

Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 14 **The Joy of Partnership in the Gospel – Phil. 4:14-23**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Sept. 1st, 2024

Intro:

- In these final lines of Paul’s letter to the church of Philippians, Paul tells them that it was “good” that they shared in his “troubles.” The question that I want to answer from our text today is, “Why is it good *for you* to partner with gospel ministry?” And when I say “partner,” I mean giving of your time, thoughts, energy, efforts, prayers, finances, resources, blood, sweat, and tears.
- For some of you, from the moment you first believed the gospel, you were “all in” and haven’t turned back. The more time has gone by, the more you have read scripture, the more of life you have lived, and the more you have been convinced that following Jesus is true and right and the good path. You have fallen more in love with Jesus and treasure Him more and more above all things and all others. I hope that today, you will be encouraged and strengthened by this passage.
- For others of you, you have cautiously and casually waded into the gospel and the things of Christ. You have been splashing around the shallows for a while and perhaps for decades. You might get involved here or there or give something if you can or if you have extra. You will pray on occasion and read your Bible from time to time, and you have some Christian songs on your playlist. But you don’t want to go “too far” or get “carried away.” I hope that today, you will be convinced and find courage, in the words of C.S. Lewis, to go “further up and further in.”
- And for others, you are skeptical of Christianity, the Church, “organized religion,” and religious leaders. We see you, and we are glad that you are here. We have intentionally worked to lower the barriers between you and the message of the gospel. We look to be transparent and open about our lives, our objectives, our values, our motivations, and our finances. It is hard to find where to give money around here, and we are not looking at you for money. I hope that today, you will become less skeptical and more open to embracing Christ, His church, and His cause.
- We are going to read our passage for today and then take a deeper look at what is being communicated to us. May God give us each ears to hear what He is saying to each one of us. This passage is on page 1013 in your pew bible.

Phil 4:14-23 NIV

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

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

21 Greet all God’s people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. 22 All God’s people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

- Paul opens this section by saying that it was “good” that they shared in his “troubles.” So again, the question we are looking to answer from this passage is, **“Why is it good for you to partner with gospel ministry?”** We will find seven reasons from the text, and I hope you will be convinced and compelled to do so more and more.

You are treasuring rightly

Phil 4:15 NIV

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 the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;

- The Philippians received the message of the gospel that they can be forgiven of their sins and receive new life in and through Jesus Christ from Paul. Paul gave and risked his life to communicate the good news so that people would be right with God and have eternal life.
- Paul did this because he was convinced of the truth of this message and was called by God to communicate this message to places that had not yet heard (Rom. 15:20). One of these places was Philippi, and they received and believed the gospel. Paul then continued his ministry to other places. The people in Philippi choose to support the gospel proclamation in other places as well.
- Why did they do this? Because they treasured the right things. There are only two things that will make it through to eternity. The Word of God and the souls of mankind. They so treasured the Word of God that it came to them and that it had changed them. They also treasured the souls of those who had not yet heard, and they gave themselves to see this goal accomplished. They knew the value of the Word, and they knew the value of people. So they got behind this work and supported it because of what they treasured. They understood that they were like a starving man who had received bread, and they told other starving men where to get it as well.
- Jesus said that where your heart is, there your treasure will also be (Luke 12:34). They treasured the surpassing value of the message of Christ, and they knew that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Then they understood the logic that “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom 10:13-16 ESV).
- By partnering with Gospel ministry, we treasure the right things, which keeps us focused on what matters most and keeps us from being distracted and entangled by things that don’t matter and lesser pursuits. What good is it for one to be rich in this world but be poor towards God? (Luke 12:16-21), what good is it to escape through the flames and lose your reward (1 Cor. 3:10-15)?

You are developing character

Phil 4:16 NIV

for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.

