

# A Church Flourishing in Concern for the Support of Gospel Labors by James Jennings

by James Malachi Jennings

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of reviving our concern for others, particularly in supporting gospel labors, and highlights the example of the Philippian church's sacrificial giving.*

**Duration:** 56:36

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:17

**Topics:** "Sacrificial Giving", "Gospel Support"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of reviving concern for supporting Gospel laborers, using the example of the Philippians who generously supported Paul. It emphasizes the need to view giving as a pleasing sacrifice to God, an eternally rewarding investment, and a promise of God's provision. The sermon challenges individuals and the church to consider missionaries they support, those they should support, and the importance of sacrificial giving for the cause of the Gospel.

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## Transcript

So Philippians chapter 4, last time I spoke we looked at verse 9 about the God of peace being with the Christian in a manifest way. The Christian who is thinking on these things and seeking to imitate what they have seen and heard in Paul in his life and his ministry. Now let's think for a moment.

Why did Paul write the Philippian letter? They had sent Epaphroditus to minister to his need with gifts. And Paul is writing a letter that Epaphroditus is then going to take and bring back to the Philippians. And this is really a letter of friendship.

Paul deals with some issues here, but this is not like the letters to those at Corinth. It's not full of correction, hard reproof. He loves these saints.

He said in chapter 1, verses 8, he said, God is my witness how I yearn for you with the affection of Jesus Christ. He loved them deeply. So he's thanking them for the gifts.

What was amazing with the letter to the Philippians is Paul didn't just start out the letter thanking them. He mentioned different truths and then he gets to this point of acknowledging their gift right here. He acknowledged Epaphroditus in chapter 2. Now he acknowledges their gift.

So we're going to start in verse 10. Philippians 4, 10. Paul says this.

He acknowledges their gift. I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

Now verse 11, Paul is going to give a qualifying, clarifying statement so he's not misunderstood. He does this two times. This is the first time he does this.

Paul says in verse 11, not that I'm speaking of being in need. I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low.

I know how to abound in any and every circumstance. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Then verse 14, Paul again acknowledges the gift. Yet it was kind of you to share in my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves, know in the beginning of the Gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. In verse 17, it's his second clarifying statement. He doesn't want to be misunderstood in regards to the issue of money.

It's a very sensitive issue. He says this, 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, that's the messenger, the gifts, what the Philippians sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. And on such a glorious thought as that, Paul just starts to close in verse 20, To our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Let's pray again. Lord, we do pray to You be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Father, I am weak. I need You to be with my mouth as You were with the mouths of Moses and Aaron.

Lord, I need You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit that I would handle Your Word rightly. Lord, that this would minister to the needs of the saints. Lord, we think about even what Brandon read.

Lord, the whole counsel of God. Lord, hear this thank You letter for these gifts as part of Your counsel. Lord, this is God-breathed Scripture.

And it is profitable for us today. And Lord, I trust that after three years of preaching through Philippians, here You have me in these verses on this very day. And so Lord, I trust that this is the Word for the season.

And so Lord, would You quicken this? Give it life. Lord, help us. Come, draw near to us, Lord.

We want You, the God of peace, to be with us, Lord. Free us from distractions and sleepiness, Lord. Help.

Give us grace today as You already have. In Jesus' name, Amen. In these ten verses, I have a sermon today I'm calling, A Church Flourishing in Concern for the Support of Gospel Labors.

Then the next time I preach, I'm going to use the same ten verses to do a message called, A Content Imprisoned Missionary Strengthened by Christ. It would be very wrong of me to just go to verse 13. Everyone knows I can do all things through Christ.

It would be wrong of me to speak on contentment. I'd be missing the bigger picture of what Paul is doing here when he writes this acknowledgement of their gift. So today, I want to focus on considerations for us as a church, as we support gospel labors.

The next time, considerations for the missionary, the fellow worker, the laborer who is being supported. Now I want to ask a question. Do you guys want revival? Yes, we do.

We want things which are starting to die to have new life and be revived. You think about Elisha. He was dead.

His bones were in the ground. And someone got killed and they threw that man into Elisha's grave. And what happened to that man? It says he was revived and he stood on his feet.

