

GOD SHALL SUPPLY

PHILIPPIANS 4:14-23

Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 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. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 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.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The English word “friend” is a term with multiple meanings and different depths. *What is a “friend?”*

Let's say you meet somebody on the street you barely know, both of you greet each other. Later someone asks, “*who was that?*” You reply, “*Oh, just a friend of mine.*”

Or let's say, you're going through a terrible hardship, and someone's visit lifts your spirits. When this person leaves, you're asked, “*who was that?*” - this time you answer, “*Oh, that guy is a real friend of mine!*”

It's the same word "friend," but obviously this one word can represent different levels or depths of relationship.

Perhaps Facebook has done more to muddy the meaning of the word "friend" than anything else.

Today, the average Facebook user has 338 *supposed* "friends" - but how many of the 338 are *true friends*?

The way I use Facebook I've got over 3600 "friends," but there may not be a dozen who'd loan me 20 bucks.

Today, you see someone on Facebook posting about their illness, or a troublesome situation, and because you click the "like" button you feel as if you've fulfilled an obligation of friendship. If you take the time to post a "comment;" then you've just proven you're best buddies.

I'm sure Facebook is a helpful tool for friends. It can reconnect you to old pals, and keep you in touch with current ones, but Facebook also promotes a sort of pseudo-friendship with hundreds of folks, without ever fulfilling the responsibilities of a real friend with any one person in particular... *no late-night conversations... no personal inconveniences... no material sacrifices...*

Friendship on Facebook is most often a mile wide, and an inch deep. It takes more than sharing a "thumbs-up" or clicking on a heart to win a person's trust and prove your commitment. Real friendship is forged by putting your money where your mouth is - and expressing your dedication to that person in a tangible, real-world way!

And this is not only true in the world of Facebook, it was also true in the first century world of Paul and the Philippians. More than letters, or good intentions, true friends were willing to physically assist one another.

Paul never set up a “[Go Fund Me](#)” account, but if he had the Philippians would’ve been the first to contribute!

The believers in Philippi were the one church that had consistently supported Paul and His ministry financially.

Since Paul shared the Gospel on the banks of the Gangites River near Philippi, and Lydia and her family became Europe’s first converts, this tiny group had given financially to Paul and his ministry. Other than the businesswoman, Lydia, the Philippians were poor, and destitute, and opposed by the town’s civil authorities. Yet they remained **a pipeline** of financial support to Paul.

Even after leaving Philippi their support continued. As Paul journeyed further into Macedonia - to Thessalonica and Berea - and on to the great Greek cities of Athens and Corinth... *despite the growing distance between them, the Philippians never forget Paul or his needs.*

These believers were both joy-filled and generous!

Now Paul is imprisoned in Rome - some 700 miles and an ocean away from Philippi - and once more the Philippians come through... One day, Paul looks through the bars, and sees Epaphroditus, a messenger from Philippi. He has a pouch full of money - *their offering!*

Paul had always been able to count on the loving support of his faithful friends in Philippi. These were people who **put their money where their mouth was.**

And he writes of their giving in verse 14, “**Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.**”

They gave to Paul in good times and in bad times. In Thessalonica, when the crowds of people were flocking to Christ - **and** in Berea, after he'd been kicked out of Thessalonica... in the ups and downs of his ministry, the Philippians still supported Paul with their offerings.

Even in wealthy Corinth, Paul talked about how he wasn't a drain on the Corinthian church, and here's why? 2 Corinthians 11:9 tells us, “**I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied.**” Paul was able to donate his time in Corinth to the Gospel because of the support sent from Philippi.

*What **type of friends** show this kind of generosity?*

Remember what Paul said earlier in Chapter 1 about the relationship he shared with the church at Philippi. He told them, “**I thank my God upon every remembrance of you... for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...**” Theirs was **a Gospel-oriented fellowship.**

Paul and the Philippians weren't golfing buddies, or business associates, or folks who bumped into each other at the country club and had an occasional dinner together. Their friendship was forged around the Gospel.

