:2](#)

The **NAS** renders **karpos** as benefit (2), crop(5), crops(2), descendants*(1), fruit(43), fruitful(1), fruits(4), grain(1), harvest(1), proceeds(1), produce(4), profit(1).

Increases (4121) (**pleonazo** from **pleion** = more) means to cause to increase or superabound and so to be present in abundance or to have plenty ([2Pe 1:8-note](#), [Php 4:17](#)). To have more than is necessary or more than enough to meet one's needs ([2Co 8:15](#)). To become more and more - in [Ro 5:20-note](#) speaking of transgression and sin increasing, in [Romans 6:1-note](#) of grace increasing (in his rhetorical rebuttal to those who would seek to turn grace into an opportunity to increase in sin, falsely thinking such conduct was "okay" with God!), of grace spreading or increasing as manifest by giving thanks to God (as an aside, genuine giving of thanks proceeds from an attitude of gratitude in

a grace filled/controlled/transformed heart), in [2Th 1:3](#) speaking of love for one another.

Pleonazo was a term taken from the money market and was used of the accumulation of interest, in this case the interest in the "spiritual account" of the Philippians as a result of their generous giving.

Account (3056) (**logos**) in this context is used much as we would use the term "bank-account."

The Philippians were in effect storing up for themselves treasure in heaven. ([Mt 6:2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#)--See **notes** on giving [Matthew 6:2-4](#); [Matthew 6:19-21](#))

Received (568) (**apechomai** or **apecho** from **apó** = from + **écho** = have) means to be enough, to be sufficient and as in this case to have received in full. In this specific use **apecho** is used by Paul in the technical sense "This is my receipt". **Apecho** was constantly used in secular Greek describing the drawing up of a receipt. What Paul is saying to them in "business terms" is "you have paid me in full in all respects". Note that in other NT contexts, **apechomai** has a distinctly different meaning of to have ([Lk 15:2](#)) or to produce separation or distance from someone or something ([Mt 15:8](#)) and then by figurative extension to avoid contact with as in ([Acts 15:29](#), [1Ti 4:3](#), [1Th 4:3-note](#), [1Th 5:22-note](#), [1Pe 2:11-note](#))

Apechomai - 19x in the NT - [Matt. 6:2](#), [5](#), [16](#); [14:24](#); [15:8](#); [Mk. 7:6](#); [14:41](#); [Lk. 6:24](#); [7:6](#); [15:20](#); [24:13](#); [Acts 15:20](#), [29](#); [Phil. 4:18](#); [1 Thess. 4:3](#); [5:22](#); [1 Tim. 4:3](#); [Philemon 1:15](#); [1 Pet. 2:11-note](#)

The **NAS** renders **apechomai/apecho** as abstain(5), abstaining(1), away(1), have back(1), have in full(3), have received in full(1), it is enough(1), off(1), receiving in full(1), was away(2).

Wuest explains it this way...

And now Paul signs a receipt for the gift they sent him, possibly a bit of apostolic humor. The words "I have" are a rubber-stamp of the first century for, "I give you a

receipt for what you sent me,” or “I have received in full.”
 (Wuest, K. S. *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)

Have an abundance (4052) (**perisseuo** from **perissós** = abundant) means to superabound or to be in excess. In this verse **perisseuo** extends the idea of **apecho**, as if he was not just full but overflowing or superabounding.

Wuest commenting on **perisseuo** writes that...

The word “abound” (NASB = “abundance”) in the Greek speaks of that which exists in superfluity. The Philippian gift must have been generous, and Epaphroditus must have been loaded down. What a demonstration of the work of the Holy Spirit is seen in this act of generosity on the part of these former pagans, performed for one who in origin, training, and religion had been and in some ways was still so different from them, different in a sense which would naturally militate against Paul, Gentiles of the proudest and most exclusive race of antiquity, the intelligentsia of the world, loving one who belonged to a race that was looked down upon and despised. (*Ibid*)

I AM AMPLY SUPPLIED HAVING RECEIVED FROM EPAPHRODITUS WHAT YOU HAVE SENT A FRAGRANT AROMA AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE WELL-PLEASING TO GOD: pepleromai (1SRPI) dexamenos (AMPMSN) para Epaphroditou ta par' humon osmen euodias thusian dekten euareston to theo: ([Phil 2:25,26](#)) ([Jn 12:3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); [2Co 2:15,16](#); [Ep 5:2](#); [Heb 13:16](#), [20](#), [21](#); [1Pe 2:5](#)) ([Ro 12:1](#); [2Co 9:12](#))

Amply supplied (4137) (**pleroo** from **pleres** = full) means to be completely filled, as a net filled with fish or cup filled to brim. Pleroo is used often to describe the fulfilling of God's OT promises and prophecies.

