

Gospel-Driven Giving, Part 2

Philippians 4:18–20

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Introduction

We return again, this morning, to the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Philippians chapter 4. And we find ourselves in the middle of what has been properly called a "Thank-You Note," written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi, in response to a financial gift that they had sent to him. Epaphroditus, their servant and messenger, has made the 40-days' journey from Eastern Greece to Central Italy, in order to deliver the Philippians' gift to Paul which they hoped would minister to him during his imprisonment in Rome. And he's received that gift from Epaphroditus and has been blessed by it, so, as he prepares to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter in hand, and after addressing a number of his own pastoral concerns to this dear church in the body of the letter, he takes up this subject of communicating his gratitude to the Philippians for their gracious and generous support of him in the midst of his present affliction. And so in verses 10 to 20 of chapter 4, we have Paul's thank-you note for the Philippians' gift.

And we noted last time that Paul has a great concern to attend to as he writes his thank-you note. And that concern is that he would tactfully and courteously express his gratitude and appreciation to the Philippians for their gift, while at the same time not giving the impression that his heart was set on receiving their gift. He wants to honor the Philippians for their well-doing, but he also doesn't want to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ by speaking in such a way that will lead the Philippians to believe that Christ is not sufficient to sustain Paul's joy and contentment in his difficult circumstances. He is walking this tightrope of (a) expressing sincere thanks to the people of God for their partnership with him in the Gospel, and (b) doing so without sinful flattery, or conveying a sense of faithless desperation that would dishonor the glory and sufficiency of Christ.

And you see him trying to maintain this balance all throughout the thank-you note. In verse 10 he starts by telling the Philippians that he rejoiced greatly to receive their gift. But then he immediately qualifies that statement, because he doesn't want people to think that his joy is directly tied to money. He says in verse 11, "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." And he goes on in verses 12 and 13: "I know how to be abased and I know how to abound; I've learned the secret of being hungry and of being filled. I can do *all* things—I am content in all circumstances—in union with Christ who strengthens me."

“Yes, I rejoiced greatly in receiving your gift, dear Philippians. But that’s not because I am not satisfied in Christ. If I have Him, I have everything I need.”

But then in verse 14, he immediately repositions again, striving to stay balanced upon that tightrope. After going on about how his true sufficiency and contentment are in Christ and not in *things*, he’s aware that the Philippians may have gotten the wrong impression. They may have thought, “Well, if Paul was so content without our gift, maybe he didn’t need it! Or worse! Maybe he didn’t appreciate it!” And so he says, “Yes, dear friends, make no mistake that I am content in Christ no matter my circumstances. *Nevertheless*,” verse 14, “let me say explicitly: *you have done well* in giving me this sacrificial gift. In fact,” verses 15 and 16, “I recognize, my dear Philippians, that this most recent financial gift was only the latest instance in a long history of your earnest, sacrificial giving. Over 10 years ago, when you were just recently converted to Christ, you were the only church to partner with me financially, and you supported me more than once immediately after I left! Please don’t misunderstand, dear friends, I do appreciate your gift. It touches my very heart!”

And then, it’s as if he recognizes that even that kind of gratefulness can sound a little over-the-top, and so he shifts his balance on that tightrope once again in verse 17. He doesn’t want the Philippians, or anyone else, to think that he’s being so complimentary because he’s trying to coax more money out of them. And so he says in verse 17: “*Not that* I seek the gift itself. The reason I’m rejoicing and commending you for your giving is because I know that spiritual blessing attends earnest sacrificial giving. And I’m after that profit which increases to your spiritual account.”

It really is lovely to observe the way Paul walks this fine line of tactful courtesy and theological accuracy. His pastoral sensitivity and graciousness is instructive to all of us in how we interact with one another. Some of you in this room are not very concerned about whether the particular words and phrases you use might unintentionally communicate things that are not true about God, the Gospel, or other truths of Scripture. But Paul was careful that the expression of his sincere thanks wouldn’t give the impression that Christ is less satisfying than He is. His example provides a rebuke for that kind of laziness and urges you to bring the truth to bear on even the most mundane facets of your life. And others of you in this room are *fastidious* about dotting every theological “i” and crossing every doctrinal “t.” But your problem is that you can tend to be brash and ungracious as you wield your sound theology. But Paul goes out of his way, and chooses his words and his tone very carefully in order not to cause unnecessary offense. His example provides a rebuke for that lack of graciousness and exhorts *you* to put on the tenderness and meekness of Christ as you conduct yourselves with your brothers and sisters.

