

Some construction workers were building a high rise across the street from a hospital. As they were working on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, they noticed a little girl standing in a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor window of the hospital watching them work.

One day they looked across and saw the little girl hold up a poster that said, "My name is Lisa. What are your names?" So the next day the construction workers came back with some poster board and magic markers, and they all wrote down their names. "My name is Bob. My name is Bill. My name is Harry. How old are you?"

The next day the little girl held up a sign that said, "I am 7 years old. How old are you?"

This went on for several days, but one day they noticed that Lisa wasn't at her usual place in the window. So at break time one of the workers called the hospital and asked for a third floor nurse. He asked if she could tell him anything at all about Lisa. The nurse said that Lisa had taken a turn for the worse and was now in ICU. So the workers pooled their money and bought some flowers and a card and wrote a note on it, and sent it to Lisa. Several days passed by, and then another sign appeared in the window, "*Lisa passed away. Thank you for caring!*"

**If you care, you share.** It's that simple. This is our last message in the book of Philippians. Our giving says more about our spiritual maturity than probably anything else.

Whenever I speak on the subject of giving, I'm aware that I'm dealing with a sensitive area where people are easily offended. Please hear me. This is not about your money. For some of us, giving money is easy. Caring and sharing is about the Lordship of our life. It's about our treasure. Twice in the Gospels Jesus states: "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Mt. 6:21; Luke 12:34). For some our treasure is time, for others it's money.

For those who struggle with giving money, it's hard for them to fathom that it's easy for some to be generous. But for those who it's easy to be generous with money, they often struggle with sharing their time. Both money and time are in these verses. All of us struggle with surrendering one or the other. Jesus is not Lord of your life until He is Lord of your cash and your calendar.

As we mentioned last week, this passage is a "thank-you note" Paul wrote to the Philippians who'd given sacrificially to meet his need and in it he gives us one of the most comforting promises in the Bible that: ***If we give faithfully to the Lord's work, He will supply all our needs.***

In the context, it's a conditional promise. We can't divorce verse 19 from what comes before it. It's to believers who give faithfully that Paul says, "*My God shall supply all your needs...*" If we meet the condition of giving faithfully, God will fulfill His part to supply all of our needs.

Many of us struggle with a sense of not having enough money or time, because we've not yet surrendered our cash or our calendar to Jesus. With the time that we have left, let me suggest then that...

**1. Sharing faithfully furthers Christ's Kingdom,** "*Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 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.*"

Paul looked on their gift as an investment that would pay them rich spiritual dividends. The word "share" is our familiar word "fellowship." The Message renders it, "*It was a beautiful thing that you came alongside me in my troubles.*" That's caring and sharing!

These Christians entered into an arrangement of "giving and receiving." They gave materially to Paul and received spiritually and eternally from the Lord. God keeps the books and will never fail to pay one spiritual dividend! The church is poor, the Christian is poor – that fails to share with others.

Paul's focus was on preaching the gospel, not on his need for money. While he genuinely appreciated the gift from the Philippians, he was more excited about what it signified about their heart for God, that it represented fruit accruing in their account in heaven (4:17). As for himself, Paul lived by faith and was content with whatever God provided. He never made strong appeals for funds for himself.

This is our struggle. We have a "someone else who has more should give" mentality when it comes to our time or money, but God wants us to grow spiritually. Healthy Christians are generous whether it's time or money.

British preacher, Charles Spurgeon (**picture**), received a request from a wealthy man to come to his town to help them raise funds for a new church building. He told Spurgeon he could stay in his country home. Spurgeon wrote back and told him to sell the home and give the money to the project.

The Philippians weren't a wealthy church. In 2 Corinthians 8:2 we read how they gave out of "*their extreme poverty [that] welled up in rich generosity.*" Most of us don't have a clue about poverty, much less *extreme poverty*. Yet these impoverished believers pleaded for the privilege of sharing. Can you imagine Christians today pleading for an

opportunity to give more time or money? What would happen to our church if we never had to ask for folk to serve or give...but they just volunteered?

Paul says this is a good thing. "It was good of you to share in my troubles." You could also translate his words as "You did well" or "Good job!"

The Lord gives us the privilege of giving and receiving. It's a sacred fellowship. We're partners in the gospel together. We'll never fulfill the Great Commission without shared sacrifice of time and treasure.

