

Our Stewardship in World Missions

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Text: Philippians 4:10-19

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Series: Stewardship

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Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Philippians 4**, and let's read **verses 10-19**. The title of this evening's message is: "Our Stewardship in Giving to World Missions". Giving to missions is a spiritual endeavor according to the apostle Paul. We are going to find out that our giving to Missions is an act of worship that God is pleased with. We can give what God leads us to give because it is God who supplies all of our needs.

Philippians 4:10-19, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want [BEING IN NEED]: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. 14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate [SHARE] with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated [SHARED] with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

[Prayer for Guidance]

Many times you can identify a spiritually healthy church by what it gives to missions.

Have you ever visited a church and said to yourself, "That is a dead church!" May God spare us from spiritual deadness! We want a church that is alive and earnest, that sincerely seeks to live out the Bible, a church filled with people seeking to be revived and who walk in the Spirit of God.

None of us wants a spiritually dead church. One of the ways you can test our life and obedience to God is how we give. Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (**Matthew 6:21**). Throughout the Bible giving to man is not really giving to man, but giving to God.

What we find out from this passage in Philippians 4, is that giving, and specifically giving to missions is a way of sanctifying you, and making you more like the Lord

Jesus Christ. A church that has a heart for missions is a church that has a heart for God.

God calls us all to be missionaries. Remember the Lord's command? "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature",¹ Yet the Bible says in **Ephesians 4:11** that God has given certain gifted offices to the church. He's give prophets and apostles. He's given pastors and teachers. And He's given "evangelists".

What is an evangelist? Is an evangelist someone who comes to our church, holds meetings for a week, and then goes to another place? That is not an evangelist. That is someone with the gift of exhortation. That is a needed gift in the churches. Paul and Barnabas exhorted all the churches that they had planted. But an office of the evangelist is what we would today a "missionary". An evangelist is one who "gives the good news in order plant a church". That is what a missionary is. That's what Paul was.

What we find in Philippians 4 is a thank you letter to the church at Philippi for the money that he received. Do we get some of those kinds of letters at this church?

In this thank you letter, Paul says something really amazing, he says that giving to missions is not just for Paul's monetary support and needs. He ends up telling them that giving to the work of world missions is a way to accrue spiritual fruit to their account. They can grow spiritually by giving sacrificially to missions. Because let's face it, do have a lot of extra money to give to missions? On the surface we would say no. But when God begins to move us to give, we also begin to get our priorities in line, and we are able by the grace of God to lay up treasure in heaven, instead of making the choice to lay up some more treasure on earth. And this benefits you spiritually. When we have our priorities in line with God's heart, we will have plenty of money to give to missions.

So tonight I want to see how giving to missions benefits the soul of the believer. Giving to missions is one of the ways that God is going to conform you to the image of Christ.

In verse 10 we learn,

- I. Giving to missions is an endeavor of spiritual growth and fruitfulness because... **Giving to Missions puts Others First** (10). You want to grow in Christ? Be selfless and stir up your concern for others.

Look **verse 10**, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care [CONCERN] of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful [CONCERNED], but ye lacked opportunity.

What happened here? These Philippian brethren stopped thinking about their own needs, and they became burdened and concerned for Paul and about the Gospel and about the lost around them! When you see a missionary out there in a strange land away from family and friends, some times risking his life, you are going to stop worrying about your new TV that you think you need, and your nice back yard, and you are going to stop worrying about the little things we worry about, and we are going to start **praying!**

¹ Mark 16:15

Look at the text here. Paul says, "your care of me hath flourished again". I love this phrase. Their concern had waned, but now it was being stirred up again! One of the signs of revival and a Holy Spirit motivated work of God is selflessness. More than your ability to know the Bible is the evidence of living out the Bible. Selflessness is the mark of true spirituality.

Giving to missions will make you selfless. Where you put your money is an investment, and if you give to missions, you are going to pray for those missionaries more fervently. It's going to make you holy.

Application: Why don't we give more to missions? Because we are selfish. We look at our budgets, and we spend more money on eating out and on our cell phone and on our internet than we do giving to the direct proclamation of the Gospel. Let's look at where we put our money. Do you realize that we as Americans waste more money in a week than most people in the world make in an entire month?

We are rich. If you make 20,000 dollars, you are in the top one percent income earners of all the world. And if you make 50,000 dollars you are in the top one-tenth of one percent of income earners in all of the world. We are as rich as the kings of the past up until the 20th century.

Application: If you are say tonight, "I can't give to missions" or "I can't increase my missions giving because... [Fill in the Blank]" than I can tell you, your priorities are wrong. We are all going to stand before the Lord and give an account. As Americans, we of all people on the planet have not excuse not to give to missions.

We need to give to missions so that we can get our eyes off of our needs and onto the needs of others. Giving to missions puts OTHERS first!

Illustration 1: Last year I met a Thai couple that was going back as missionaries to Thailand. Their names were Ed and Darlene Weber. I don't think that is their Thai names, but they took on American nicknames. Anyway, Ed told me that the first time he met Darlene, she was so poor, that their whole family lived in a shack that was the size of one of our walk in closets. She lived in a place that only had a dirt floor. When they came to this country, they didn't know what to do. They couldn't spend all the money that we get in a month. They wouldn't know what to do with it!

