

The endless supply

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[0 : 00] To the epistle of Paul to the Philippians and chapter 4. I'm looking for some time this evening at verse 19 of this chapter and the verses that come immediately before it.

We can read from verse 14. Notwithstanding you have done well that you did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicates with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

But I have all and abound I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an order of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

But my God shall supply all you need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

[1 : 16] Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints salute you chiefly, they that are of Caesar's household.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now this will be our final study in the series of studies that we've been undertaking in Ephistles to the Philippians.

We've had, as a matter of interest, some 55 studies in all. It's something more than perhaps we might have anticipated in the beginning, but the number of them is not really all that important. What is important, as I hope we'll see in concluding, are the essential truths that are communicated to us in this great epistle of the Apostle Paul to us.

And tonight, to round off our studies, we again come to a very practical emphasis that the Lord is bringing before us, as in these final words of Paul to the Philippians, he brings before them again the fact that they have given very liberally in the gift that they sent to him, and in the gifts that he received from them even at other times also.

[2 : 35] And he assures them that that particular sacrifice which they made is not at all unnoticed by God and will not go unrewarded on God's part.

He will supply, he says, your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. In other words, what arises from these verses naturally for us is the subject of Christian liberality, of Christian giving, that which the people of God give in the support of the cause of Christ, of the Christian ministry that they prize and have in their midst.

The church in its ministry, particularly in the ministry of the gospel, though of course this goes beyond the financial giving that includes the diaconal ministry of the church in its widest extent, that which the church gives in its distribution to the poor, all of these things ultimately come into it.

But Paul is particularly thinking of the gift that they sent himself, that which by which they showed their appreciation of his ministry as an apostle, as a preacher of the gospel.

And again he's being very careful as we've seen before. He doesn't want to give the impression that he is at all unappreciative of what they sent to him, and yet he doesn't want to give the impression that he is desirous of more.

[4 : 07] He clearly shows that he didn't initiate the gift himself, not because I needed it, not because I asked for it is what he's saying, not because I desire a gift, but the initiation was from them.

They initiated it, they sent it to him, but he shows that he appreciates it, and that he shows, that he knows, that it was something that they sent in the regard, not just for him, but for the gospel that they greatly learned.

And so tonight there are two things that arise out of this passage for us, and they both have to do with liberality, because first of all, we have to look at the subject of Christian liberality, and then

secondly, in correspondence to that, there is the emphasis on divine liberality, because there's an abundance that God gives, and gives as a response to the giving of these Philippians and of his people in response to this principle.

Well, first of all then, the emphasis is on Christian liberality. And the first thing we have to notice in Christian liberality, the first principle there, is that it is primarily an offering to God.

Notice the emphasis that Paul lays, the language that he's using there in verse 18 especially. I am full, he says, I have all and I abound. Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you.

[5 : 51] And then he describes it this way, an order of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And that is singularly the most important emphasis that you and I can lay upon our givings in the support of the Gospel, because the givings of God's people in support of the Gospel are not primarily givings that have to do with whatever the church building needs, whatever the minister needs, whatever the mission work needs.

all of these things are so important and yet the primary reference, the fundamental reference, the important reference, the constraining reference, is that the giving is directed Godward.

It is in the form of a sacrifice to God. It is in the form of an offering to God. That is why we call it our offering.

That is why we call it our freewill offering, our weekly offering. All that we do in that way, in giving to the support of the Gospel, it is of fundamental importance to it that we regard as primarily and fundamentally and first and foremost as an offering to God.

In other words, the giving of the Christian church in the support of the Gospel is a giving that is itself a response. It is a giving as a response to what God has given to us.

[7 : 34] Because everything we have belongs to Him. Everything we have, He has given to us. Everything that is beneficial and good, whether it is of our finances or our other material resources, God has put it in our hands.

We are stewards of the end of God. God has blessed us with it. God has liberally disclosed His bent these things to us.

And the Apostle is telling us this is the primary reference of our giving. It is a response to the giving of God to us. It is a certain portion from that that we give back to Himself in the support of His cause and His church on earth.

That is why, and very likely, we insist that if as we do here, our collection is taken as we come into the church service, we regard that as the beginning of that service.

Because that itself is something that is important in the service, in the worship of God. The fact that this is, in fact, a God-worth thing, the givings of Christ's people, the givings of His church on earth, that it has primary reference to God, means that certain things follow.

[9 : 01] And the first thing it means is that this in itself is a spiritual thing. You see, we mustn't regard these givings that support the gospel as primarily that what we're doing is a material thing.

That what we're doing is on the level of the worldly, the material. It's not. It's a spiritual transaction. It is a spiritual activity. When you put your money in the plate, in an offering to God, you are engaging in a spiritual exercise.

because that is something that you are directly giving in response to the way God has benefited you and blessed you. There's a lovely story of Principal John MacLeod when he was an old man and still able to go to the means of grace.