And it’s precisely because the implications of the Gospel have touched every area of Paul’s life—because he is so driven and dominated by Christ and His Gospel—even the way he writes

his thank-you notes proves interesting and instructive for us. Two sermons ago, as we studied verses 10 to 13, we found that beneath the surface of his thank-you note, Paul provided us with a theology of Christian contentment. We saw that true Christian contentment (1) patiently trusts in the sovereign providence of God (v. 10); (2) it is independent of the circumstances of life (vv. 11–12); (3) it is satisfied in the surpassing value of Christ (vv. 12–13), and that (4) it is fueled by the strength of our Savior (v. 13).

Then, last week, we found that beneath the *second* portion of this thank-you note, Paul had begun giving us **a theology of Christian giving**. We saw that true, Christ-honoring giving both (1) leads to, and (2) is rooted in genuine biblical fellowship. We saw that (3) giving is *driven* by the Gospel. And we saw that (4) giving is attained by pursuing God’s promised blessings.

Well as we come to the final three verses in Paul’s thank-you note, we discover that he wasn’t done with this theology of Christian giving in verse 17. There are more principles to guide and direct our giving to the work of God that Paul would have us understand from this passage. Let me read our passage this morning. Philippians 4, verses 18 to 20: “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. ¹⁹And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

And as I mentioned, in these verses we have a bit of a “Part Two” to Paul’s **theology of Gospel-driven giving** that he began in verse 14. In verses 18 to 20, we can glean another **three principles** that provide wonderful instruction for us concerning the matter of true, Christ-honoring, Gospel-driven giving.

I. Giving is to be Generous and Sacrificial (v. 18a)

And the **first principle** that we see in this passage is that **giving is to be generous and sacrificial**. And I take that from the first half of verse 18. Paul says, “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent.”

And before we jump right into that principle, you see here again that Paul continues to walk that fine line of courtesy and tact. He’s just qualified his commendation of them for their giving, assuring them that he is not after prying more money out of their hands. But again, lest they doubt Paul’s appreciation for the gift, he adds this comment to assure them that their generosity has truly met real needs in his own life.

And he insists upon this by using three increasingly emphatic verbs, one right after the other. He says, “I have received everything in full and have an abundance.” “Abundance” is the same word Paul used in verse 12 to explain that he has learned the secret “both of having *abundance* and suffering need.” And so whatever need he was suffering in the context of his Roman imprisonment, it had been met by the Philippians’ gift, such that now he has an abundance. The Greek word means, “to overflow,” “to have an excess,” or “to have more than enough” (MacArthur, 307). And then he adds: “I am amply supplied.” *Peplērōmai*, from *plerōō*, which is the word for “to fill up.” Paul says, “Thanks to your gift, I am full to overflowing!” (BDAG). Paul was delightfully overwhelmed by the Philippians’ generosity (cf. MacArthur, 307).

And here I have to remind you that everything we know about the general economic condition of the Philippian church indicates that this couldn’t have been an objectively large sum of money. Remember, in 2 Corinthians 8 verse 2, Paul wrote that the churches of Macedonia gave to the needs of the saints while they were “in a great ordeal of affliction” and in “deep poverty.” And so from any objective standpoint, their offering couldn’t have been much. And yet Paul, in prison, with no savings account, no IRA, with little clothing on his back and even less food in his stomach, can say, “I have more than enough! I am full to overflowing!” Spurgeon comments, “See how little a gift may make a good man glad! ... Some would grumble over a roasted ox, but here is Paul—rejoicing over a dinner of herbs.”

And that is a lesson to us, friends, reminding us of our teaching on contentment. Some of you sitting here this morning could receive a hundred times what Paul received from the Philippians, and you would still be prone to anxiety and complaining and covetousness (cf. Martin). But we need to learn something of the spirit of the Apostle Paul, who, because he had caught a glimpse of what verse 19 calls God’s “riches in glory” put on full display “in Christ Jesus”—and because the *surpassing value* of that glory satisfied the very depths of his soul (cf. Phil 3:8)—he could receive this relatively meager gift from the Philippians, and count himself a rich man (cf. Fee, 455n18). Friends, I ask you, could you do the same? And if you say you could, does your present way of life reflect that now?