We want things that look dead to have new life. Sorry, there's like 20 people outside right there. Did we already figure? Are they good to go, Bobby? Okay.

We want revival. Now consider here what revival happened at the church at Philippi. What type of revival did they have? Verse 10, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at length, so this revival was at length, you have revived your concern for me.

What type of revival did they have? A revival of concern for Paul. A revival, a reviving, a renewing in their thoughts of Paul, who was the initial missionary used in the planning of their church, and who they had been supporting him and the gospel since the beginning. And here, they revived their concern.

So when I speak of a revival this morning, I'm not speaking of thousands of souls being converted. I'm speaking of Christians being revived in their concern. In this case, for Paul, a missionary, a gospel laborer.

And consider the imagery that this word revived in verse 10 should bring to mind. That word, it means to shoot up again. It means to sprout again.

To grow green again. And the idea is here you had a plant, it was very green, it was bearing much fruit, but there was neglect. It wasn't watered.

The heat. Who knows what happens? And all of a sudden, it starts to droop. And Paul says that, in some way, was happening to their concern for him.

And now their concern was revived. And it sprouted up again. It had new strength.

To revive is to restore something to life. Now Paul says, he's very gracious. Look at v. 10, the second half.

He says, you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. So the Philippians, it wasn't that they weren't concerned for Paul. They were.

They just didn't have opportunity. Maybe they didn't have a messenger. Epaphroditus to give money to send to Paul.

Maybe they didn't have any money at that point. Maybe they were concerned, but they lacked the desperation to truly do something. At that point, whatever the case, Paul rejoices in the Lord greatly that now at length, there has been a revival in their hearts, and it was a revival of concern for him.

We know how that feels, right? When you get that email or that call from someone you've not heard from in a while, and they're showing love and concern for you, you can rejoice greatly, not in the circumstances, but just that the Lord loves you enough to bring you to mind in that person's life. Now, for the Philippians, what did this revived concern at length look like practically? Paul says they had a revived concern. He rejoices in the Lord greatly.

But what did this look like? Did it look like they made a decision at a prayer meeting that we should give money to this need and one of the deacons went and deposited in the bank account the next day? Is that what it looked like? They didn't have that ability. You know what it looked like? It looked like giving their gifts to Epaphroditus. And the estimated journey that Epaphroditus had to get to Paul, who was in prison, was six weeks to three months.

It was not easy. Look at chapter 2, verse 27. Paul even says, their messenger who ministered to his need, 227, he was ill near to death.

He almost died. Verse 28, Paul wants to send him back. Verse 29, he says, receive him in the Lord with all joy and honor such men.

What did it practically look like for them to show concern for Paul? Epaphroditus nearly died for the work of Christ. Risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Something was lacking in their concern and service for Paul.

Something was missing. And they gave gifts to Epaphroditus and he traveled maybe three months to get there. He was ill and he almost died.

That's part of what it looked like practically. What specific way did they show concern? Well, I think one thing clearly is financial gifts. Maybe not the whole thing.

Look at verse 15. Paul says, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving. That idea of giving deals with money.

Money. The wallet. Verse 18, Paul says, I have received full payment.

Verse 18. Payment speaks of money. So what way did they show concern? It seems sending money.

Paul even says in 2 Corinthians, he says, I robbed other churches, referring to those in Macedonia which Philippi is a church in Macedonia. And he says, I robbed churches by accepting support from them. So he uses the word robbed.

Paul's thinking about financial gifts in his mind here. That's clearly part of it. I won't say that's all of it.

Epaphroditus, it says ministered to his needs. But money was a big part of it. Now, when I revive my concern for someone, it always doesn't have to deal with money.

Right? It doesn't always have to deal with financial gifts. But a willingness to give what's in our wallet, our bank account, can be a great evidence of how far we're willing to go to help bear the burdens of others.

Now, something to think about, Paul.

Paul here in verse 10, it says, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord. What was he rejoicing over? The money? The money? Was he rejoicing at the money he got? No, he wasn't. Paul was not rejoicing in the money.