Pleroo is a great NT verb to take a moment and study to see what or who is filled (or fulfilled), what they are filled with (eg, just to "tease" you, contrast [Ro 1:29-note](#) and [Eph 5:18-note](#), [Acts 13:52](#), [Jn 3:29](#), [2Ti 1:4-note](#); [1Jn 1:4](#), [2Jn 1:12!](#)), how this filling comes about, what the result of filling is, etc.

Note Paul's use of the **perfect tense** which signifies "I have been filled full and remain in that state" or "I have been filled and am still full, supplied and satisfied." Such was the lasting effect of their gift on Paul!

II. Philippians Sacrifice

¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Aroma (2175) (euodia) fragrance, sweet odor and metaphorically as here of sacrifices pleasing to God, specifically the material assistance sent to Paul by the Philippians.

Euodia - 3x in the NT - [2 Co. 2:15](#); [Eph. 5:2](#); [Phil. 4:18](#)

Fragrant aroma is an image that moves us from the business world of accounting to the religious world of the priest and obviously is used by Paul to describe their material gift to God. It is worth noting that the same terms are used to describe Christ's

sacrificial death in Ephesians, Paul writing for the saints at Ephesus to...

2 Corinthians 2:15 (NASB95)

15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

Ephesians 5:2 (NASB95)

2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Vine commenting on **an odor of a sweet smell** writes that... the phrase is used in the **Septuagint (LXX)** for the Hebrew **savor of rest** especially of the burnt (or ascending) offering, e.g., Leviticus 1 and 2, but also of the peace offering, Leviticus 3 and sin offering (Lev 4). The idea of free will and self-dedication was not altogether absent from the burnt offering (though this is not to be gathered from [Lev. 1:3](#), for the phrase there is not “of his own voluntary will,” a.v., but “for his acceptance”)... **Acceptable (1184) (dektos** from **dechomai** - see above at "received") means one of whom there is or has been a favorable decision of the will. **Dektos** was particularly used of the sacrifice although not to distinguish it from unacceptable sacrifices, but to specify it as the object of divine approval.

The important principle for saints to remember is that whether or not an offering is really acceptable and well-pleasing to God depends on the motive of the one who brings it. Lowell phrases it poetically as...

*“Not what we give but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare.”*

Sacrifice (2378) (**thusia** from **thúo** = to sacrifice) is literally that which is offered as a sacrifice. Here **thusia** is used metaphorically to describe their service of giving. It was a sacrifice to God and since they were financially poor, it was given "sacrificially"!

Euarestos - 9x in the NT - [Ro 12:1, 2](#); [14:18](#); [2 Co. 5:9](#); [Ep 5:10](#); [Php 4:18](#); [Col 3:20](#); [Titus 2:9](#); [He 13:21](#).

The **NAS** renders **euarestos** as acceptable(3), pleasing(2), well-pleasing(3), which is pleasing(1).

The KJV Commentary adds that...

The Philippians' stewardship was a barometer of their spiritual condition. One can give without loving, but he cannot love without giving. Love takes the stew out of stewardship. The love gift pleased God, relieved Paul, and enriched the Philippians. (Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson)

Dwight Pentecost has a practical summation of [Philippians 4:14-18](#) writing that...

We are responsible before God for the use of every material thing that God puts into our hands. We are not only responsible for the surplus, we are responsible for every penny. Our material goods are to be used under the control of the Spirit of God, so that the saints' needs might be met, and the servants' needs might be met, and God might be satisfied as we give sacrifices acceptable and well-pleasing to God. I trust that God may give such an attitude toward the material things He has given to us, that we shall no longer divide them into "His" and "ours" but recognize that they all belong to Him and that we are stewards of what He has entrusted to us, so that we might use them to the glory of His name. (Pentecost, J. D. The Joy of Living: A Study of Philippians. Kregel Publications)

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The **KJV Commentary** writes...

The Philippians had met Paul's need out of their poverty by Epaphroditus; God will meet their need out of His riches by Christ Jesus. (Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E G, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson)

Don't yank this verse out of context and apply it indiscriminately. Such amazing generosity does not allow for foolish and frivolous spending on our part while at the same time we consider God is responsible for necessities! Rather, because the Philippians had been so generous in their Christian giving, God would meet their needs as well. (see Jesus' promise of the Father's intimate care of His children's needs in the notes on the Sermon on the Mount - [Mt 6:25](#), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [33](#), [34](#)- see notes [Mt 6:25-26](#), [6:27-29](#), [6:30-32](#), [6:33-34](#))

Paul is saying

"You met **my** need, and God is going to meet **your** need. You met **one** need that I have, but my God will meet **all** of your needs. You gave **out of your poverty**, but God will supply your needs **out of His riches in glory!**"

Paul is reminding

"his benefactors that "his" God ("**my God**") will do what he himself is in no position to do namely, reimburse his benefactors. This assurance of the divine supply of the Philippians' needs implies that they had given so liberally that they actually left themselves in some real "need." (Expositor's)

Shall supply (4137) (liberally supply) (**pleroo** [word study]) means to be filled (passive voice = saints acted on by outside

force) to the brim (a net, [Mt 13:48](#), a building, [Jn 12:3](#), [Acts 2:2](#), a city, [Acts 5:28](#), needs [Phil 4:19](#)), to make complete in every particular, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally, to flood, to diffuse throughout, to pervade, to take possession of and so to ultimately to control.

