



Paul's letter to the Philippians was a 'Thank you letter' for money the church had sent to him while he was in prison in Rome. In typical Pauline fashion he thinks of all sorts of other reasons to be thankful for the Philippian church but eventually he gets round to the reason he was writing – and thanks them for the cash. **Read Philippians Ch. 4: 14-20.**

1. The generosity of the Philippians. Verses 14-16.

- They had started supporting Paul's work with gifts of money as soon as they had become Christians, beginning with when he was in Thessalonica and continuing 'again and again' over a 10 year period.
- They also supported Christians in far-off lands. For example when there was a famine in Jerusalem, they sent money to the church, even though they themselves were not at all wealthy. **2 Cor. 8: 1-5.**
- For some reason they had (perhaps) lost track of Paul and were now pleased to renew their giving.

2. Paul's way of dealing with a sensitive subject. Verses 11 & 17-18

- To our ears, Paul may seem to be somewhat lukewarm with his thanks: almost suggesting he didn't need the money. This is not his intention, he is genuinely excited by the gift – but he is more moved by it as an expression of the Philippians' love and partnership than as the means to a decent meal.
- And he needed to be careful:
 - To avoid appearing manipulative.
 - To avoid getting accused of having mixed motives and losing integrity.
 - To avoid finding that accepting a gift meant he now had a patron who expected to influence his ministry. **(Acts 18:1-3 & 2 Cor. 11:9).**
- Paul doesn't have a traditional business-like attitude to money, but he knows his financial jargon. On writing a cheque, one usually sees one's bank balance diminish: Paul assures the Philippians that their giving would be credited to their account, the balance would go up! But not in money: in **JOY!**
- **2 Cor. 8:2** again – the Philippians experienced huge joy through their giving. They found that generosity in giving goes hand-in-hand with being content with what you have: it is an expression of confidence in God. Genuine confidence and contentment breed **joy**.
- And the fruitfulness of gospel partnership means we share '**joy** in heaven' when someone is saved.
- This kind of giving is a sacrifice (**v. 18**), but not a sacrifice to earn our forgiveness. That sacrifice was made for us all by Jesus on the cross (**John 3:16**). It is an offering of ourselves in loving thanks to God

3. A Glorious Conclusion. Verses 19 – 20.

- '...my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.' This doesn't mean we are entitled to everything we want; nor does it justify equating material riches with God's favour.
- Neither does it guarantee an easy life. Our prayers will always be answered by our God of infinite resources according to our needs: needs that He knows better than we know ourselves.
- Our local charity, Besom, operates by faith and prayer: time and again God has provided resources to meet the needs that have come up. James Hudson Taylor, a 19th century Missionary to China, had no fundraising scheme to support him. His needs were always provided for and he went further when his buildings and medical supplies were destroyed by rioters. He refused compensation from the Chinese government so he could demonstrate Christ's 'glorious riches' of hope, peace and forgiveness. Riches that cannot be measured in pounds and dollars, riches that are, simply, priceless.

To our God and Father be Glory for ever and ever. Amen

Questions to discuss.

1. Do the previous blessings identified in Philippians link to provision: the act of mutual giving and receiving?
2. Motives around giving and sharing money are important. Can we think of examples of mixed motives?
3. Have we experienced the joy that comes from supporting a cause, or from giving money to help someone?
4. In this age of instant gratification, how do we teach our children the difference between 'needs' & 'wants'?
5. Have we any stories to share of times when God's people provided for us in a time of trouble or hardship?