But then to the point of application that I mentioned at the beginning of this point: **giving is to be generous and sacrificial**. Paul says, as a result of the Philippians’ gift, “I have all things and abound. I am filled to overflowing.” Now, as I said, from an objective measure, the Philippians’ gift could not have been all that much. But *relative* to their general condition of poverty, this gift was likely a great sacrifice for them. And that is an example to us.

Turn with me this time to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, so you can see this with your own eyes. In that passage, Paul speaks of the generosity of “the churches of Macedonia,” of which the Philippians were a significant representative. And in 2 Corinthians 8, starting in verse 1, he says: “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches

of Macedonia, ²that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints.”

What an absolutely magnificent picture of the kind of self-sacrifice and inconvenient generosity that the Gospel produces in the hearts of God’s people! In a great ordeal of *affliction*, in *deep* poverty, these dear saints *begged* the apostles—they didn’t have to have their arms twisted in fund-raising campaigns!—they *begged* that they might be allowed to give *beyond their ability*, the text says! *This* is what the Gospel produces, friends! That’s why Paul says he wishes to make known to the Corinthians the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia! Because only the grace of God experienced in the Gospel of Christ—the Gospel that opens blind eyes to see the loveliness and the surpassing value of the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ—only the grace of God could loosen the vice-grip of the naturally-selfish human heart from clinging to its own material comforts, and can free people to *beg*, without manipulation or coercion, for the *favor* of the participation of the support of the saints!

You see, **true, Christ-honoring, Gospel-driven giving is to be generous and sacrificial**, because it’s that kind of giving that puts the all-satisfying richness of the glory of God on display!

King David understood this. Turn to 2 Samuel 24—the very end of 2 Samuel. Because David was faithless and prideful in commanding that a census of Israel be taken, God sends the pestilence upon the nation and 70,000 people die. David pleads for mercy and God directs him to build an altar on the threshing floor of a man named Araunah. So David goes to this man and offers to buy his threshing floor from him, and Araunah says, “You’re the king! You can have it! Take the threshing floor, take the oxen for the burnt offering, whatever you need!” Do you remember what David says? Verse 24: “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to Yahweh my God which cost me nothing.”

You say, “Pastor Mike, how much money should I give to the church? Ten percent?” Well, tithing was an Old Testament principle that was binding upon Israel, and the New Testament doesn’t give us a number. But the principle I can give you is that it should cost you something. True Christian giving is to be **generous and sacrificial**. If David, under the limited light of the shadows of the Old Covenant, could resolve that he wouldn’t give to God that which cost him nothing, how can we—with the *full radiance* of the Gospel-light shining in the face of Christ—how can we give to God that which costs us nothing? Where is that Macedonian spirit among us, that *begs* for the favor of participating in giving to the needs of God’s people?! That gives even out of deep poverty! Oh, may the grace of God visit Grace Community Church—and may it visit

GraceLife—in the ways that it has visited the Philippians so that our giving would continue to be **generous and sacrificial**, even amid meager resources!

II. Giving is an Act of Worship (v. 18b)

Secondly, not only is giving to be generous and sacrificial. But a second principle for true, Christian giving is that **giving is an act of spiritual worship**. Look with me again at verse 18: “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 here Paul moves from the language of commerce and accounting to three parallel phrases that describe Christian giving in the language of Old Testament sacrificial worship. And that language originated all the way back in Genesis chapter 8, as Noah worshiped God after he and his family had emerged unharmed through the worldwide flood of God’s judgment. They came out of the ark, and Genesis chapter 8 verse 20 says, “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” And verse 21: “The LORD smelled the *soothing aroma* [there’s our phrase from Philippians 4]; and the LORD said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man....’”

This was the essence of worship under the Old Covenant. God’s people were commanded to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5), to worship and serve Him only (Deut 6:13; cf. Luke 4:8), and to have no other gods before Him (Exod 20:3). And a principal way in which His people demonstrated that He had occupied first place in their hearts was by offering up to Him of the firstfruits of their livestock—by dedicating animals to God that would have otherwise been used for food or for securing profit through labor. As an act of worship—as a lived-out demonstration that they regarded God as more worthy than their own possessions—like David, they gave God that which cost them something.