Solomon exhorts us to

"Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce, so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine." ([Pr 3:9,10](#))

And again he says

"There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered." ([Pr 11:24,25](#))

Although in context God was speaking to Israel in the following verse, the principle applies that God's people have the responsibility to support the work of God, rather than to heap luxuries on themselves. Thus **God** tells Israel to

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." ([Mal 3:10](#))

Barnes has a practical comment noting God supplying all their needs

does not mean that the Philippians would now be justified in becoming lazy. "God's word does not advocate fanaticism, nor does it say that one should throw his pocketbook into the nearest river and then announce that he is going to live by faith" (Tenney). To be sure, God was taking care of Paul, but one of the ways in

which he was doing so was exemplified by the gift from Philippi.

Calvin writes that the saints at Philippi had...been truly sowing in the Lord's field, from which a sure and abundant harvest might be expected. Nor does he promise them merely a reward in the future life, but even in respect of the necessities of the present life: "Do not think that you have impoverished yourselves; God, whom I serve, will abundantly furnish you with everything necessary for you. **According to (2596) (kata)** reveals the extent to which God would supply the Philippians' needs.

According to (kata) which is not the same as "out of" His riches. If I am a billionaire and I give you ten dollars, I have given you out of my riches; but if I give you a million dollars, I have given to you according to my riches. The first is a portion; the second is a proportion. The first would take it out of His riches, & would be like Mr. Rockefeller who used to give his caddy a dime. God gives in proportion to His infinite and inexhaustible riches!

Spurgeon comments...

"You have supplied my need out of your poverty; my God shall supply all your need out of his riches. Your greatest need shall not exceed the liberality of his supplies."

Riches (4149) (**ploutos** [word study]) properly denotes abundance, plentitude, and literally is used to refer to material wealth or prosperity (abundance of earthly, temporal goods) which is the meaning in the parable of the seed and the soils ([Mt 13:22](#), [Mk 4:19](#), [Lk 8:14](#) = Material riches are deceitful and choke out reception of the Word of God. Be careful all you wealthy readers! Contrast spiritual riches - [Ep 3:8](#)) Indeed, think of the people who know whose whole lives glow with the glory of God for they are rich in spiritual possessions, albeit often poor in material possessions!

Ploutos - 22x in NT - [Matt. 13:22](#); [Mk. 4:19](#); [Lk. 8:14](#); [Rom. 2:4](#); [9:23](#); [11:12](#), [33](#); [2 Co. 8:2](#); [Eph. 1:7](#), [18](#); [2:7](#); [3:8](#), [16](#); [Phil. 4:19](#); [Col. 1:27](#); [2:2](#); [1 Tim. 6:17](#); [Heb. 11:26](#); [Jas. 5:2](#); [Rev. 5:12](#); [18:17](#)

The **NAS** renders **ploutos** as riches(19), wealth(3).

Figuratively **ploutos** refers to spiritual abundance or prosperity. **Ploutos** refers to a high point on any scale with the implication of value as well as abundance. God's storehouse will never go bankrupt for He who own everything and has abundant fullness has an inexhaustible ability to supply their needs.

Francis Havergal alluded to true riches in these lines...

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.
Play Hymn - Take My Life and Let it Be

(**Another Version by Chris Tomlin**)

The famous missionary to China, **Hudson Taylor**, wrote "It matters little to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money and brings me his purchases. So, if God should place me in serious perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will prove unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me."

When God leads He provides. **Hudson Taylor** observed, God's work, done in God's way, will receive God's supply

Our God hasn't changed.

A classic illustration of the truth of this Scripture comes from the life of **George Muller (Online biography)**.

Things looked bleak for the children of George Muller's orphanage at Ashley Downs in England. It was time for breakfast, and there was no food. A small girl whose father was a close friend of Muller was visiting in the home. Muller took her hand and said,

"Come and see what our Father will do."

In the dining room, long tables were set with empty plates and empty mugs. Not only was there no food in the kitchen, but there was no money in the home's account. Muller prayed,

"Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat."

Immediately, they heard a knock at the door. When they opened it, there stood the local baker.

"Mr. Muller," he said, "I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you had no bread for breakfast, so I got up at 2 o'clock and baked fresh bread. Here it is."