They were drawn to a common Savior. Their heart beat with the same passion: “**to know Christ.**” When they both counted

the cost they concluded together, “to live is Christ, to die is gain.” They agreed to let the mind of Christ - His humility and servanthood - be their mindset.

In terms of background and interests, Paul and the Philippians couldn't have been further apart. *What does a Jewish rabbi have in common with Greek pagans?*

Their only commonality was the most important!

They both counted all their past claims to fame, and hopes for the future, as rubbish, so they could now invest their whole life into knowing and growing in Jesus.

It was the Gospel that brought Paul and his friends in Philippi together. It was each other's commitment to the Gospel of Jesus - to both *living it out* and *spreading it around* - that bonded them in a forever friendship.

Last year, during the off-season, Atlanta's Coach Dan Quinn brought in a group of Navy Seals to work out with his Falcons. The Seals taught the football players drills emphasizing tenacity, communication, and teamwork.

They talked about *brotherhood*, and the commitment to each other that goes into doing their jobs. It didn't take long for Coach Quinn to incorporate their message of “*brotherhood*” into his talks with the team. If the Falcons were going to be victorious it would be as brothers.

As corny as it first sounds, Quinn's motivational talks resonated. The players say it was a big key to last season's success. *Let's hope it works again this year! We've got a little unfinished business in the Super Bowl.*

But realize, this idea of Brotherhood isn't about liking or disliking a teammate's personality. It's not a fickle thing - a merely social bond. It's about each football player's mutual commitment to pursue a championship.

It's about giving it your all, and expecting the same of your teammate - *on game day and in practice.*

And this is the perfect illustration of the Philippians and Paul. They were teammates who bonded in the mutual pursuit of Christ. *Their brotherhood was in the Gospel.*

As I mentioned before, this is what you need to be on the lookout for in a church. Not whether it's a cool crowd, or your friends go there, or you like the music - don't be so superficial. *Is this group committed to the Gospel?*

If there's no gumption for the Gospel, don't waste your time. You want to commit to folks who are sold out for the Gospel. These are the friendships worth forging.

This was the bond between Paul and the Philippians. And this is why the Philippians were willing to support Paul - not just with *their prayers*, but with *their purse!*

Paul writes in verse 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.”** The church in Philippi was Paul's only consistent donor.

Paul was sent out from Antioch in Syria, and he had close ties to the church in Jerusalem - but when those monies dried up, the Philippians remained faithful.

“For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.” *Philippi was a generous church!* They were committed to Paul through thick and thin. Paul provided the legs and voice. Philippi paid the bills. They were committed to *the Brotherhood* and worked together for the advancement of the Gospel!

Yet sadly, the Philippians were Paul’s only consistent supporters. And remember, this was the Apostle Paul...

No one’s ministry was more successful - no minister was more trustworthy - yet Paul’s donor list was short. Let’s see, the Philippians... the Philippians... the Philippians... And here is the reality with which every missionary agrees, **financial givers to the Gospel were scarce in the first century, and they are scarce today!**

I read recently where Americans spend more on dog food each year than they give to their churches.

There’re a lot of Christians who are just tipping God.

Here’s a startling statistic. If every church member in America were suddenly placed on welfare, yet gave a tithe (that is 10%) of their welfare check - the income of the churches in America would increase 35 percent.

We can say we’re dedicated to the Gospel - that we want to see a great church - *but how real can that commitment be if it doesn’t reach our wallet?* The Philippians put their money where their mouth was!

Do you know anyone like this: "The fountains flash across the lawn, his yard is full of flowers. His house has thirty rooms or more, with half a dozen showers.

He slumbers in a massive bed, some king once owned, it seems. The table where he eats is long, the silver brightly gleams. He drives the newest foreign car, that has the latest shape. He sits before a mighty desk, and reads the ticker tape. He goes to church when Sunday comes, he sits up very straight, and with a pious look he drops, ONE DOLLAR in the plate!" Hey, "When it comes to giving, some folks stop at nothing."