He was at one time in the vestibule of St. Columbus in Edinburgh. And as he was much slower at that time in his life, he began to struggle to look for his envelope to put in, his offering to put into the plate.

And the church officer on the beadle, or the beadle apparently, went over to him and suggested to him that he might take his offering and that he might put it in the plate for him.

[10 : 22] And it met with a stern rebuke from the lips of the old principal. Because you see, to him, it was a very important action that he himself placed his offering directly by his own hand in the collection plate where the support of the gospel ministry, the support of the gospel was actually made.

For him, it was a spiritual transaction. for him, it had a primary reference to God. And that is what the apostle is saying. It is an order of a sweet smell.

It is a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God. So that's the first thing that is true about it as an offering of God, an offering to God.

It is something that is in itself a spiritual exercise. The second thing that belongs to it as an offering to God is that it means that in our offerings to God, in our giving to God, to the support of his church, we have to work it out in a way that puts God first.

We don't spend the first part of the week, the great part of the week, in actually spending upon ourselves and then when we've done that, work out how much it left for God.

[11 : 51] That is directly counter to the principle of the word of God itself, to this great principle of the apostle where God comes first. What Paul is saying to the Corinthians for example is, let every man on the first day of the week lay by in store as God has prospered him.

the week begins, says Paul, by asking the question what must I give to God? You remember we read the prophecy of Malachi, something that the Lord through Malachi was accusing the people of Israel then of.

He was saying you are bringing to the altar things, animals which are defiled, animals which are the worst of the flock, animals which are themselves spoiled in some ways.

And you're imagining that you're in keeping the best for yourselves that the left overs will do for God. And God is saying to them, will you go to your governor, to the person that even naturally is over you in things and bring the offerings you're bringing to God's house, to him, will this be sufficient to support your governor, to please your governor, to please your earthly ruler, and the clear implication of what is no or not.

Well that is what God is saying to us both there and here of. But the principle of this as an offering to God means that primarily we say first and foremost, what must I give to God?

[13 : 39] How has God prospered me? What is it that God has given to me? What must I of that now give to him in return? And then we ask what am I going to spend on myself?

What am I then going to live by in the world? And when it comes to proportions, well, there probably isn't any hard and fast rule in that, but many people, and it's we believe a commendable way of looking at it, regard the Old Testament way of tithing as their guideline in this respect.

The New Testament simply says, lay by in store as God has prospered me. But the tithing is certainly a guidance to us.

The tenth part of all that we have that is placed directly, at least in our hand, that comes in, in all that we are, the tenth part should be regarded, we believe, as the very minimum that we bring and lay before God and say, that is what belongs as an offering to God to support His cause.

And sadly there are so many people that attend church services, I'm not saying it's true here, but I know it is true at least elsewhere, but spend much, much more on their daily news page every week than they do in an offering to God to support His gospel.

[15 : 19] This is clearly very much against the emphasis of the scripture itself, and that is what we have to do. Not a matter of the church making appeals of the minister's desires, or anything like that, this is the principle of the word that we're trying to bring out, that we're trying to adhere to, that is all important.

This is what the Lord is saying to us through this epistle of Paul to the Philippians, that it is an offering to God, and that that means it's a spiritual exercise, and that that means that God's portion comes first, then we work out what is left for ourselves, what we apply to other things.

The third thing that that means as an offering to God is, that the spirit in which we offer this offering to God is directly related to the nature of the offering itself.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 9 that we read together, we find the spirit in which we should offer our offering to God, and you remember how Paul describes it there, he says, that God loves a cheerful giver, one that gives his portion to God cheerfully, and that means not grudgingly, not reluctantly, not out of a mere sense of duty or comparison to what somebody else is bringing, we bring our offering to God, not in a way that says, well, I'm giving it, but I wish I didn't have to give so much, no, he says, that is not the spirit in which we must offer it at all, but a cheerful giver, glad that we're able to give it, glad that God has prospered us to this extent, glad that we have such a thing, to give to the Lord, glad that he's filled our heart in such a way that gives to us that we may give to him in return.

There's a story of a famous preacher called Andrew Fuller, who at one time was doing a series of services round about the country in support of missions, and of course there was a collection taken at these services that went specifically to mission work, and he met with this very well-to-do

gentleman who had never actually seen him, but had heard about Andrew Fuller, and this gentleman went up to him and he said, you know, I don't really think I should give anything to the cause for which you are appearing.