What was the money? When he got money from them, what did it affirm to Paul? Their love for him? It affirmed even him of God's love for him and burdening them? It affirmed to Paul their continued partnership? You know, we send money to someone, it's not just, oh good, I got money. Hey, they're continually holding the rope and partnering with us together for the Gospel. So Paul's bigger thing here is the cause and that their love, they're still, since the beginning, they have been supporting me in the labor of the Gospel.

He then says in verse 14, he acknowledges the gift by saying, yet it was kind of you to share in my trouble. Paul's just thankful they shared in his trouble. Sure, part of that trouble was he needed money in the current situation he was.

That's the only way he's going to get provided for in this prison situation. But it was just kind of them to share in his trouble. We know Paul.

Was he living it up in prosperity? The guy's in prison. The guy, he had sleepless nights. Nights at sea on a piece of wood.

Paul suffered. Paul would go places. He didn't want to be a stumbling block, so he wouldn't press people to give him money and he would go and make tents.

Imagine getting out of here tonight and going and working nine hours through the night and doing that every night and then preaching just in order to provide for your needs to continue laboring for the Gospel. That's how Paul was. Paul was not about money.

He's not about the prosperity Gospel that we see in our country today. His main desire was their friendship and partnership. That's what he wanted.

That's what he was thankful for. So, what is a revived concern? Because if you and I need a revived concern in any way, what is it? It's more than a feeling. Because Paul says, you were concerned for me.

You were, but you didn't have an opportunity. So a revived concern means you take advantage of the opportunities that are before you, or you even create an opportunity. As Paul said, second chapter, he said there was something lacking in their service to him.

As Brandon read in Acts 20, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Those are the words of the Lord Jesus. And I was trying to think about us as a church.

What's an example of a time that we revived our concern for someone? And I thought about in 2011, when Bob James was dying from cancer, we as a church voted, I forget if it was 10,000 or 15,000, something like that. We voted as a church to send him \$10,000-15,000 knowing he has all these medical bills. Philippi? Very similar.

There's needs. They send to support those needs. Paul sends back a thank you letter.

When we gave to Bob, he wrote a letter. He said this to us. You're going to see, it wasn't about the money.

This is in 2011. He said, dear saints of Grace Community, you indeed are a community of gracious folks. Terry and I came upon the enormous gift from you and were left standing in silence.

Thus, we have been slow in expressing our thanks. We don't know how you did it, except for God. We don't know why you did it, except for God.

We don't know what you will get in return for it, except for God. And may the Lord indeed cause you to abound in grace all the more with joy unspeakable, with love immeasurable, with truth unfathomable, hope immovable, and in the good fight invincible. The Lord Jesus has helped us to be able to pay off our medical bills by the end of the month.

I don't have to go back till December for another scan. They said I could have fatigue and more pressure for three months as the tumor first swells before shrinking. It is like the Gospel.

Things get worse before getting better. And he then mentioned some verses and he signed by saying this, My love to you all with sweet memories of the time with the Church of Perpetual Fellowship. Our name for the church there.

Are we living up to that name? The Church of Perpetual Fellowship? We had the fellowship meal every Sunday we really lived up to that name. Maybe we're lacking in that. But the point is, Kevin thinks we are, alright.

He's still single and doesn't have kids who need naps and all other types of things. But you think of that. Paul's writing a thank you letter.

Thank you for the gifts. Thank you for the revived concern. It's not about the money.

It's about this ongoing partnership for the things of the Gospel. And Bob's right. You know why we gave that gift? He's right.

You only did it because of God. We carry out this act of grace, of giving, of being concerned, because God works it in our heart. And you can't escape it.

The Lord is pressing on you a revived concern for certain people, whether to give and that's the way you meet the need or not, and you can't escape it. You're constrained by the love of Christ. I've got to go meet that need.

I need a help in that regard. So what is my goal for this sermon? We're going to look at a couple points. Just as those at Philippi who 2,000 years ago had a renewal of concern in their hearts towards supporting Paul's Gospel labors, I think we should challenge ourselves with these five questions.

Number one, is there any missionary that we monthly support as a church that we need a revived concern for? The Wilkinsons. The Sims. Or the missionaries that we support that you don't even know we support.