- It is not how you start that matters most but how you finish. Good intentions do not produce results. And perseverance is a highly valued characteristic in the eyes of God. So much so that God intentionally brings trials, tests, and suffering so that you will develop endurance, and through endurance, you will become strong and mature and full of hope, and your faith will be proven to be true and genuine, which is of more value than all the gold and riches and pleasures of this world (See I Peter 1:6-9, Rom. 5:3-5).
- When you continue to be engaged with what matters most and continue to overcome obstacles and be consistent, your character grows, your faith is proved genuine, and the Kingdom of God advances in the hearts of people. Focus on what matters most and continue until it is completed.
- When you persevere in giving to a person's needs, you are expressing love because genuine love perseveres. It is not "one and done" to clear your conscience. It is expressing love by meeting needs, time, and time, and time again. It is especially good for us to give to people that we love and trust, to places that have helped us grow and understand the gospel, to those who are looking over our souls, and then continue to give because it is good for us to do so and develops our character to be more like Christ.

You are receiving credit

Phil 4:17 NIV

Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

- Paul indeed had a need, and it was a dire one at that. But what he wanted more than this need met, was that those who were going to give to meet that need would gain "credit" to their account. This way of thinking is contrary to the way we normally and naturally think. We see a need and we meet a need. We have a need, and we seek it to be met. We typically don't think about what is happening when we do so from an eternal perspective.
- Paul had trained his mind to focus on what matters most from the reality of eternity. All of these things in this life are fleeting and temporary. What is coming next is eternal and permanent. Therefore, those who think like Christ, and follow in His footsteps have the same mind and view this life through eternal lenses and make decisions based upon what is best from this view. This is true wisdom based upon true faith. Scripture always points us to think like this. Here are a few passages:

Matt 16:27 ESV

For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Matt 10:40-42 ESV

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. 41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Luke 12:33 ESV

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

1 Tim 6:17-19 ESV

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

- Knowing the teaching of Jesus and the reality of His promises and the sureness of eternity, Paul wants the people to give, not just that their needs are met, but more importantly that they will get credit in their eternal account, the place of real wealth, the place that matters most.
- In the light of this teaching, you are a fool to spend all your resources on things of so little value when you can spend these things on what matters most and what truly will last and have eternal value and worth.
- Jim Elliot, who gave his life as a missionary to people who have not yet heard the gospel, was right when he said, “He is no fool who gives what he can not keep to gain what he can not lose.” Why would you not invest yourself and invest your life and riches into eternity? Eternity is right around the corner. Use what you have and the time you have left to invest in what really matters, which is the eternal Word of God and the message of Christ being proclaimed and cultivated to all people everywhere.
- One of my primary responsibilities is to help you “live as Christ” in your thinking and in your acting so that your dying will be “gain.” My job is to help you live well and die well in the reality of eternity based upon the truth of scripture and the revelation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and what we have in and through Him.
- Why is it good for you to partner with Gospel ministry? Because this will be credited to your account.

You are making a difference

Phil. 4:18a NIV

I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

- We are also making a real difference in this world. We are meeting real needs and making a real difference by shining and showing the love of Christ in and through our gospel ministry. There is satisfaction in knowing that your life counts for something, giving you purpose and power for each day.
- While my kids were growing up and still to this day, I told them to go “MAD,” that is, to Make A Difference for the sake of Christ in light of eternity. Make this your goal of each day and evaluate if your day is a success by this standard. Not if you were treated well, or you had a good time, or you did what you wanted, etc. Make it your goal to make a difference each day. Ask God for these opportunities when you get up, and He will give them to you. Look for them

and pursue them. Set your eyes to see where you can make the most difference, and then choose to do those things. What you do matters and makes a difference.

You are pleasing God

Phil. 4:18b NIV

They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

- When we partner with gospel ministry and give to kingdom causes, doing so pleases God. And whatever pleases God will ultimately be the best for you. Please seriously think about this sentence and let this way of thinking shape your way of thinking, which will, in turn, shape your choices, which makes a difference now and impacts all eternity. Paul urges us to walk in a way to please the Lord, and we are to do so more and more.