And because that was the heart attitude of a faithful worshiper who brought a sacrifice to God—the one who recognized God’s worth above all things and thus could part gladly and even eagerly with a portion of what God had given to him—when the odor of the burnt flesh of an ox or a bull or a ram ascended into the heavens, rather than a disgusting stench, the text says it reached the nostrils of God and was to Him a *soothing aroma*—a *fragrant* aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Well Paul uses this very same imagery and applies it to the *giving* of God’s people in the service of the Gospel. He says, “O Philippians, when Epaphroditus arrived in Rome and laid before me the gift that you had sent with him, it was as if my physical needs were an altar, and your gifts were the sacrifice laid upon that altar. And because your gift was rooted in true fellowship,

because it was driven by the Gospel, because it was generous and sacrificial and came from a glad and willing heart—when Epaphroditus set those coins before me to meet my needs, a soothing aroma wafted into heaven. God smelled the sweet-smelling aroma of a spiritual sacrifice, and He smiled. He was pleased.”

And friends this is the way the New Testament speaks of the present ministry of the people of God! Revelation chapter 1 verse 6 says we are a kingdom of priests to God! And the sacrifices that we are to bring before God, are not the carcasses of bulls and goats, but, as Paul says in Romans 12:1, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your *bodies* a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God [there’s one of our phrases in Philippians 4], which is your spiritual service of worship.” 1 Peter 2:5 says that the people of God “are are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” And then Hebrews 13, verses 15 and 16, mention those spiritual sacrifices even more specifically. The writer says, “Through [Christ] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” You see? The sharing of the needs of the saints are *sacrifices*, well-pleasing to God.

Friends, what this teaches us is that true Christian giving is **a sacred act of spiritual worship to God**. Whatever benefit that our gifts bring to our fellow believers, the ultimate recipient of all of our giving to Gospel efforts is none other than God Himself. You see, Paul understood the principle that the Lord Jesus spoke in Matthew chapter 25, where in the last day the King will look to those on His right, and tell them to come and inherit the everlasting kingdom, because, he says, He was hungry and they fed Him, He was thirsty and they gave Him to drink, He was naked and they clothed Him, He was in prison and they visited Him. And then the righteous will say, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or naked or in prison?” And Jesus responds, Matthew 25:40: “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to *Me*.” Paul understood that principle. How could he not? It was he who was confronted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, as he sought to continue in his murderous persecution of the church of God. The Lord struck him down and asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting—” not: My people, but, “why are you persecuting *Me*?” You see, because of the vital spiritual union between Christ and His people—because by the grace of God we are *bound up* and *immersed*, as it were, in the Person of Christ—what we do to even the least of our brethren, whether for good or ill, we do to Christ.

And friends that means that **our giving is an act of spiritual worship to God**. Our giving is catapulted out of the realm of the merely horizontal relationships between our fellow-man up to the realm of our worship of the living God! That’s why, when we’re gathered in the worship center as the body of Christ, the offering is part of our worship service! Because we recognize

that we're not just participating in some person-to-person-level *accounting*, but that we're offering spiritual sacrifices to a holy God!

We are priests, offering sacrifices to the thrice Holy God of heaven! And just as the priests of the Old Testament needed to bring their offering in a right spirit and in purity of heart, so also is our sacrificial worship in giving to be attended with the utmost sobriety and care! We're not to be like the priests in the day of the prophet Malachi, who despise our duty and disdainfully sniff at it (Mal 1:12–13). No, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, God loves a *cheerful* giver. God loves a giver—a worshiper—who from a pure heart *delights* to offer to Him the fruit of their labors! The priests of Malachi's day brought defiled food to the altar—not their best and choicest, but the lame and the sick. But we are to bring our very best—the firstfruits of all our labors—so that giving to the work of God takes first priority in your checkbook and on your budget sheet—that before any other obligations are met, God is to have His share.

And in the sacrificial worship, the priests were not just to prepare the *offering*. They were also to prepare *themselves*. You see the regulations for the priests in Leviticus chapters 8 and 9. They were to wash with water; they were to be girded with the priestly robe and the linen ephod. He was to wear a breastpiece and a turban with a golden plate at the front, and then was anointed with oil on his head. And friends, though the preparation itself will look different, the need for the preparation of the heart of the worshiper is only *increased* in the New Covenant era! The preparation of our weekly offerings and other sacrificial gifts given to further the work of Christ's kingdom should not be done in a casual, flippant matter—writing the check in the car on the way to church! Consider the preparation of your giving as the act of worship that it is! Set aside time on Saturday evening to review your finances, to thank God for His provision for your needs, and to ask for His continued provision. Pray that He would enable you to give sacrificially, and think strategically about how you might be able to bless God's people and contribute to the advance of His kingdom in strategic ways.

