



JUNE 20, 2021 | PASTOR PETER YI

“Motivations for Kingdom Generosity” (Philippians 4:14-19)

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

With today's passage Paul's letter to the Philippians is reaching its conclusion. As he draws the letter to its end, he speaks about kingdom generosity or Gospel generosity. If you remember, Paul had a deep intimacy of relationship with the Philippians, perhaps more than he's shared with any other church. Though he expresses his affections to the Christians in all of his letters, it seems that the Philippians have a special place in his mind and heart. In the very beginning of the letter, he tells them how much he's filled with joy because of them, especially because of their partnership with him in the Gospel. He is so touched by their love, that the continual growth of their love becomes the subject of his prayer. So, as he reaches the end of this short letter, he acknowledges and appreciates the generosity that the Philippians have shown him. It's in these final words that Paul teaches us what kingdom generosity looks like.

Kingdom generosity is based on Gospel fellowship. In verse 14 Paul says that “it was good of you to share in my troubles.” Then, in verse 15 he says, “no one shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.” The word for ‘share’ is the word from which we get our word for fellowship. Some of you may have heard the Greek word, “koinonia.” That's the word that's translated fellowship or partnership or sharing. In chapter 1, Paul highlights the ‘Gospel partnership’ that the Philippians shared with him. What was the nature of this partnership? It included things such as suffering together. Paul is suffering in Rome, imprisoned for the faith. The Philippians are suffering in Philippi, as they were being persecuted for their faith. So, Gospel partnership includes a fellowship of suffering for the advancement of the Gospel. Remember when Paul said that God didn't merely call us to believe in Christ, but he's also called us to suffer for Christ. Suffering for the Gospel is the calling of every Christian, so that's one way in which we share together.

However, it's more than that. Or perhaps it's related to suffering, and that's giving or the sharing of resources. Gospel partnerships or kingdom partnerships involve our finances. When we give away our money, that of course means that we no longer have that money, to do what we want with it. That may not be an act of suffering, per se, but it is an act of self-denial. I am denying myself this money so that a brother or sister in need can be supplied. I am denying myself of my personal resources, so that a Gospel partner can be supplied to carry on their ministry. That's why we give to missions. That's why we support our Gospel partners here in the city and abroad. That's why literally millions of dollars, over the years, have been generously distributed by our church to support missionaries and Gospel projects all over the world. One example of this is the Men of Faith missions teams that have over the years have built over 70 homes and at least 3-4 churches. This is an example of our church's kingdom generosity, which is what Paul commends.



So, that's the first thing. Kingdom generosity is based on Gospel fellowship, Gospel partnerships, especially in times of trouble. If you and I want to see the Gospel advance in our communities and among the unreached around the world, it will require our sacrifice and suffering.

Kingdom generosity has nothing to do with how long you've been a Christian, and everything to do with the Gospel's impact in your life. (15). Look with me to verse 15. Paul writes,

Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;

Now, this is truly remarkable. He says, "as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel." Paul is saying, remember when you were baby Christians? He's looking back ten years, when during his second missionary journey he went to the region of Macedonia and into the city of Philippi. That's when the first Christians were converted and the church began, sometime near AD 49-52. Now it's AD 62-63, ten years later, and they're still giving, and it appears that they've given over and over again. Paul reflects back on those early years, and he can't forget how generous the Philippians were, even when they were so young in the faith.

This shows us that kingdom generosity has nothing to do with age or how long you've been a Christian. Children, are there some of you here in this room or watching at home? Just because you are young, doesn't mean you can't be generous and give to God. You can. In fact, as many of us can attest, it's often the new Christian, whose heart is so filled with joy, the joy of his new salvation, that he literally wants to give everything to God; and he wants to tell everyone about God, but then as we get on with the Christian life, we may find that we've cooled down in our passion and zeal. It shouldn't be this way. That's why it's so encouraging to see so many of you, though having been Christians for so many years, are still overflowing with kingdom generosity. Regardless of whether you've been a Christian ten months or ten years, show kingdom generosity.

Kingdom generosity sometimes looks like this. You share your resources even when others are unwilling or unable to share. (15b). Look to verses 15 and 16. Paul says,

when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.

I don't think this is a slight on the other churches. He's not criticizing the churches that didn't support. It have been that they were so poor that they were unable to give. We can't know the reasons. But what Paul is saying to the Philippians is that they gave even when others didn't.