1 Thess 4:1-2 ESV

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

- He tells us to make it our aim to please God, knowing that we will receive what is due to us at the judgment, whether good or evil.

2 Cor 5:9-10 ESV

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

- If you ever wonder what the best way to please the Lord is, know with crystal clarity and full 8K HDMI that giving to gospel work pleases the Lord. And what pleases the Lord will ultimately and abundantly please you as well. When you give, it is an act of worship and an expression of your faith.

You are expressing faith

Phil. 4:19-20 NIV

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- This is a marvelous promise and one worthy of memorization. It will help you if you do so. Remember, in your partnership with gospel work and ministry, that God is the one who will, has, and forever will supply all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.
- When you give, it is an expression of faith. It is an act of worship that says that you trust in God to give you what you need as you meet the needs of others in and for Gospel witness. Here is another promise for you to consider.

Luke 6:38 ESV

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

- Do you believe this or not? You show what you believe by what you do. Jesus is telling the truth or He is not. Now, understand the timing of this. We are not always paid back here and now in this temporal realm. This is not a “get rich” scheme in the sense of getting physically rich now. However, it is absolutely true that God will supply your needs, and the measure you use will be measured back to you, but much, much more so when it comes to God because you can not and will not ever outgive Him. Because He is greater than you, and has way, way, way more than you and it delights Him to give good gifts to His children. Do you believe this? If so, live like it and look forward to your reward.
- The last thing on this list as to why it is good for you to partner with gospel ministry is that you are making friends, and we will see why and how this is important.

You are making friends

Phil. 4:21-22 NIV

Greet all God’s people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. 22 All God’s people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.

- People who more than likely would never meet each other in person on this earth send greetings and love to each other. The love and warmth were shared because of the connection between them in the gospel and through the ministry of Paul. Because this church supported this one man, many lives were changed and connected for eternity.
- When you support gospel ministry, this is happening in your life as well. Jesus told us to do this. Here is what He said.

Luke 16:9 NIV

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

- The people who lived in Philippi used their “worldly wealth” to “gain friends.” They built bridges and opened doors by supporting the work of ministry and impacting lives. One day, all the stuff you have will be gone, and the most valuable thing that you can take with you is your connection and relationships to others, which is forged on earth and will last for eternity.
- When you give to people you know in gospel ministry and people you will never know because of gospel ministry, you open doors. They may not know who you are now and what you have done, but they will know this in heaven, and their doors will be open to you!
- We do this by supporting mission work, in places like Kenya, where thousands of lives are being transformed. You can do this through child sponsorship. Through organizations like Compassion, where you sponsor a child to have what they need and know the gospel. Make it your practice to give to these things. Know this promise of Jesus.

Matt 19:29-30 ESV

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Conclusion

- Paul concludes his letter with a prayer that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirit.

Phil. 4:23 NIV

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

- It takes the grace of Christ to be with our spirit to think, like, and give like this. God's grace first reaches us through the message of Christ from others who give us His Word. Then, we give this grace through our lives to others in this world so that all people will be around the throne of God and have an opportunity to know the grace of God and experience His goodness.
- Think about what we have seen in this passage today; don't let these things go. Take them to heart, examine them, and build your life on the bedrock of the Word of God and the promises through Christ. It is indeed good for us to share in the "troubles" of our ministry partners and to give ourselves to the concerns of Christ and the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
- I trust that this series in this book has been helpful to you. Read it again, remember what you have learned, put verses to memory and live them out. You will be eternally grateful that you did.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen (2 Cor. 13:14)

Questions for Growth Groups

- Have you ever felt supported in a time of need? How did it impact you?
- What does it look like to support others in a way that truly meets their needs?
- What does Paul mean by "what I desire is that more be credited to your account"?
- How does this perspective on giving challenge or encourage your view of generosity?
- What does this imagery of a pleasing sacrifice teach us about giving?
- How does trusting in God's provision affect the way you give to others?
- How does Paul's community-oriented conclusion reflect the importance of relationships in our faith journey?