And then—with your spouse (if you're married), or just before the Lord if you're by yourself—*pray* over the gift that you will offer up to God as a spiritual sacrifice on the next morning. Acknowledge that all you have comes from Him. Pray that you would offer it from a pure heart, cheerfully and not begrudgingly, but delighted to give the Lord a portion of what He's blessed you with. Pray that God would receive it as an act of worship from a heart made glad by His glorious grace. And though you know that even your best deeds of obedience are laced with enough sin to damn the whole human race, pray that He would receive this offering in the name of Christ, cleansed, as it were, by His own blood, so that it would be acceptable to Him. And then pray that He would bless it as it goes from your hand into His kingdom—that He would multiply its efficacy for the accomplishment of His own will through the hands of those to whom you're entrusting it. And finally, pray that the Lord Jesus Christ would meet you in fellowship as in a very real sense you partner *with* Him in the advancement of His Gospel ministry in the

world. Pray that your giving would be occasion for communion with the living God—that He would increase the spiritual profit that accrues to your account in the currency of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

Oh what a privilege that the Lord our God receives our giving as an **act of spiritual worship unto Him!** May we be faithful to such an awesome responsibility—the *priestly ministry* of offering spiritual sacrifices to God! May we not defile His table—may we not defile *ourselves!*— by taking those resources which God gives us so that we might set them apart for our spiritual service of worship—to pour them out, as it were, upon the altar of the needs of the poor and the servants of Christ— and squander them on worldly luxuries while our brothers suffer need (Calvin, 128).

III. Giving Results in God’s Rich Provision (v. 19)

Well then, we’ve seen, first, that giving is to be generous and sacrificial; second, that giving is an act of spiritual worship to God. The **third principle** for true, Christ-honoring, Gospel-driven giving that we see in this text is, **number three: giving results in God’s rich provision**. Look with me at verse 19: “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

What will be the result of such generous and sacrificial giving that stretches the heart as well as the checking account? What is the result of giving in full knowledge that our giving is an act of spiritual worship to God—a sacrifice which we know must not cost us nothing? Is it poverty? Is it unmet needs for adequate food and clothing? “Pastor, if I give generously and sacrificially as an offering of all the fruit of my labors to God, won’t there be unpaid bills? Won’t there be constant uncertainty and anxiety? Paul says, “*By no means!*” The result of such sacrificial giving—of such Christ-honoring, Gospel-driven giving—is the **rich provision** of the God of the universe. Those who give sacrificially will be the special object of the Father’s care and compassion.

He says, “My God will supply all your needs.” And the word *supply* is the very same Greek word he just used in verse 18 when he said, “I am amply *supplied*.” It’s the word for “to fill up.” And Paul is saying, “Just as my God filled *me* to overflowing through *your* gift, so also, as *you* continue to give in sacrificial ways such that you experience true *need*, so also will my God *fulfill*—He will satisfy to the full—*every* need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

And we learned this principle last week, as we looked at a number of Scriptures that taught this principle: that God will not be out-given. You can look back in our notes for those passages; I want to give you more of them this morning. Proverbs 3, verses 9 and 10: “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.” In Malachi chapter 3 verse 10, God challenges the people of Israel to test Him in the matter. He says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this . . . if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows!” “*Test Me!* You honor *Me* before all else in your giving, and see if I don’t pour out blessing from the infinite storehouses of heaven until it overflows!” Matthew 6:33: In a context in which the disciples were worried about their necessary food and clothing, the Lord Jesus taught them, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” “Let your first and primary concern be the advancement of the kingdom of God, and let that concern be manifested even in the way you handle your money. And the result will be that all these things—food, drink, clothing—all these things will be added unto you as well.”

And then I cannot resist returning to 2 Corinthians chapter 9—such a treasure chest of instruction on the matter of Christian giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6: “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” You see, the farmer who spends every dollar he has on seed for his farm realizes that in his seed bag he has his entire livelihood! And yet if he returns to his farm and starts to feel attached to his seed, and says, “Well I can’t just start throwing this stuff everywhere! This is all I have!” And so he pinches a little bit of seed between two fingers, and sows here, and sows there—what’s going to happen come harvest time? Not very much at all! He’s going to have a small harvest!