Those are the ones obviously you need a revived concern for. The ones that you don't know exist. If that is the case.

Is there any missionary? And that revived concern for them might not look like, hey, let's send more money to them. It might actually be just simply meeting needs in another way. Writing a letter.

Visiting the Wilkinsons in Sao Tio. Or as people have even visited the Sims in Lebanon. Second question to ask.

Is there any missionary that we don't support that we need to revive a concern for and show it in a more manifest way? Third question. Do I need a revived concern in supporting the gospel advance of this local church? Fourth, is something lacking in my service to someone? Paul said, something's lacking in your service to me. Is there anything lacking in my service to one of you, to one of them? Fifth, in a broader sense, yeah, is there a church member of this church that I need to revive my concern for and show it and take opportunity? You know, Paul said in 2 Corinthians that their zeal in giving stirred up most of the people of Macedonia.

And I hope that the Philippians example here in Philippi, even though they got stirred up, I hope it will stir us up to a revived concern. Maybe to one of these five questions I just asked. So a couple observations.

First observation that we're going to see here. We should never let our poverty and lack of money be a reason to not show concern through giving. We should never let our poverty and lack of money, lack of resources, cause us to not show concern.

And to think about this, we first need to consider who the Philippian church was. These were not a wealthy group of people. At least, we know this is true of them in the past.

Over five years earlier in the letter to Corinth in 2 Corinthians 8, Paul referred to the churches of Macedonia. He didn't make a distinction and say Philippi, but they were included. They were one of the churches.

And Paul says of those people, he says this, in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. Extreme poverty did not overflow to no generosity. It overflowed to more generosity.

And why do I think 2 Corinthians 8 is referring to the Philippians specifically? Because Paul says in 4.15, he says, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only. So what was one of the churches in Macedonia? At that time, only those in Philippi had entered in. And so now he's writing this letter five years after saying what he said in 2 Corinthians.

We've got every reason to believe there's still poverty in Philippi. And yet, that did not keep them from showing concern to Paul in reviving that concern. 2 Corinthians 8, it didn't just say they had extreme poverty.

It says they had a severe test of what? Affliction. They're physically suffering. They have poverty in the bank account.

And yet in joy, they're giving and holding the rope for Paul. They overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. Isn't that something? They did not let their own dire circumstances prevent them from supporting Paul's labor.

So we shouldn't either. And you know what? We see this reviving of concern. It calls for sacrifice.

It calls for sacrifice. The Philippians, they gave sacrificially. And your distinction is to realize, generous giving is not the same thing as sacrificially giving.

If I have 100,000 and I give 5,000 to a need, that's generous, but that's not sacrificial. Because I have 100,000. What would be sacrificial is if I took 95,000 out of that 100,000 and I gave that.

So there's a difference here. And the Philippians, no matter the amount they gave, they gave sacrificially. And it's interesting, Paul's next destination after Philippi was Thessalonica.

The odd thing is when he was there, he had to make tents and still support himself. So whatever money they entered into partnership with him on, it wasn't even enough to support his labors. But he thanked God they entered into partnership with him.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul says, they gave according to their means and beyond their means. Beyond their means. They gave beyond what they even had, obviously trusting that this is the will of God and God is going to provide so I can give this and trust Him.

Could we presume on the Lord? Sure we could. Generous giving is not the same thing as sacrificial. Jesus said in Luke 21, they all contribute out of their abundance, but she, the widow out of her poverty, put all she had to live on.

Sacrificial. To revive my concern might mean I need to be more sacrificial. Here's a good question to ask us.

Can your giving, whether money or your time, be called sacrificial? We do it in secret. We don't want to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Jesus said.

But if you looked at everything and you were honest with yourself, could you say, do I have a sacrificial attitude in reviving concern and giving towards needs and giving towards supporting gospel labors and endeavors? So, secondly, a thought and observation I hope will help you and help me not grow weary, but be revived in our concern for supporting gospel endeavors. Consider what cause we're talking about supporting. Think of what cause we're talking about.

What reason? What purpose of having a revived concern? What more important cause is there? Tell me. I'm open to hear. What is a more important cause than partnership for the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is there anything that can exceed that in the list of importance? Paul says in Philippians 1, that's what their partnership was about.