During his sermon a country preacher shouted out, "Now, let this church walk!" The congregation replied, "*Amen, let it walk!*" A little later he shouted, "Let the church run!" Again everyone replied, "*Amen, let it run.*"

Finally the preacher screamed, "Now let the church fly!" Everyone hollered, "*Hallelujah, brother, let it fly.*"

That's when the preacher explained, "Now, its going to take money to get this church off the ground." The church whispered, "*Let it walk, brother, let it walk.*"

That was NOT the attitude among the Philippians. They understood that the Gospel deserved a financial investment, and they kept up their giving over years.

Remember in verse 10. Paul wrote, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity." Apparently, there had been a break in their giving... *Perhaps a famine or recession had hit Philippi - or*

maybe the church collected an offering, but lacked a person who could transport the funds... There were no wire transfers or pay-pal in the first century.

I'm sure Paul missed their money. It's tough not to get a paycheck, but what concerned Paul more the cash, was not hearing from his friends in the Gospel.

What a joy it was when Epaphroditus arrived. It was reassuring to Paul that the Philippians still cared.

I'll let you in on a little secret you might not believe at first. When you get a fund-raising letter from a missionary asking for *prayer first*, and *money second*... don't assume that's just religious, pious-sounding talk.

I get dozens of those letters, and my first reaction is to think, *"Come on man! Cut to the chase. You'll take my prayers, but what you're really after is my money, just say so!"* But my cynical attitude may not be true.

Understand, a person who's sacrificing years of their life to serve on a mission field isn't an ordinary person in the first place. They're a Christian who's already made a radical commitment. They've said good-bye to the money and the creature comforts we have here.

Oh, I'm sure they want our greenbacks. It takes funds to go, but for most missionaries your prayers are just as important. They desire your spiritual support.

Paul wants the Philippians to know he isn't rejoicing just in the check that he received - there's another reason he's excited about their giving to the Gospel...

He says in verse 17, “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 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.” *Paul’s primary concern was not their money.*

Paul wasn’t greedy. As he says, “*Not that I seek the gift.*” The real reason he was happy the Philippians had given to him financially were the benefits it accrued *to God and to them.* To God, their gift was “*a sweet-smelling aroma*” - it brought Him pleasure. And to the Philippians it was “*fruit that abounds to their account...*”

Technically speaking, Paul didn’t need the Philippians’ money. If God had not met Paul’s financial need through them, He would’ve done so through someone else.

But Paul appreciated the Philippians’ willingness to give sacrificially, and their commitment to the Gospel.

Their generosity was like a slab of beef sacrificed to God. In the OT God enjoyed barbecue! This was how the Jewish priests satisfied God. They took the pick of the litter - the best of their flock - and marinated it in repentance and prayer - then cooked it on the altar.

God is similarly pleased when we give a generous offering to our church and to the work of the Gospel.

According to verse 17 it seems that Paul understood what pastors face today. Whenever we talk about money we run the risk of people judging our motive.

Folks assume, *why discuss it, if you’re not after it?*

This is why Paul puts out a disclaimer! Notice, he writes, **“Not that I seek the gift.”** The money itself is not his motive... ***And let me issue the same disclaimer!***

You guys know I almost never talk about money. I trust God to supply our needs... And CCSM had *THE* biggest monthly offering we've ever had in July. I have no reason to try and *pressure* anyone to give.

But when the passage I'm teaching, speaks about giving money I've got to be faithful and emphasize the meaning of the text. *And that's what I'm doing today...*

Paul is telling us, when we give a financial gift - a donation to our church, or to a missionary - or to any Gospel enterprise - we're actually making a spiritual investment. And like any investment it pays dividends.

This is why **it's important to make wise investments.**

Paul tells us, **“seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”** We should treat our charitable giving like we do our retirement investing. Put your money where you think you'll get the best return. Invest in the church or ministries that are producing solid, steady spiritual fruit.

A couple of years ago I overheard my son-in-law talk about the money he was making in the stock market.