But you see: that’s a foolish farmer. That’s a farmer who doesn’t understand the *purpose* of seed. You don’t have seed so you can collect it. You don’t accumulate seed so you can hoard it and store it up. Seed is for sowing! And so the wise farmer returns to his farm and sows bountifully, scattering seed liberally by the fistfuls, and spreading them all over the soil! And when harvest time comes that farmer will have an abundant, bountiful crop!

You see, friends? Seed is for sowing! The very reason God has given you financial resources—to whatever extent He’s given them to you—He’s given them to you for *sowing*, so that you might reap a harvest of righteousness! And lest you think that that kind of liberal generosity will land you in the poor house, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:10: “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; ¹¹you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.” God says, as you scatter seed bountifully, you’ll never lack seed. But notice! It says you’ll never lack seed *for sowing*. “You’ll be enriched in everything”—for what purpose? “For all *liberality!*” It’s a glorious cycle of God’s grace! As you give faithfully and sacrificially, God will continue to provide for all your needs so that you may *continue* to give faithfully and sacrificially. And as you seek first the kingdom, all these things will be added unto you.

A. The Source of this Provision

Well, let's look a bit more closely into this promise of God's rich provision that is the result of Gospel-driven giving. First, notice the source of this provision. Paul says, "My *God* will supply all your need." Paul would have been overjoyed to find himself in a situation one day where he could meet the material needs of the Philippians. But of course, he's in a Roman prison, himself in need of financial support. But Paul says, "My God will do what I myself am in no position to do. God Himself will supply what I could never give, according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus" (cf. Kent, 157; Fee, 449). Spurgeon paraphrased it this way. He said, "Just as God has, through you, filled me up, so shall He, by Christ, fill you up." And so the source of this provision is God himself.

B. The Certainty of this Provision

Second, notice the certainty of the provision. Paul does not just say "*God* will supply all your need," but "*My* God will supply all your need." And the use of that personal pronoun emphasizes the intimate communion and personal relationship that Paul had with his God. God was not merely an abstract idea for Paul. This was not just "God" whom he had known only in theory. "No, this is *my* God who will fulfill every need of yours. This is the God whom I know, and whom I've proven, over and over again in my life. I have staked my whole life on Him and His Word, and *my* God has *never* let me down. I myself have been in dire need, and yet *my* God has *never* failed me; He has *always* provided. And I tell you that the very same God is *your* God! And just as He has never failed me, so you can be certain that He will never fail you. No, He *will* supply every need of yours."

C. The Scope of this Provision

Thirdly, notice the scope of this provision. "And my God will supply—" *some* of your needs? *Most* of your needs? Your spiritual needs only? No, "my God will supply *every* need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Now, there can be no mistake that Paul certainly intended that God would supply every spiritual need of the Philippians. He has spoken to them throughout this letter about their spiritual needs for steadfastness, for unity, for humility, and for joy. And he's just gotten finished telling them in verse 17 that he's after the compounding interest that accrues to their *spiritual* account which comes as a reward for faithful giving. And they can be sure that God will supply all of those spiritual needs.

But the scope of this provision is not limited to the spiritual realm. Notice the way Paul speaks here. He says that God will supply their every *need*. Now, Paul has just used that word *need* in verse 16 to describe his own need that had been met by the Philippians' financial gifts to him in

Thessalonica. And so when he uses the very same word three verses later, we shouldn't conclude that it means any less than the material needs of the people of God who themselves are faithful to give according to God's direction.

You say, "But Mike, I've given faithfully to the Lord's work for decades, and *I* have material needs!" Well friend, do you have *needs*, or do you have *wants*? You see, what we *need* and what we *think* we need are often two different things. Paul doesn't promise that his God will supply every *wish* of ours. The text doesn't say He'll supply every *luxury* of ours. No, it says He'll supply every *need* of ours. And if I can put it bluntly, this text is teaching you that if you don't have it, God doesn't think you need it. There is nothing that the faithful servant of God truly needs that God doesn't provide.