What's remarkable is that Paul began his ministry in Thessalonica almost immediately after he left Philippi. Thessalonica was a neighboring region. Paul hadn't even left the region yet and these Philippian Christians were already sending support, helping him in his time of need.

The people and organizations we support like GAP or Milwaukee Rescue Mission are real people. Like us, they have real needs. They're not superhuman. They require food, clothing, medical attention, rest, relaxation, and support for their families. As partners in the gospel, we have the privilege of meeting their needs and making sure they're well provided for.

At Grace, we want to expand our missions budget. We'd love it if the Lord would touch some from our own church family to serve Him in the fields of the world. We support Tom & Joanna Kubiak (**picture**) who've started their second church plant in Chicago. Wouldn't it be great if the Lord would touch hearts in our church family to go and plant churches in our cities? Wouldn't it be great if the Lord touched hearts in our church family to go to reach the untold millions in places like India, or the Ivory Coast or Indonesia?

**2. Sharing faithfully blesses us as God's Family.** *"Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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."*

Do you know what the word *blessing* means? We use the word *blessing* so much, it's become just another word. But what does blessing mean to God? In the book of Genesis alone *bless* or *blessed* is mentioned over 30 times, *Blessed* is the most common word in the Old Testament for God doing something favorable to someone or something. When we share, we're not only a blessing, we're blessed by God, *"fruit that increases to your credit."*

***When we are sharing faithfully, we are investing in eternity.*** Paul says, "I'm looking for the profit that increases to your account" (4:17). These were common accounting words. When you give to the Lord's work, you're putting money into your account in the Bank of Heaven and it pays guaranteed high interest for all eternity. If you have any money invested in stocks or mutual funds, you realize that the more risky the investment, the greater the chance that you can make high returns, but also the greater the chance that you can lose a lot. And even the "safe" investments have no guarantees. But when you invest in God's work, there is no risk and you get the highest possible return on your investment, guaranteed by the very Word of God! By giving your time and money to the Lord's work, you're investing in eternity. It's the smartest investment you can make.

***When we are sharing faithfully, we are worshipping.*** Now Paul moves from accounting imagery to sacrifice. There's a spiritual dimension to giving that he doesn't want the Philippians to miss. The gifts from Philippi have not only supplied his need, but are also a pleasing sacrifice of worship to God. They're a fragrant offering, pleasing to God.

Paul uses Old Testament language where the sacrifice on the altar was described as a sweet smelling sacrifice that went up before the Lord. It was a picture of God being pleased with the heart of the worshiper who brought sacrifices to Him. We find the same language in Ephesians 5:2, *"Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*

When we give of our money or time, we're ultimately giving to God. Yes, you're furthering the spread of the gospel. Yes, you're supplying the needs of Christian workers, but worship is your primary reason for giving. Giving is not measured primarily by amount, but by the giver's heart.

A big-time sports fan was watching a football game with his grandchildren. He had just turned seventy-five and was feeling a little wistful. "You know," he said to his grandson, Nick, "it's not easy getting old. I guess I'm in the fourth quarter now." "Don't worry, Grandpa," Nick said cheerily. "Maybe you'll go into overtime."

Epaphroditus was in overtime. We studied the sacrifice of his time and life when we worked through chapter 2. Estimates range from 700 to 1,200 miles depending on the route taken from Philippi to Rome. Travel times varied depending whether one travelled by sea or land and the weather at a given time of the year. In the best conditions such a trip could be made by foot in about six weeks. In less favorable circumstances, it could take three months. That was a great time sacrifice for the cause of Christ!

God is most interested in our hearts. 2 Corinthians 9:7, *"God loves a cheerful giver."* Suppose I gave my wife, Jane, a gift on Valentine's Day. How would she feel if I said, "I didn't really want to, but I hadn't gotten you anything for quite

a while, and I was feeling kind of guilty. I know that our neighbor got his wife something and I know it's my duty as your husband to give you something."

Would she be "well-pleased"? No, my motive was wrong. Instead if I said, "Honey, you deserve even more than I can give, but I love you so much and I was thinking of how much you mean to me when I bought this." The very same gift would be accepted as well-pleasing to her. That's how we should give to God, out of a heart of love and gratitude, to glorify Him.