[17 : 57] And he said, but I know of one individual that I've heard of, those writings I've read, I would give to someone like him, his name is Andrew Fuller, and Fuller was somewhat taken aback, but he immediately said, I am Andrew Fuller, and the man was even more taken aback, and he began to fumble in his pockets, and he took out a guinea, and with some hesitation, he gave it to Andrew Fuller, and Fuller saw his hesitation, and he said to him, does this come from your heart?

Because if it doesn't, I won't take it. And the man was greatly convicted, and he reached into his pocket, and he took out ten guinea, and he said, please start, this is from my heart, leave him. You see, his first giving was a reluctant giving, a giving that was on a very wrong principle, a giving that simply just threw it into the hands of Fuller because he appreciated or respected him as a man, and Fuller was bold enough, biblical enough to say to him, if it's not from your heart, I won't receive it.

The spirit in which we give is important to God, because God loves the cheerful giver. God loves the giver that gives gladly, the giver that gives not reluctantly, the giver that regards it as an offering to himself. So that's the first thing about this giving that the apostle brings out, it is regarded as an offering to God, that means it's a spiritual thing, a spiritual exercise, that means that we think of God pushed in it, and that means that the spirit in which we give it is the spirit of cheerfulness of gladness.

[20 : 11] The second thing about this matter of giving is that not only is it an offering to God, but it is also what we can call a personal investment.

It's very interesting in verse 17 there that Paul says, not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to you account.

And he's actually using a term that's used in accounting or in bookkeeping. What he is saying is you giving is itself something that is registered by God in the way of his accountancy.

And the way of his accountancy is that you will never be alluded by giving as you should be giving to God. God will see to it that you are abundantly competent.

God will see to it as we'll see in a moment coming to verse 19 that he will supply all you need according to his riches in glory. He is saying I desire fruit that may abound to you account.

[21 : 22] Paul is so glad to receive it because he realizes that God is going to bless these Philippians who have given so liberally to assist Paul in the work of the gospel.

you remember that Peter asked the Lord at one time we find it in Mark chapter 10 verse 28 Peter began to say to him no we have left all and have followed thee and Jesus answered and said verily I say unto you there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life he not just simply say that God's way of accountancy means that in the world to come God will dispense that which will be a blessing in response to our giving to him in the support of his cause no the

Lord is saying more than that he is saying even in this life God will abundantly compensate that which is given in the support of his cause in other words when we give to God our comparison is not with others who are giving in the support of the gospel our comparison is with the rest of what we earn and what we can afford you remember the story that's given us also in Mark's gospel and in Luke of the woman that had the two mites in chapter 12 of Mark's gospel we say we find Jesus sat over against the treasury and he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury many that were rich cast in much and there came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites which make a farthing and he called to him his disciples and he said to them verily

I say unto you that this poor widow had cast more in than all they who cast into the treasures and he explains it by saying for all they did cast in of their abundance but she of her want did cast in all that she had even all her living in other words the widow put in very little compared to what those rich people put in but you see she put in far more proportionally to what she had in total than they put in they put a lot in but they had a massive amount laid out she put a little in but she had nothing left she put everything in she gave of her want she did not give in proportion like those Pharisees were giving as they looked at others giving in to the treasury this was what their mind wasn't look at how much we give this is not the spirit in which we gave to

God not in comparison to anyone else whatever anyone else gives that their business our free will offering is in comparison to how God has prospered us on the first day of the week let everyone lay by him as God has prospered that's the principle that becomes an investment a personal investment for ourselves you will never lose by the right support of God's cause because it is something that is abounding in fruit in the way that God himself keeps accustomed no one has ever been the loser for the support of God's cause no one has ever been the loser for giving God what is his due them that honour me I will honour so it's first of all then a stress for us on this

[25 : 54] Christian liberality and even when it comes to leaving ourselves short though of course we must pay respect to our duties in this world to our family commitments and so on though as we say the giving to God comes first the calculating has God first but it may be like these Philippians that they gave so as to leave themselves somewhat short Paul is now going on to say ah but in response to that there is divine liberality but my God shall supply all you need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus and you notice how he begins with this but my God we know from the New Testament that the Macedonian churches of which Philippi was one were not well to do churches they did not have a great deal financially material so that when they gave they gave in a way that was inevitably

I suppose to leave themselves somewhat short and yet Paul is commending the extent of their giving and he is saying he knows that they have left themselves short that they have given themselves that they have given sacrificially in that sense of it that they have given not just sacrificially as an offering to God that they have given even beyond perhaps what they might have afforded but but my God shall supply all you need you and I have to be prepared even if it is necessary to give in a way that leaves ourselves without certain comforts as we look out past over generations past we find that our ancestors had very little of the material goods and plenty that we enjoy and yet there was no question of their support of the gospel indeed there's a very touching account of a certain woman in the days of the covenanters a woman called