Verse 5, your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. You see, we're not talking about causes and partnerships like finding a cure for cancer. We're talking about partnering and telling people the cure for their sins which already has been found.

No more research is necessary. No more investment of millions in dollars to find out how to resolve it. Christ has resolved that answer through shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary.

So we're not talking about finding a cure for cancer. We're not talking about partnering with Democrat Republicans to get a new health care bill. We're talking about partnering with the gospel to get truth out that really does give people good health.

And whether they die with insurance or not with insurance, if they have the insurance of knowing Christ, they're in heaven. I found an article called Reigniting a Sports Passion. That's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about reigniting a concern and a passion and a renewal of our minds for supporting the cause of the gospel. No greater cause than that. This article said, there will be days when your child does not want to practice or even play a game.

He seems tired and his passion is fizzled. The question you must help your child answer is this, can that passion be revived? Or is the flame of sports interest out for good? You know what my answer to that would be? Let it fizzle. I don't want to try to reignite it and revive that.

Let it fizzle. Let every passion in the world fizzle, but a passion for Christ. And some of us know, some of us were really into sports before we were Christians.

And you know what? You can relate. You just start watching a couple of highlights, a couple of games, and all of a sudden, you're hooked. Your heart gets emotionally attached to these sports.

What's that in the end? I'm not saying don't watch sports. That's between you and the Lord. But I am saying this, if that gets in the way of you being burdened for the cause of Christ, let every passion fizzle.

But this one thing I do, I press on for Christ who shed His blood for me. And you know what that probably means? We need a view of the cross revived. You want to have your concern for others revived? Maybe the quickest way to do that is to gaze at Jesus Christ and His love for you, and that will revive your concern to financially help support different labors.

And Paul appeals to this to Christ in 2 Corinthians 8. He says, you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor so that you by His poverty might become rich. Paul appealed to Christ. He knew you give people a sense of Christ who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself and took the form of a servant.

You show them Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That will affect what they think about, what they do. That will make them realize if He, the greatest, became poor that I might be rich in the spiritual realm.

How can I not give of myself, my life, my concern for these things that are eternal? And you know, this is practical. Someone could say, well, does viewing Christ really make you want to give? Does it really make you want to partner together? Yeah. Who's our example? The Philippians.

The Philippians are our example. What happened to them? Paul comes to town in Acts 16. Lydia's converted.

They're in prison later. A man's about to commit suicide. Rather than kill himself, he gets converted.

His whole house gets converted. What do Lydia, the jailer, and all the others want to do right after they're converted? What did they start doing? They partnered together in giving and receiving with Paul from the beginning. Why? What would make these Christians all of a sudden want to give to Paul? It was the Gospel.

The Gospel. Look at v. 16, chapter 4. You entered into partnership with Me in giving and receiving. No one except You only.

Look at v. 16. Even in Thessalonica, You sent Me help for My needs once and again. Even? Even? What do you mean, Paul? You know what he means? Where was the very next destination Paul went after Philippi? Thessalonica.

And so Paul says, even right after you're converted, right after the church is planted, I get put in prison. He didn't have a real nice farewell. He had to leave prematurely.

And guess what happens? He gets to Thessalonica and that new church with new Christians in their extreme poverty is already giving to Paul once and again. Why? Because of the cause. They just experienced the power of the Gospel.

That jailer about committed suicide and killed himself, and now he has life in Christ. What do you think he's going to do? I want to support this guy to keep telling others about Jesus Christ. And that's exactly what they did.

Christ, the cause of the Gospel, it motivated them. And Paul says, in the beginning of the Gospel, and in chapter 1, verse 5, we already read it, your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now. This church had been partnering with Paul since the beginning.

And here they revived their concern again to him and they sent him gifts. Which we know there were financial gifts. Maybe other things, but they sent him money to help for his need.

And he rejoiced greatly in the Lord. You know what's a good example of Philippi? They supported Paul in the long term. Right? From the first day until now.

All these years are going by and they're still supporting Paul. So here an application is right here. Being concerned for Gospel labors is something a new believer in a new church can enter into right away.

