



“Sufficient Provision”

Paul recorded some practical principles for maintaining the joy of the Lord no matter what, to the followers of Jesus living in the Greek city of Philippi. It seems these principles also apply to maintaining the peace and contentment of the Lord no matter what.

I. PICK THE RIGHT AXIS – A Passion to praise Christ 1

Praising and exalt Christ in everything

II. PRESERVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE – A Passion to please Christ 2

Pleasing Christ through sacrificial service

III. PURSUE THE RIGHT AIM – A Passion to pursue Christ 3

Pursuing Christ above all other things

IV. PRACTICE THE RIGHT ACTIONS – A Passion to practice Christ 4:1-9

Practicing living like Christ

V. POSSESS THE RIGHT ABILITY 4:10-20

Praying for the power and provision of Christ

A. Rely on the power of Christ 4:10-13

When dealing with the difficulties of life, we can rely on God to strengthen us with sufficient ability to respond according to His direction.

I can do all things through the One strengthening me. Philippians 4:13

That confidence was Paul's secret to contentment. He learned contentment in any and every circumstance because he knew Christ promised to empower him in any and every circumstance of life.

B. Receive Christ's provision 4:14-20

Today's passage contains a well-known, oft-quoted verse.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

Every verse is surrounded by a context. It is important to always consider the context when seeking to interpret any specific verse and especially when making any specific personal applications. Contrary to the little chorus I learned as a kid, Not EVERY promise in the book is mine. Some promises were to individuals or specific groups. Some hold God responsible to fulfil a promise He never even made to them. Not all promises should be universally applied. Paul shifts between teaching, exhortation and personal testimony and his relationship with the Philippians throughout his letter. In this section, he shifted back to personal testimony.

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Philippians 4:14-20

Paul thanked them for their unsolicited gift. He relied on the Lord as the ultimate supply of his needs. As we mentioned last time, prisoners of that time relied on the benevolence of family and friends for their basic needs while imprisoned. He fully trusted God in every life circumstance. He did not demand or pressure support from anyone. In fact, he worked voluntarily on the side in order not to burden anyone for support.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

For an expanded treatment of this principle, see 1 Cor 9:3-14

Paul wrote to express his appreciation for their current support. He thanked them for their past support just after his initial ministry with them and then later as he ministered in Thessalonica. It appears that the Philippian church was the only one to extend such support. Paul clearly communicated that the benefit to them by giving was more important than the benefit to him.

Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

The term translated “profit” is the word normally translated “fruit”. We plant trees for the fruit. Literal fruit has to do with something beneficial and pleasing and refreshing. Paul understood the Biblical principle of giving and receiving. Paul told the Ephesian church...

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

It is interesting that Paul’s quote here does not appear in any of the gospel accounts. The point he affirms is that there is greater blessing in the giving than the receiving. Perhaps it is a reduction of Jesus’ teaching in Luke.

Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return. Luke 6:38

Giving precipitates receiving. Malachi proclaimed to Israel the blessing of giving to God.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! 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. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts. "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:8-12

The subject of giving in the Bible is extensive. In fact, the Bible has more to say about money than nearly any other subject. The Bible indicates a direct correlation between how we handle money and our spiritual health.

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? Luke 16:10-11

Paul expressed more excitement over the potential blessing to the givers than the gift they had passed to him. This priority of giving over receiving runs contrary to human nature. The cry of our current culture is, “Acquire and store all you can while you can.”

The average charitable giving in America according to IRS 2014 stats...

Under \$25,000	12.3%
\$25,000-\$50,000	6.8%
\$50,000-\$75,000	4.8%
\$75,000-\$100,000	3.8%

\$100,000-\$200,000	3%
\$200,000-\$500,000	2.6%
\$500,000-\$1,000,000	2.8%
\$1,000,000-\$2,000,000	3.2%
\$2,000,000 or more	5.6%

Jesus told the parable of the rich man.

'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Luke 12:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

How do you make deposits in the eternal bank of heaven? By giving to God. How do you give to God? By giving to God's causes and the needy.

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered. Proverbs 21:13

Paul affirmed the personal benefits of giving over receiving. This subject is so abused and misunderstood, especially in Christian circles. The fact that it is so horribly misapplied does not negate its reality.

He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor. Proverbs 22:9

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. Proverbs 3:9-10

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed. Prov 19:17

He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward. Matthew 10:40-42

Many use these principles to encourage people to manipulate God. They only give to God thinking to obligate Him to "bless" them. Some have audacity to entice people to give "seed faith" to their ministry so that God will bless them with more than they gave. If that is how God operates then it is those who teach such manipulation that should be sending people money from their resources so their "ministry" can be blessed.