I thought if a wet-behind-the-ears son-in-law can make smart investments, then a older, wiser father-in-law ought to be able to hit the jackpot! *I bought a few stocks, and they immediately tanked! This can't be!*

It finally dawned on me, if the boy was wise enough to marry my daughter, he's smarter than he looks.

He's proven he's smarter than me when it comes to the stock market. I pray that he also makes wise spiritual investments! *I'm praying the same for you!*

And when it comes to giving, I've got a stock tip for you. *This might be illegal - a little insider trading.*

But if you're looking for a great spiritual investment I suggest Calvary CSM. This is where I heavily invest, and I've always felt I was getting a good eternal return.

There are churches around that accomplish more than we do. They have greater resources on hand. But for a lot of reasons, I don't know of any church that does more with what it has than this church.

You may invest elsewhere, and that's okay, but the point is, **be calculating.** Give your offering where you'll get a good return. Make wise spiritual investments.

But by all means invest! Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Give a lot and you'll get a lot. Give a little and you'll get a little.

If some of you saved for retirement like you give to God, you'll be living under a bridge at age 70. You'll be living in that dark, damp room in your kid's basement.

Hey, a 401k is not where a Christian makes the most important investments! Smart financial investments might

insure a good retirement, but it's your spiritual investments that will insure for you the best eternity.

Remember what Jesus said to the rich, young ruler (Matthew 19:21) **“Sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”** Jesus' words emphasize, that **“Our giving on earth determines our treasure in heaven.”**

Bryan Olson of Schwab Investments encourages his readers to invest in their retirement. Olson says it only takes a few minor changes to make a major difference.

For example, give up potato chips at lunch and it'll save you \$177 per year. Save the potato chip money over 20 years, and it'll add \$10,483 to your nest egg.

Or switch from a double latte with whipped cream to regular coffee each morning, and you'll save \$429 per year. In 20 years that adds \$27,000 to your retirement.

And the same is true of spiritual investments. *Little sacrifices go a long way!* Take your potato chip and coffee savings, and give it to a missionary. Those two small changes can pay for another full-time missionary.

Paul hopes the Philippians will continue to be generous givers, and make spiritual investments in the furtherance of the Gospel... but he also knows that if they never give him another dime, he'll be just fine...

For in verse 19 God makes an amazing promise!

Paul writes, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**

Here's what holds us back from giving - if I give who's going to take care of my bills, and put food on my table? Well, here God frees us from that kind of thinking, He Himself promises to supply all our needs!

What a promise! Paul could rest assured that God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply!

The Greek word translated "*supply*" means "to fill up, or to fill to the full." It denotes an abundance.

I love what author Nancy Spiegelberg writes, "Lord, I crawled across the bareness to you with my empty cup, uncertain in asking any small drop of refreshment. If only I had known you better. I'd have come running with a bucket." *And God will fill your bucket to the brim.*

Of course, God supplies *our need* not **our greed**. Verse 19 is not a blank check for anyone's selfishness.

It's heretical for pastors to portray God as a heavenly vending machine where you plug in a request and out pops whatever you want. God doesn't work that way.

What responsible father would do that to his child?

It's been said, "*Children are like stomachs, they don't need everything we can afford to give them.*" And the same is true of God's kids. God promises to meet our needs, He's not going to cater to our self-indulgence.

Yet when it comes to what we need God doesn't hold back. *How much of our need does He supply? "All"*

And notice, God's supply is given *not "out of His riches,"* but "*according to His riches in glory.*" If I were a millionaire and I

gave you a hundred bucks, I'd be giving *out of my riches*. But if I gave you a hundred thousand dollars I'd be giving *according to my riches*.

And this is how God satisfies our needs - *to the brim*.

Paul writes to the Ephesians, God does “*exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...*” (3:20)

Paul wraps up the body of his letter by turning his *prose* to *praise* - his *theology* becomes *doxology*...

He sings out, “*Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*” *God is worthy of all glory!*

Paul closes this letter as he does all his letters with greetings and salutations. “*Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.*” Remember, in Paul's eyes a “*saint*” wasn't a super Christian with special devotion. *We're all saints*.