Illustration 2: I'm holding in my hand the budget of a woman, Elizabeth Mativo, who is discipling a group of widows who are ex-Muslim converts in Nairobi, Kenya. She is raising support to live and to teach, and cloth and feed these widows and their children, and she is funneling them all into her local church, the Africa Inland Church in Nairobi. One day I want to visit that church!

How many people do you know that are converting woman and children from Islam to Christianity? Do you know what her budget is per month for her needs? \$289. One day I'm hoping to have her come and give a testimony to our church, as she is right now in the US visiting her family. Elizabeth Mativo's home has no electricity, running water, or heat.

Brethren, we need to realize how much we have and stir up our hearts toward the needs of others! Giving to missions will do that!

Transition: Secondly, we need to understand that God doesn't need us to give to missions. You see,

II. God's Plan in Missions will Go on **with or without you** (11-13).

God has promised to provide for missionaries whether you give to them or not. This is what Paul says in **verses 11-13**, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Listen, Jesus Christ died, and God is going to provide for the missionaries to go out one way or another. God's purpose in saving sinners will be accomplished, and He will always move in the hearts of His people to provide the needs. If it is not you, then you will suffer spiritual loss. You will miss an opportunity to grow in the Lord. But God has promised to care for those He sends out.

- Paul was depending on the God of heaven to supply his needs. He was leaning on the God who gave Elijah food from a raven in the wilderness. He's the God that can rain manna from heaven. He's the God who can always make something out of nothing. God can do it all—with or without you. God is going to provide, and He can do it any way He wants to.
- Remember, after David had been anointed King of Israel by Samuel he had spent years and years hiding in caves, and God provided for him and in his time brought him to the throne.

Can I ask you, can you honestly say with Paul (**verse 11**), "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content".

If your contentment is not in Christ, you are living a life of covetousness. Is Christ your all, or do you need things to make you happy? Stop for a moment. Let life slow down for a moment. What are you living for? Have you had to suffer need in your life? Can you say from your experiences this past year, as Paul did in verse 12, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

We like to quote verse 13 for our own purposes, but when Paul said "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" he was talking about living with or without a proper income. He could obey God and do His will and see fruit in His life no matter if he had a big pay week or a small pay week. He was living off of God for His paycheck. He had forsaken all for the Lord, and He gave all that He had for God's work.

You might say, "I can't give to missions!" Let's quote verse 13 tonight, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". You can do all things through Christ. You can be abased. Perhaps if you give to missions you will be abased. It will be good for you.

You are not called to have everything you want in life. Now God may give it to you, and that is fine. But if you love money so much that you are not willing to part with it when God calls on you in your heart to give, you have made money an idol.

Paul didn't have any lack. He said "Not that I speak in respect of want". The word "want" means something lacking. Paul had everything He needed in Christ. He could say in **2 Corinthians 8:9**, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Through Giving to Missions, we learn to depend on God and have a deeper walk with Christ.

III. Thirdly, Giving to Missions **Hurts**. (14)

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate [SHARE] with my affliction. The word 'communicate' means "share". We are called to share in the financial burden of missionaries.

Paul's affliction was his need. He learned by God's grace how to deal with that affliction. It is a distress and a burden to have financial difficulties. Even the apostle knew what it was to suffer need and have financial burdens.

No doubt it hurts to give to Missions. It is a burden. But what you are doing when you give to Missions is you are taking some of the sting of the financial burden away from the missionary.

IV. Giving to Missions is a Stewardship of the **Truth** God has given us (15)

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated [SHARED] with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

What is this giving and receiving?

Paul GAVE or dispensed the Gospel to them, and it was right that he should receive support from them.

Jesus told the 70 evangelists in Israel in **Luke 10:7**, "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire."

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:14** Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

We have a lot of responsibility. We read in **Luke 12:48**, "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The point is, part of our stewardship of receiving the truth is giving to those who are dispensing the Gospel to all the world!

- V. Giving to Missions is an On Going Spiritual **Exercise** (16-17)
16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Every time you give you grow! You get fruit. You grow spiritually. You by faith trust in God to supply your needs, as the brother on the field is depending on God to supply his needs.

Not only that, but John says you are a "fellowhelper to the truth".

3 John 7-8, "Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive [SUPPORT] such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

- VI. Giving to Missions is an Act of **Worship** (verse 18)
18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

In the OT, God commanded that the people give sacrifices. They were to give their very best. Now this was above the tithe. They were simply to give a peace offering at their own will.

God says giving to missions is a spiritual sacrifice that pleases Him.

There's not too much in this world that I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt pleases God, but this is one of them!

- VII. Finally, Giving to Missions will allow you to **Experience** God's Rich Supply (19).
"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

I know what you are saying! I can't give another dime. I don't have it. Look at Malachi 3. I understand that this was written to rebuke unregenerate Israel, and Christians cannot be cursed

Look at **Malachi 3:10-11**, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Conclusion: The missionaries are not the ones that profit the most from your giving. YOU DO!

Tonight we are going to put this truth of God's Word to the test. (Explain Missions need, Pass out Faith Promise commitments)

We have a need for Missions this year (**2010**) of \$15,000. Last year we had \$9400 come in for Faith Promise Missions. If every adult member would give at least \$35 per month to missions, we could easily make this number, and perhaps take another missionary family on.