Back to our passage...

Paul thanked them for their generous supply.

But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied (filled), having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent...

Paul stacked up four verbs in this short phrase. Literally it reads.

I currently have all things

I currently abound

I have been filled and am still fully supplied at the writing of this letter.

All this, having received the things sent to him by the Philippian church through Epaphroditus.

How does God view such generous giving?

a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. Philippians 4:18

Paul drew on their exposure to and understanding of animal offerings to God. The aroma of the burning of an offering on the altar rose up to God indicating the sincerity and obedience of the one offering the sacrifice, bringing Him pleasure. Even though God no longer requires such sacrifices since Jesus' once for all sacrifice, it does not mean there are no longer sacrifices to be offered.

Through Christ then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:15-16

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1

The point behind such sacrifice is NOT to acquire for ourselves, but please God. As a result of the Philippians generous offering, Paul promised that God would pour out blessing on them.

And my God will supply (fill) every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:19

Based on your generosity, God will be generous to you. Paul told them that just as he had been "filled" with their gift, God would "fill" them "according to His riches in glory". What is the difference between "according to" and "out of"? "According to" is proportional to the totality of God's resources. "Out of" is a fractional piece out of God's resources. If Bill gates gifted you "according to" his resources it would be a substantial gift. If he gave you \$100 it would be "out of" his resources.

Some observations!

First, this promise was specifically made to the generous Philippians.

Second, this promise was based on the demonstration of their generosity to Paul.

Third, **God** would supply their need.

Fourth, the supply was in relation to Christ; "in Christ Jesus".

Fifth, the supply was "according to" not "out of" God's storehouse.

Sixth, God promised to meet needs **NOT** necessarily wants.

One pastor who cited God's promise to meet our needs said, "Sometimes we need to go hungry."

So, can all Christians claim such a promise? Based on the numerous passages reinforcing the Biblical principle of giving and receiving, I believe we can apply a general principle.

Giving brings greater blessing than receiving.

God abundantly blesses the blesser.

God blesses us so we can bless others.

Whether that blessing is spiritual or material is not always specified. Paul called the Ephesian church to bless God for blessing them with every **SPIRITUAL** blessing in the heavenlies. Paul applied this general principle to the Corinthian Christians.

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

God enriches us so that we can enrich others.

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. Ephes. 4:28

Here is the ultimate Biblical work ethic. Work not only to support your needs and the needs of your family but work so that you will have something to share with those in need. How does this square with why you go to work every day? The amazing thing is that God doesn't require a massive amount. There are numerous illustrations how God transformed a miniscule gift into a monumental result. He satisfied the hunger of probably 10,000 very hungry people with a young boy's lunch. God's blessing in response to giving has little to do with the amount given.

And Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 2 Cor 8:1-5

Hattie's Mite Society

A first-hand account of it is in a sermon delivered December 1, 1912 by Russell H. Conwell, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Philadelphia. Rev. Conwell said the little girl's name was Hattie May Wiatt. She lived near a church where the Sunday School was very crowded and he told her that one day they would have buildings big enough to allow every one to attend who wanted to. Later, Hattie May Wiatt became sick and died. Rev. Conwell was asked to do the funeral and the girl's mother told him that Hattie May had been saving money to help build a bigger church and gave him the little purse in which she had saved 57 cents. Rev. Conwell had the 57 cents turned into 57 pennies, told the congregation the story of little Hattie May and sold the pennies for a return of about \$250. In addition, 54 of the original 57 pennies were returned to Rev. Conwell and he later put them up on display. This was in 1886 when 57 cents was no small savings account for a little girl from a poor family. Some of the members of the church formed what they called the Wiatt Mite Society which was dedicated to making Hattie May's 57 cents grow as much as possible and to buy the property for the Primary Department of the Sunday school. A house nearby was purchased with the \$250 that Hattie May's 57 cents had produced and the rest is history. The first classes of Temple College, later Temple University, were held in that house. It was later sold to allow Temple College to move and the growth of Temple, along with the founding of the Good Samaritan Hospital (Now the Temple University Hospital) have been powerful testimonies to Hattie May Wiatt's dream.

- a church with a membership of over 5,600 people
- a hospital where tens of thousands of people have been treated
- 80,000 young people going through university
- 2,000 people going out to preach the gospel

NOTE: If you want the full story from the original pastor Russell Conwell there are copies in the back and I will put the document on our website.

The focus of this passage today is quite simple.

Giving brings greater blessing than receiving.

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**God abundantly blesses the blesser.
God blesses us so we can bless others.**

Where am I storing up treasures; here or there? How much is enough here? What is my attitude toward helping others? What is God calling me to do?