If you're a new Christian here and you think, well, I need to give it some time. Look, these Philippians got saved. Isn't what Christ did so marvelous that in some way you want to invest towards this Gospel being advanced further? Boy, we need an eternal perspective.

We need an eternal perspective. I was thinking about missionary Daniel Smith. He was in China in the 1900's.

And Dan Smith, he had two young converted Chinese men come to him from these faraway mountains. It was kind of bizarre. Where did they come from? And he found out that earlier when he was in town, he had talked to a soldier who was a Christian.

That soldier that year ended up in this remote village and evangelized these natives and they got converted. And he said, I know where Dan Smith is at. Go all the way to him and he can teach you more.

And so these two young Christians, they get to Dan Smith and listen to what they say. I'm saying this because we don't want to lose a perspective of the unreached. Dan says this, when they finally found us, I shall not easily forget their first two questions.

They were thin with hunger, but they did not ask for food. They were weary with the journey, but they did not ask for rest. Their clothes were worse for wear.

They did not beg for clothes. The first question was this, where is the book? And the second went like a knife in my heart. How is it, one asked, that you have never come to us? How is it? And Dan Smith said, those simple searching questions need no comment.

You know how it is that missionaries never get to certain tribes? Because in America, we get lost in the glitz and the glamour. We get lost in all sorts of things and our focus is not out there, it's building a kingdom here. And I'm not imputing that to be true of our church, but that's true of a lot of professing churches.

That's not their investment. I'm thankful that our open financial report that we do every year, if I understand it right, still over 50% of our money is going out to support missions. We want to keep it like that.

How is it that you've never come to us? And the Philippians, the Gerald, or Lydia, they're thinking, we just got saved. Take whatever money we have in our extreme poverty. Give beyond our means.

Go, Paul. Go to Thessalonica. Preach Christ that they might be saved.

Maybe there's another jailer who might be about to kill himself and he could be converted. Thirdly, you want a revived concern in this great work of excelling and giving to support of gospel labors? Consider God's divine perspective on our giving. You want to get stirred up? Ask yourself this, what's God think about it? What does God think about it? First, from God's perspective, our giving is a pleasing sacrifice.

We see this in v. 18. He says halfway through, the gifts you sent, what were they? A fragrant offering. A sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

A sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. Giving to Paul was a sacrificial offering which like an Old Testament sacrifice, offered properly was pleasing to Him. The picture is of aroma of that sacrificial fire going heavenward and being a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

This, Paul says, is what their gift has amounted to from divine perspective. We see the same thing in Hebrews 13. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have.

For such sacrifices are what? Pleasing to God. Isn't it interesting he says such sacrifice? Even here, he says sacrifice. Not just, oh, I have a little extra.

I have this. Or if I show concern for them, it's really going to cost me. What? Christ showed concern for us.

What did it cost Him? His life. He left the glories of heaven to become a servant and die for His enemies. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my all.

And you've got to think here even, the ultimate reason of giving is for God. Paul says it's pleasing to God. They're giving.

It's not primarily we're doing this to please people. That's the wrong motive. Pleasing to God.

That was the motive of the Philippians. That's how God views this sacrifice. And our motive matters.

You think of 2 Corinthians 9. Paul said each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctant or under compulsion, not manipulated. Why? God loves a cheerful giver. Isn't that beautiful? No one can twist our arm to give.

No one can say you need to give this much. Because if you do, you're sinning by even giving and it's not pleasing to God. But when you give from a cheerful heart and all of a sudden, God provides such a concern in your heart where you had all this money over here, you had plans to use it in this way, and you

kind of had a thought, maybe I'll give it towards that, and you kind of rejected it, but the Lord kept burdening you.

Give it towards this. Give it towards that. And eventually, you do it cheerfully.

Not under compulsion. Not under a sermon being preached. Not under present needs.

But cheerfully. Lord, this is Yours anyways. I'm just being a steward of it.

So second thing about God's perspective in our giving is this, it is an eternally rewarding investment. That's what God thinks. Verse 17, we see that there.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Not that I seek the gift. Paul wasn't seeking the gift.