The word means “*set apart, dedicated to God.*” Paul would tell us a person is either *a saint* or *an ain't!*

And the Philippians had proven that one way to show it, was by putting your money where your mouth is!

He also says, “*The brethren who are with me greet you.*” *Who was with Paul at the time?* Obviously, Timothy, the co-author. *Who else?* We don't know.

But apparently, Paul had a small posse with him. He writes, “*The brethren*” or “*The Brotherhood*” greets you.

And then Paul makes a marvelous statement, “*All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.*” Remember, Paul is in prison in Rome. He's

awaiting trial before the emperor himself. He was probably in the hands of *the praetorian guard*.

This was a small band of elite soldiers who were assigned to the royal household's personal protection.

Every time a shift change took place, and a new soldier took over the post next to Paul it became another opportunity for Paul to share the Gospel.

In Chapter 1 Paul took joy in his incarceration, for it had occurred for **"the furtherance of the Gospel."** You can be sure, soldiers were saved. Lives were changed.

And apparently, the Gospel had spread. A mini-revival had broken out in the Caesar's royal palace.

Imagine, the cooks, and maids, and janitors, and bellhops who served in the palace also attended to the barracks. This meant converted soldiers were sharing their faith with domestic workers. *The Gospel was on the move.* Paul had Bible Studies seven days a week.

I wonder if any of the emperor's own family came to faith?
The Gospel of Jesus is a force that cannot be contained!
And a testimony to that fact, is that here Paul adds to the number of the saints who were with him, **"especially those who are of Caesar's household."**

They too, send their greetings to *the Brotherhood*.

Paul concludes his letter in verse 23, **"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."** And this is a fitting end, Paul directs his readers to God's grace.

The Philippians and Paul not only shared *a passion for the Gospel*, but *an appreciation of God's grace*. In 1:7 he said, *“you all are partakers with me of grace.”*

As we've said now for twelve weeks, the book of Philippians is about **finding joy at half-mast**.

When the Queen of England is in residence a flag flies from atop the palace. Likewise, joy is the flag that indicates King Jesus is residing in a Christian's life.

And that joy still flaps even when the flag of a person's life is lowered to half-mast - in times of grief, and loss, and trials, and suffering, joy can still be had!

In Christ, we can reach out by faith and *take joy* - we can grab on to joy even in the worst of circumstances.

This past week, I saw an example of this up-close and personal. A friend of mine suffered a family tragedy. Alan Joiner pastors Wellspring Church just outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee. He and his wife, Judy, are faithful servants to the Lord and their church.

Last Sunday in the morning's wee hours the Joiner's house caught on fire. The blaze quickly spread from the basement throughout the house. It was a total loss.

Thankfully, no one was injured, *and his insurance was paid-up*. Alan knows it could've been a lot worse.

And he realizes God has promised to supply all his need. When we talked, he was still rejoicing! Even in a joyless situation, Alan had grabbed on to Jesus' joy.

Later, Alan posted photos of his house. At least, the charred ruins of what was left. Here's a photo of the living room... *Notice the only item the fire didn't burn...* In the front corner of the room there's a gold plaque.

And a close-up of the plaque reveals its message. John 15, where Jesus said, "I am the Vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit, for apart from Me he can do nothing."

The survival of that plaque was a message to the Joiners. *Take Joy!* God is at work even in our losses.

If the Lord puts them on your heart, pray for Pastor Alan and his family - but more so, model their example. There is joy in Jesus, and it's yours for the taking!

But it requires faith. Are you a Gospel-oriented person? Are you a member of *the Brotherhood*?

Here's how I want to close Paul's wonderful letter to the church at Philippi. *Listen again to its highlights...*

Chapter 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...” 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain...” 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” 2:12, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure...” 3:13, “but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus...”

Chapter 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!...” 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus...” 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me...” And finally Chapter 4:19, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus...”

May these truths echo forever in our hearts!