An African proverb states, "*There is only one crime worse than murder on the desert, and that is to know where the water is and not tell.*" God has led us to Jesus Christ, the living water. He's blessed us with His salvation and promises to bless us even more abundantly in the future. God didn't save us so that we can sit in the lifeboat feeling warm and cozy, oblivious to the lost of the world. He saved us so that we would be a blessing to others. If you're saved, but you don't have your focus on blessing others, you've only got half the picture. He blessed you so that you would be a blessing. Are you?

**3. Sharing faithfully is rewarded by God.** "*And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*" What a famous promise! James Montgomery Boice (**picture**) said that this may be the greatest promise in all the Bible because it contains within it every other promise.

There are three parts to this promise.

***There is the source of the promise.*** "*And my God.*" This is an unusual expression. Paul could easily have said "And God will meet all your needs." But when he says "*my God*" he is making it exceedingly personal. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is "my God." The God who raised up Moses is "my God." The God who led Joshua around the walls of Jericho is "my God." The God who enabled David to defeat Goliath is "my God." The God of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all of the prophets is "my God." The God of the Virgin Birth is "my God." The God who raised Jesus from the dead is "my God." The God of the Apostles is "my God." When Paul says "my God," he wants us to remember that the same God who worked all the mighty miracles in the Bible is the One who makes this amazing promise.

***There is the statement of the promise.*** "*Will supply every need of yours.*" The most important word is the little word "*every.*" Whatever you truly need, God has promised to supply. Do you need forgiveness? He will abundantly pardon. Do you need more grace? His grace is sufficient for you. Do you need hope? He is the God of hope. Are you tired and about to give up? He said, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*" Are you confused about the future? In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. Do you need a miracle? Nothing is impossible with God. Are you worried about what may happen? Fear not, says the Lord, for I am with you always. Do you need salvation? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. This promise is as comprehensive as the needs of your life, and you may claim it at any time.

The God who owns the whole universe says that He will meet our needs if we give faithfully. What a blessed thing it is to know this in your experience as you watch Him do it.

J. Wilbur Chapman (**picture**) was a contemporary of D.L. Moody's and traveled the globe preaching and sharing the gospel. Chapman had a family tragedy occur that made it necessary for him to travel to the West Coast. A banker who attended his church visited with him just before he left. As they talked, the banker took a piece of paper out of his pocket and slipped it into his pastor's hand. Chapman looked at it and saw that it was a blank check made out to him, signed by the banker. Momentarily stunned, he asked, "Do you mean you are giving me a signed check to be filled out as I please?" "Yes, exactly," said the banker. "I don't know how much you might need, and I want you to draw any amount that will meet your need." Chapman gratefully took the check, but he didn't need to use it on his trip. Later he commented, "It gave me a comfortable, happy feeling to know that I had a vast sum at my disposal." Our supply is as sufficient as the Bank of Heaven. But how do we know that the check is good? Because...

***There is the sufficiency of the promise.*** "*According to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*" It's God's way of saying, "You can always come back for a second helping. There's plenty more where that came from."

Do you ever worry that you might be asking too much from the Lord? It's not possible to do that. We are like children with a plastic pail trying to drain the Atlantic Ocean. After we have done our best, the ocean is still there, untouched by our efforts. So it is with God. He will supply what we need not according to our resources—which are limited and finite—but according to His riches in Christ—which are unlimited and infinite. In this promise we come to an ocean without a bottom or shore.

God will not merely meet some of your needs. He will meet **all** of your needs. God has whatever you need for any situation. This is a wonderful encouragement towards faithfully sharing because our Heavenly Father is so sharing! When we're faithful, God promises to meet all of our needs.

Do you want to know one of the keys to being a generous giver? It requires that you believe that there really is a heaven ahead. Since you plan to spend eternity there, you invest your life in the other side in advance, where it's earning interest in heaven's bank, awaiting your arrival. Jesus called it "*laying up treasures in heaven*" (Matt. 6:19).

**4. Sharing faithfully breaks down people barriers.** "*Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*" Paul probably penned this part himself as he often did with the personal greetings at the end of his letters. Let me highlight a few things from these verses.