Again, money is so sensitive of a topic, he's trying to clarify. Not that I'm speaking of being in need, guys. I've learned to be content.

Making tents. Not that I'm seeking the gift, but I am seeking something. I take your money and I labor, and I seek something for you.

Fruit that increases to your account. That was Paul's attitude. What does this mean? As he labors, interest is going to the account of the one who invested in the spiritual labor.

You could say it like this. First, the investment is in this life and that there is a greater fruitfulness in the believer's life. One way you can bear fruit is by giving and holding the rope and bearing people's needs in that way.

And Paul prayed in Philippians 1 that their love would abound more and more. Why? That they might be filled with the fruit of righteousness. So one way to get filled with fruit is to revive the concern and seek to meet the concerns and needs of others.

To let each other look, not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Having this mind that is in Christ. Or secondly, what do you mean? Eternally rewarding investment.

In that it leads to greater rewards in heaven. This is not like the false gospel of prosperity. It's simply teaching what you do in this life accounts for eternity.

Just like it does for the wicked. He who knew his Master's will and refused to do it, what type of punishment does he get? More severe. There are degrees of anguish in hell.

In a similar way, the Bible teaches a degree of reward in heaven. And such rewards have nothing to do with merit for salvation. Such rewards have nothing to do with getting blocks of gold or some stupid carnal idea like that.

I appreciate what Charles Leiter said. He said in regards to these rewards, they reside in a fuller knowledge of God and the joy of having glorified Him and having done what was right. Not to mention the joy of having been used by God in some small measure in the salvation of a soul.

It's not a carnal joy to know we gave and supported and held the rope for this missionary and these people got converted. And Paul says, I labored seeking the fruit that would increase to your account. Paul calls

the Philippians my joy and crown.

Think about 3 John 8. It says we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth. Fellow workers for the truth by supporting? Yes. That's one way to be a fellow worker is supporting.

Now, this brings up this question. Do we view this world and money correctly? Do we view it correctly? I think of Luke 12. Jesus said, sell your possessions and give to the needy.

Provide yourself with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in heaven that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. You think about 1 Timothy 6. The uncertainty of riches. Riches are uncertain.

You see that in Houston. How many people lost their homes there and in Florida? They didn't have proper insurance. I heard of someone in Florida they just paid off their house.

It's all gone. You see, that's uncertain. But investing in gospel labors and true workers of the Lord, that is an investment that is not going to be lost.

Yes, there are a lot of people on judgment day and those out there who compromise and are they going to have their works burned up and they get paid for it as Paul says? Yes. So there are people giving money to workers and their works are going to burn up. There isn't going to be fruit there.

But for the true Christian, for the faithful laborer, it's not an uncertainty. This credit before God is not uncertain. I thought of Titus 3. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way.

See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help the cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. Paul is saying, I as a Christian can have fruit by making sure Zenas the lawyer has got a plane ticket to get back to there.

Has got a voyage. I mean, things as little as that. Or bring my cloak that is in Troas.

See that they lack nothing. A revived concern, it says in you, I don't want them to lack anything. This gospel labor, do they lack anything? And so we're going to look at whenever I preach next, the gospel laborer, they better learn to be content and to have hunger and need.

This idea of just living in abundance. It's not in the Bible. Mark 9, whoever gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

So what's God's perspective? It's pleasing to Him and it's an eternal investment. There are eternal rewards. Thirdly, God's perspective on our giving is accompanied with a promise.

Look at v. 19. And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus. And as I mentioned on Wednesday night, you can't let this verse stand alone.

I see people quote this on Facebook or different places and they stand it alone. Who did Paul say v. 19 to? He said it to those who had just made sure He was well supplied. He said it to those who were concerned about gospel laborers.

He said it to those who gave in extreme poverty and even gave beyond their means. And he turns around to them and he says, my God will supply all of your needs according to His riches and glory in Christ

Jesus. I think we'd be wrong to take this verse away from its context and you've got a person out there they're not even concerned a bit with the advance of the gospel.

Everything is about their own kingdom. And they go take that promise. Well, God, You're going to supply every one of my needs.

And you can say, I don't know if I agree with that, James. Well, Proverbs 21. Verse 13, whoever closes his ear to decry the poor will himself call and not be answered.