We can have the tendency to look around to see what others are doing or what others have done, before we act for ourselves. We ask, "I wonder what others gave." or "How much do churches tend to give for projects like this?" Now, there's nothing wrong with asking those questions, but I wonder if we would be swayed one way or the other, to give or not to give, based on what others have done. It can go both ways. You can find out that there were some generous donors, so you conclude that you don't need to give. Or you may find out that no other churches contributed to this missions project and so you might conclude, "Oh, there must be something wrong with the project or with the missionary" and so, decide also not to give. Of course, the opposite can occur, too. You find out that others are giving, so you jump on the bandwagon and join in on the giving.



All that to say that you're giving may be based on what others have done, rather than on Gospel convictions and close relationships, like the one that the Philippians shared with Paul. So, let's not look over our shoulders to see what others are doing. Let's not give just because others are giving. And let's not decide not to give because others are not giving. Rather, regardless of what others do, out of great Gospel generosity, let's give...give enough to make your accountant blush.

Let's look at the next point, and this is really interesting. Look with me first to verses 17-18 and then let's try to understand what the principle is.

¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

What is going on here? Paul says on the one hand that he doesn't desire their gifts, their money, their material support; and what he really desires instead is that more be credited to their account. However, in verse 18 he says, I have received full payment. I have more than enough. I am amply supplied. I have received your gifts. So, he says, I don't desire your gifts, but I've received your gifts. He doesn't say, "Take it back! I have sent Epaphroditus back to you with everything he came with." What's the principle that Paul is trying to teach the Philippians and us as well?

Here's it is. **The giver gets more than the receiver.** Paul, first, is trying to dispel any misunderstanding that he's pandering for favors or gifts from his churches. He understands that it's God who supplies all that he needs, and he understands, in fact, he's learned the secret of contentment, that no matter the situation he's in, he can do all things through Him who gives him strength.

So, back to the principal: the giver gets more than the receiver. Paul is instructing the Philippians that what he's interested in, more than receiving help, even while in a very desperate and needy situation, being holed up in a Roman prison; he's much more interested in the benefit that the Philippians will receive. Listen again,

¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

Do you see the principle now? The giver gets more than the receiver. Yes, the receiver receives. He gets the gift of aid and support, but it's the giver who gets more. Paul said something very similar in Acts 20, where he quotes Jesus, saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It's more blessed to give than to receive, why? Because there's a double blessing. The one who receives your gift is blessed, but you, the giver, are also blessed. The one who receives gives praise to God for the gift, and the one who gives ends up praising God for the opportunity to give." There's a greater blessing for the one who gives.

In fact, every time we give, we are actually making a double deposit. One deposit is to the one who receives the gift and one deposit to our account. Isn't that incredible? When Jesus returns, all our good deeds will be laid before us, even the serving of a cup of water, even what may now appear to be the most insignificant thing, but on that day, Jesus will reward us, more than we deserve. You and I will look into our spiritual accounts with great surprise, and we'll say, just like the righteous ones in Jesus' parable said,

(Matthew 25:37) " 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'



(Matthew 25:40) “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

That’s what we’ll say? “Lord, it was just a meal that we cooked and delivered. Lord, it was just \$35 a month to my Compassion sponsor child. Lord, what is all this in my account? I could have done so much more?”

People of God, Kingdom People, Gospel people, give and give generously, for God will surely reward, and your spiritual accounts will be so full and overflowing when Jesus returns.

Kingdom generosity always considers their giving as an offering to God. (18). Look to verse 18. Paul now says,

¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

The gifts that we give are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God. We can see the Old Testament connection in these words. Throughout the Old Testament, God’s people offered burnt sacrifices to God, as an act of worship, devotion, commitment, and repentance. God received these acts as an acceptable odor and as a pleasing sacrifice. Here’s just one of many examples.

(Leviticus 2:9) ‘The priest then shall take up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and shall offer *it* up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire of a soothing **aroma** to the LORD.

Consider the many sacrifices that the people of God brought to the altar. Their primary motive was to honor and worship God. But their secondary motive was also to provide for the needs of the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi depended on the tithes and offerings of the other tribes. So you can already see the parallels for us today. When you and I give, especially when we meet the needs of others, or when we give for the advancement of the Gospel, we mustn’t forget that first and foremost, all of our giving is unto the Lord, it’s to the Lord and for the Lord. When we give, it’s first as a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God and then it’s a gift that helps the one to whom we give.