***Each person in the body of Christ is important.*** Paul instructs the leaders of the church to greet each and every one, individually and personally. Each one is an important partner in his ministry. Each one has an important part to play. My friend, you're an important partner in this ministry. You have an important part to play. Each person in the body of Christ is important.

Someone wrote concerning the early church: "*What that first century world saw was the phenomenon of people of all walks of life loving one another, serving one another, caring for one another, praying for one another. Slaves and free men were in that community. Rich and poor were in the fellowship; Roman citizens and non-Roman citizens were in that community. Members of the establishment and those violently opposed to the establishment were part of that community. The intelligentsia and the illiterate were members of that community. To the utter amazement of the world outside they were bound together in an unexplainable love and unity.*"

***The fellowship of the saints is a Christ-centered fellowship.*** We're set apart unto God through our being in union with Christ Jesus. Apart from Jesus Christ, we wouldn't be saints at all. Everything we do must be centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was central to Paul, as He must be to us.

The number of mentions of the Savior's name is remarkable. More than 40 times in four chapters. It's characteristic of the whole New Testament. What the Apostles preached was not a thing but a Person - Christ Jesus the Lord.

The local church isn't some social club. Our supreme desire and goal is to know Christ more deeply and to share Him. When we come together, He should be the focus of our fellowship. The things of Christ draw us together.

"Saints" means "holy ones." The New Testament is clear that every believer in Jesus Christ is a saint. It means that God has set us apart from the world unto Himself. We are to be *in* the world, having contact with worldly people, but to be *distinct from* the world, bearing witness by our godly thinking and behavior that the gospel has transformed our lives!

A little boy used to attend a church which had beautiful stained-glass windows picturing St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John, St. Paul, and others. One day he was asked, "What is a saint?" He replied, "A saint is a person whom the light shines through." He was right. Being a saint is a *position* that's to result in an appropriate *practice*. The church is both a fellowship of sinners in need of constant grace and of saints. We're *saints* set apart unto God who are to grow in holiness; and sinners who must receive God's grace and show it to others.

The gospel breaks down barriers. Paul especially singles out those who belong to Caesar's household. Even within Caesar's household people have come to Christ. Caesar put Paul in prison to keep him from spreading the gospel. The joke's on Caesar! It's a wonderful reminder that we are all partners in the gospel together. The gospel is the key to all that divides our country and world. No racial or ethnic division, no political or economic division. We are one in Christ!

Paul went to prison to win people he'd never have met any other way. God may have you working in a horrible environment. You may be thinking, "I wish I could work in a more godly, or at least, a neutral place where I wasn't surrounded by such raw paganism." Friend, God placed you there. View it as your mission field, a great opportunity for the light of the gospel to shine into that dark place through your witness. To witness effectively, you must live with Christlikeness. You're being watched. Be someone worth watching!

***We owe all of it to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Paul began this letter with grace and ends the letter with grace. Everything we've learned and studied over the course of this series is bookended by grace. We are partners in the gospel, and grace is the hallmark of the gospel.

**Conclusion: To care and share,** you have to trust God. You have to believe His Word that the eternity that you can't see is more real than the world that you can see. It's like the story of the sailor who was shipwrecked on a South Sea island. He was seized by the natives who carried him to their village and set him on a crude throne. They treated him as royalty. Soon he learned that their custom was once each year to make a man king, king for a year. He thought this was a pretty good deal until he started wondering what happened to all the former kings after their year was up. He found out that after the year, the king was banished to a deserted island where he starved to death. That worried him, but he was a smart king, so he put his carpenters to work making boats and his gardeners to work transplanting fruit trees and other crops to the island where he would be banished. His carpenters built a nice home there. So when his year was over, he was banished, not to a barren island, but to an island of abundance.

If we really believe that this life is temporary and eternity is ahead, we'll invest our time and treasure in that side, so we'll have something there waiting for our arrival.

It takes trust that when you give it away, God will make up for it by providing for your needs. It's trusting that the God who saved you and has a place for you in heaven, will meet your needs while you're still on earth.

**If you care, you share.** But you won't share if you don't trust God. That's the bottom line: *Will you trust the living God?* Will you trust the One who gave His Son for you and demonstrate your faith by giving generously of your time and treasure, out of a heart of gratitude, love, and worship? If you do, He promises to meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Will you trust Him?