Psalms 84.11 No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. There are conditions. For those who love God, all things work together for good.

There are conditions. And this is encouraging because as a church, as believers, we can say, I did help that person be well supplied. So my God, will You supply all of my needs according to Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus? Someone who's entirely unconcerned with the needs of others, I don't believe they should go to v. 19 and try to claim that for their own.

I think they should go to James 2 and 1 John 3. James 2, if a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 1 John 3.17 If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? You see your brother in need? I'm not going to meet that need. You go home.

My God, You said You'd supply every one of my needs according to Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus. You close your ear to the poor. God says, I won't hear you when you cry.

But that means if we are giving, holding the rope, laboring, and we have poverty and we've given beyond our means, we can go to the Lord and say, Lord, You have to come through. And Paul says, God has what? Riches. Riches.

All the cattle are His. All the houses are His. Everything is God's.

Now, God will supply our needs, not luxuries. I love what Paul says in verse 19. And, my God.

Can you say, He's my God? He's mine. He loved me and gave Himself for me. So, in closing, One, never let your poverty be an excuse to not show concern.

Two, This is being revived for the greatest cause ever. Advancing the gospel souls being saved. Three, we saw God's perspective on this.

It's a pleasing sacrifice to Him. It's an eternally rewarding investment. And it's accompanied with a promise.

Now, one would conclude, if God's view on our giving is such, all the churches would be so zealous in this regard, right? If God's perspective is that, everyone's got to be zealous in this regard, right? Verse 15, And you Philippians yourselves know, in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. What a thing. Again, no church, but one, in the beginning, gave.

They gave money, and they took part in receiving interest to their credit. Fruit that increased to their credit. It blows your mind.

Why is this such a rare act of kindness? In Paul's day, even in our own at times. Think about Philippians 2.21. Verse 20, I have no one like Timothy who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. Look what Paul says.

For they all seek their own interest. Not those of Jesus Christ. No church entered in except them.

And Timothy is like the only guy, it seems, who's really concerned about the interest of others. That's how Paul described the situation back then. It's kind of grim in some way.

They seek their own interest. But it doesn't have to be that way. God can work in our hearts such a reality of the cause that we're involved with.

Jesus said where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. Where your treasure is. He says where my giving my money reveals where my heart is.

And if I'm seeking to partner in giving, receiving for the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I'm internally investing in that which is not uncertain and which is a pleasing sacrifice and aroma to God in which no other church except them did back then, if I do that, that shows where my heart's at. It's in things which are eternal. Can we cheerfully supply the needs of worthy laborers? So, we've seen different reasons that us as a church body and as individuals should flourish in concern for Gospel laborers through supporting them in whatever way we can.

As we saw in v. 10, at length, you have revived your concern. And so those five questions I asked at the beginning, we've got to ask each of ourselves those five questions. Is there any present missionary I should revive concern for? Is there any missionary we're not supporting we should revive concern for? Is my support of the laborers of my own local church, do I need to revive concern for that? Is there any individual believer in the body that I should revive concern for? For their situation.

And then the next time when I speak, I want to look at the godly missionary who is content and able to live in little. In hunger and need. And so brethren, if any of you feel like you're not sprouting green, you're starting to droop in this area, Paul says here, I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length, you have revived your concern.

He says you revived it. We need to revive these things in us. Is the only way going to be the grace of God? Absolutely.

So let's pray for that, for His help. Father, we need... Lord, we constantly need revival in areas of our lives as Christians. And Lord, here this church 2,000 years ago, we know in the past that we're in extreme poverty.

And here they are years later, they revive their concern again for Paul. Lord, I don't know all the applications of these verses for each of us as individuals and as a church, but Lord, would You please revive concern in our heart for the people and things if it's lacking. And Lord, we thank You that we're able to be co-workers together, partnering in advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, help us to love one another, to look out for each other's interests. Help us, Lord, to love the missionaries we support. We pray You'd bless the Sims, the Wilkinsons, James Dolly.

Lord, be with John and Paul. Lord, and many others, Lord, we just ask You'd bless them. Lord, help us.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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