Muller thanked him and gave praise to God. Soon, a second knock was heard. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. He said he

would like to give the children the milk so he could empty the cart and repair it.

I want to give you very briefly **a theology of Christian giving** that rises out of this passage. I know many of you need to be instructed on this because you have not been. Listen very carefully to what flows out of this text about our Christian giving, giving to the Lord's work, to the church.

Number one, it is to be from the heart. Verse 10 says that they gave because their concern was revived. It is to come from within. It is not that they were bound, it is bound externally; it is that they were compelled internally. Your giving is not to be grudging nor of necessity, says Paul to the Corinthians, but the Lord loves a cheerful giver. You are to give from the heart. Paul's joy was because that's how the Philippians gave, not because they had to, but because they loved.

Secondly, it is to be as God gives you opportunity. He notes in verse 10 again they gave because they had opportunity to give. And, beloved, that's the point here. When God makes it possible for you to give, and you have opportunity to give, then you are to give. In fact, the Bible says give as God has prospered you, when you have the means and the opportunity, you are to give.

Third point, it is given to those who serve God. It is given to those who serve God. In verse 14 he says, "You have done well to share with me in my affliction." Your gifts go to those who are God's servants, and it makes you a sharer, it makes you a partner. You have done a noble thing to share with me, he says. You're partners with me. And that's what your giving is; it is a partnership with those who preach, who teach, who serve the Lord. As you give to Grace Church, the vast amount of the

money that we receive goes directly into the lives of the serving people who give themselves in service to Christ.

The Fourth point we learn is that giving is to be consistent. It is to be consistent. He says, you gave to me more than once. And when others didn't give, you gave. And now, here you are and you're giving again. And if you had had opportunity in the intervening time you would have given again and again. And what we see here is that they were consistent, more than once. In fact we are told in 1 Corinthians that we are to give on the first day of the week, the first day of the week let each one of you lay by in store as God has prospered him. You're to deal with that stewardship every week. You're to give every week. You're to give to those who serve God. You're to give as God gives you opportunity. You're to give from the heart. You're to give consistently.

Fifth You're to remember also that your giving is spiritually beneficial. Verse 17 says it will be fruit or profit which will be credited to your spiritual account. You'll be rewarded for it, I believe, in this life as God will give in return; you'll be rewarded for it in the life to come with a greater privilege of praising and glorifying Him. It will be spiritually beneficial. So, you make a decision then with your money, you decide whether you want it to be materially beneficial or spiritually beneficial. You decide whether you want it to be temporarily beneficial or eternally beneficial. You make that choice.

Sixth giving is that it is to be generous. It is to be generous. Obviously, whatever they gave was generous. It says in verse 18 that he received everything in full, and it's an abundance, and he is amply supplied. Whatever they sent was very generous. And, as Paul noted among the Macedonians, it was liberally given. You're to give generously. Traditionally in the church, Christians have taught that a good starting point is ten percent of your income is to be given to the Lord. That seems to me to be only a starting point, and most of us in this society could do much, much and should do much more than that in giving in to God's work.

There is no set amount. The Old Testament people of God had to give two tithes, or 20 percent every year, and then another tithe every third year which broke down to about 23 percent per year, plus a temple tax, plus the corners of the field, plus the stuff that fell off the cart when they were harvesting that was sort of a profit-sharing plan for the poor. They were up well over 25 percent which funded their national government, the theocracy. And in addition to that, they were to give willingly out of their heart sacrificially of the firstfruits, whatever they wanted to give. It would seem that maybe a ten percent is a place to start. But we should even give more than that as God makes it possible, if indeed it is possible.

Seventh that giving is a sacred act of spiritual worship. It is a sacred act of spiritual worship. Some people might go to a church and say, “Well, I don’t sing ‘cause I don’t like the guy waves his arm.” Oh? Well, are you saying that because you don’t like the way he waves his arm you’re not going to worship God? You have a responsibility to worship God. That’s like saying, “Well, I’m not going to give any money to the church; I don’t like the way the preacher conducts the service.” Your responsibility is to God, to give a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice well-pleasing to God. When you gave it, it accrued to your account. My responsibility and the elder’s responsibility of any church is to be stewards of that and God will deal with us for our stewardship and deal with you for your giving. But you have a responsibility before God to give that which pleases Him. It is to be a sacrifice. The word sacrifice is in verse 18. David said, “I will not give the Lord that which cost me nothing.” And see it as that. You’re putting it, as it were, on the altar before God.

Eight whatever you give will be repaid by God, whatever you give, listen to this one, does not deplete your resources. It is treasure in heaven and my God will supply all your what? Needs. And He’ll do it according to or in measure of the glorious riches in His kingdom that are yours in Christ Jesus.

We need to be faithful givers, we need to be like the Philippians, and we need to be like Paul, who was more concerned with the well-being of others than he was with himself.