It’s also notable that Paul uses this Old Testament imagery in just one other place. In Ephesians 5:1-2 Paul writes,

(Ephesians 5:1) Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The entire Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. Practically every element of it. It was John the Baptist who said, upon seeing Jesus, “Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Every sacrifice pointed to Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice. At the same time, the entire priesthood of the Old Testament point to Jesus. The priests acted as the mediators between God and the people. Jesus is one and only mediator between God and us. He’s the great high priest, who doesn’t offer animal sacrifices, but offers himself. No Old Testament priest was ever asked to do that, nor was he able to. Yet in Jesus, we have the great High Priest. Then Jesus, in his own person, is the tabernacle and temple. This is where the entire sacrificial system was carried out. It was the place where God came down to meet humankind; it was the place where the sins committed against God were atoned for and now, Jesus is the true tabernacle, the true temple.



John 1:14 says, “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, that is, tabernacled amongst us.” and in John chapter 2 it says,

(John 2:19) Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

(John 2:20) They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

All that to say that it makes complete sense that Paul would use this Old Testament temple and sacrifice imagery to describe Jesus. It perfectly fits him. But he also uses the same imagery to describe our feeble gifts and offerings. What an honor and privilege, that because of the true sacrifice, that because of Jesus, God would accept our sacrifice. Because of the sweetest aroma, God would accept our aroma. What an honor for us to give generously to God, and what a blessing it is that God will receive that offering. So, when we give, let's always keep that in mind.

Finally, we can display kingdom generosity because we are giving to a God who himself has given us everything. (19). Look to verse 19.

¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Almost every word is pregnant with meaning. Let's run through them quickly.

“My God”. Paul's God is the God of the Philippians and Paul's God is also my God and Paul's God is just as much your God. It's my God who will meet my needs.

He will meet “all your needs”. Does “all your needs” mean literally everything? Maybe, but probably not. Just as we mentioned last week that when Paul said, “I can do all things through him who gives me strength,” the “all things” refers to being content in want and when having plenty. So here too, if we were to read it in context, “all you needs” must mean physical needs. Here's why this promise is so precious. It's because the concern can always be this. If I give away what little I have, then I won't have any left for myself. That's the concern for all of us. But Paul says, do not worry. God will provide for your needs. In fact he may even be implying, that God will provide for your needs so that you may continue to be generous for the kingdom. This reminds me of what God said to his people regarding tithing in the book of Malachi. Listen to what he says,

(Malachi 3:10) Bring the whole **tithe** into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test me in this,**” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

Which of us can say, “The reason I'm poor is because I was generous with God.” Do you know what? In all my years as a pastor, I have never heard a Christian say that, not once.!

Well, what's the next phrase? “According to the riches of his glory.”

Do you believe that God is rich? Do you believe when the psalmist says of God,



- 50:10 for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the **cattle** on a **thousand** hills.
11 I know every bird in the mountains,
and the insects in the fields are mine.

Do you believe all things are from him and to him and through him? Everything belongs to God. Do you believe that? Do you believe it is God alone who guarantees a glorious inheritance that awaits us in heaven, where rust and moths cannot destroy? Our of his abundant storehouse, he supplies all of our needs. Paul is saying that you can never out-give God. He gave us his Son and he will continue to give us more, so be generous with what you have.

Finally, the last phrase, “in Christ Jesus.” The phrase “in Christ Jesus” tells us to whom this wonderful promise applies. Is it to all people? No, it is not. It is only to those who are “in Christ Jesus.” To be “in Christ Jesus” is to be saved by Christ. It is to be in him and for him to be in you. It means that you no longer belong to yourself or to any other, but you belong only to him. To be “in Christ” means you are forever in him, to the very end of your days, and forever more. If you are ‘in Christ’, then God is your God and he will abundantly supply all your needs, so that you can be a generous for the Kingdom of God.

How about you? Are you “in Christ?” Is Christ “in you?” Do you belong to him? Has he called you to himself? Have you given yourself to him? You see, having Kingdom generosity reflects that you are in him and that he is in you. And the reverse is likely true too. If you lack kingdom generosity, or if you don’t have any of it at all, then it’s likely that you are not in Christ, and that Christ is not in you. Instead of generosity, your life might be characterized by selfishness and stinginess. But your heart can be changed, in an instant, like it was for the Philippians, like it was for many of us. A heart driven by greed can be changed to a heart overflowing with kingdom generosity. How? Repent of your sin, the sin of thinking and acting as if all that you have, actually belongs to you and is not a gift from God. Repent of your selfishness and greed. Repent that you have, up to this point, rejected Jesus. Then what? Trust in Him. Trust in Jesus. You see, he died to pay the penalty, the death penalty for your sin. Then three days later he rose again to defeat death and lead you to heaven. Give yourself to him. Let go of your life and give it to him. And he will change you, he truly will.

Let’s pray.