D. The Supply of this Provision

Well, we move quickly to the supply of God's provision. And this is wonderful. Paul says, "My God will supply all your needs *according to His riches in glory*." You see, God doesn't simply give *out of* His riches; God gives *according to* His riches. That is to say, He gives to His faithful ones in a manner appropriate to or commensurate with His own wealth. Commentator William Hendriksen captures this well. He writes, "These [needs] he will fulfill not merely *out of* his riches (as a millionaire might do when he donates a trifling sum to a good cause, subtracting the amount from his vast possessions) but *according to* his riches, so that the gift is actually *in proportion to* God's infinite resources!" (Hendriksen, 209–10).

You see, when you purpose in your heart to give to the church of God ten, fifteen, or twenty percent of your wages, you're giving *in proportion to* your earnings. You're giving *according to* your resources. Well friends, Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains; the world, and all of its fullness." God's resources are infinite. So I ask you: what's ten percent of infinity? Ah, now you see something of the image of the limitless bounty of God's provision that Paul intends you to see in this text, and to be encouraged by!

And friends, God's riches are not in the stock market, or real estate, or gold (cf. Hansen, 327). *God's* riches are in *glory*! God is rich in *glory*! And He will supply all your needs in accordance with the infinite supply of His riches in *glory*! Spurgeon says, "He will do it in such a style as becomes His wealth!" Friends, here is a rock solid promise of certainty and comfort to those who magnify the worth of God by a commitment to sacrificial giving. And you know God is good for it! Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" You see, He's already done the greater; certainly He will do the lesser. Again, Spurgeon says, "What will He deny us who has given up the best jewel that He had, the glorious One that Heaven could not match?" No, He will not

withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly—those who faithfully trust in His promises, and then walk in the way of His commandments.

E. The Sphere of this Provision

Well, we've seen the source, the certainty, the scope, and the supply of God's provision. Let's look, finally, at the sphere of God's provision. Where are the benefits of this blessing bound up? Read verse 19 with me one last time: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory *in Christ Jesus*." And here we are again in this familiar place. The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, verse 7, guards the hearts and minds of those who are *in Christ Jesus*. Paul says he can endure every circumstance with genuine contentment, verse 13, *in Christ Jesus*. And now he says the rich supply of God's gracious provision to fill to the full our every need is only found *in Christ Jesus*.

It is only through living and vital union with Christ that we can have any hope to enjoy these magnificent blessings that God promises, because God has exalted His Son to be preeminent over *all* things. And so there is no gift of God that can be enjoyed by His creation except that it be enjoyed in the Person of His Son. In *Christ* are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2:3. In *Christ* all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily, Colossians 2:9. Our God and Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places *in Christ*, Ephesians 1:3.

And friend, if you sit here this morning *outside* of Christ—if you hear about the grace of God that was at work in the hearts of the Philippians, that freed them from their suicidal preoccupation with themselves and their things, such that they could joyfully and lovingly *beg* for the favor to give *beyond* their ability to the needs of the saints—if you hear all of that and you recognize that you have not experienced the grace that brings that kind of freedom—you recognize that you are still bound in slavery to serving yourself—but you desire that large-heartedness and selflessness that permeated the lives of the Philippians ——— friend, I beg you: don't leave this room set on a moral self-improvement plan. Don't go away thinking that the call of Christianity is simply to modify a few external behaviors so that you can "Become a Better You."

No, the call of Christianity is that you must be born again. The grace of God that produces the kind of giving which results in this rich provision of God's blessing is only available to you *in Christ Jesus*. And Christ Jesus is yours if you will have Him by faith this morning! If you would turn from your sin, and trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ on your behalf for your righteousness before God, you can leave this room this morning *in Christ Jesus*! And you can *feast* on every spiritual blessing that is yours in Him! O forsake your sin, and come to Christ this morning!

Conclusion (v. 20)

And these great truths about God's abundant mercy and rich provision to meet all our needs in Christ Jesus leads Paul to where it must lead all of us: to exuberant praise and worship. Verse 20: "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." The only appropriate response to such magnificent truth as this is to overflow in doxology—to overflow in praising God for His worth, His honor, His power, His splendor, His wisdom, His majesty, and His grace.

The only proper response to *theology* is *doxology*. When the mind truly perceives divine truth—when the mind truly understands biblical doctrine—the heart must, of necessity, ardently yearn that glory be ascribed to God's name. And that forever and ever. For even eternity will not be sufficient to exhaust the worth of God's name.

O may this be the response of every one of you. May the truth of God's Word have so penetrated your minds that your heartfelt cry from the depths of your souls be, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever." And all of God's people said, "Amen!"