Margaret Scott from Stranlois and it's account it's recorded of that woman that she gave to the covenanting army in support of it that she gave what was really a small fortune she gave seven pieces of silver worth 11 shillings each and she gave one piece of gold seven pieces of silver worth 22 shillings each and one piece of gold worth 11 shillings each and her minister apparently went to her and asked her how could she possibly afford to give so much and that's what she said well she said I was putting this aside as a tocher as she put it now a tocher was a dowry something that you give to your child when they get married to a girl especially I was she said putting this aside as a tocher for my daughter but seeing recently that the Lord pleased to take my daughter to herself I thought it best to give him her tocher for her she could have kept it for herself I thought it best she said to give him my tocher for her tocher for a woman who understood the principle of giving in support of the gospel a woman who appreciated in love for the gospel what it meant to her to have the cause of Christ supported the Lord had taken her daughter to himself he had taken in providence something someone that was so dear to her he had afflicted her so painfully and yet this was her heart in response to him this belongs to him also as she belonged to him who does this money and

I give it to him and you see how Paul is supporting that principle by saying my God my God and what he's really capturing for us surely is this that what he's saying to the Philippians is this God that I'm talking about is the God that I know will do this why does Paul have the confidence that God will do this not just because God has spoken it in his word not just because he has heard about it somewhere else but because this is what Paul has experienced this is what God has been doing for him all along this is how Paul has been spending the last 20 years and more my God my own God my personal God the God that has looked after me the God that has given me so abundantly the [31 : 29] God of whom I can say that however much I spent in his service it was all too short and the God of whom I can say however much I gave to him he abundantly compensated me for it my God the God that I know the God that I commend before I leave the point I must put it to you that it's important for you tonight to be able to say this for yourself he is my God he is the God I possess wonderful thing the infinite God the almighty God the holy God the great majestic God of whom we were singing in our opening praise that the glory of God the majesty of God the greatness of

God and yet his children can say he is my God and the Bible tells us he is not ashamed to be called your God he's not ashamed to be addressed as my God why because he has joined himself in covenant to his people because he has brought his people to himself and made them his adopted

sons and his medicine and his son his son and his father that they are able to save my God is he father to you tonight is your giving to him based constrained by this great fact that God is your God that God is your father that God is the one who has adopted you into his family, that you give us a child of God, that you give us an heir of heaven, that you give in response to the grace, to the amazing grace that found you and your lostness that made you one of his own dignified sons in the righteousness of Christ.

My God. My God shall supply all your need. The need you notice that arose, as we said, through their givings in support of the gospel.

If we squander our needs, we have no guarantee that God will bless us. The prodigal son took these goods and he spent them in prodigality, in living in a wasteful fashion, and his need grew greater and greater, and yet he had no dependence on God and no guarantee that God was going to supply his need until he turned to God, until he took his need to God, until he was able to say, My God, until he reached the Father's bosom.

Ah, but then you see, his need becomes the need that God meets abundantly.

[34 : 43] Of course, he meets us as we turn to him in the abundance of the grace that is in Christ. But from then on, the people of God, as they give to support his cause, they're met again and again and again with this glorious promise, My God shall supply your need.

You've left yourself short. You're wondering where this next is going to come from. This is the promise. But my God shall supply all your need.

You will not be the loser or the support of the gospel for the offering that is offered to God. And you notice how he says that it is according to his riches in glory.

I was so interested in, again at the prayer meeting, to take note of Mr. MacDonald's emphasis as he took us through Ephesians chapter 1 where these very same words occur so frequently as he said, according to.

How does he bless his people? How does he fill their need? How does he come to supply even the need that arises through our giving and support of his gospel?

[36 : 04] Is it according to that need? Is it in a way that meets that need exactly and no more? Is it conditioned simply by the need itself as he looks down upon us in his mercy and his pity?

Oh God, we thank that it is not. It is by something that is far, far more than that something that is altogether glorious in itself.

He meets your need. He supplies your need. He says, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. In other words, when God gives to our need, he doesn't just say, that is what you need and you'll get no more than that.

He gives us according to a much higher principle. He takes from the storehouse of glory the riches that are in Christ.

And he takes from the riches that are in Christ and he looks at the riches that are in Christ and he regards the storehouse of heaven in Christ and he says, that is what is going to guarantee my people that they will have their need abundantly made because I'm going to meet their need according to these riches and not simply according to their need, however great it is.

[37 : 31] This is great. Oh God is not meagerly and meager in his supply. And if there is ever a text in scripture that supports, that brings that out for us in its full abundance, it is this, that he supplies our need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

What an encouragement you have tonight to go to him. What an encouragement to bring your need to him. What an encouragement to go on supporting the gospel in this place and wherever else you support the gospel abroad throughout the world.

What an abundant encouragement and exhortation God is giving to you tonight when you can go to him and say, Lord, wilt thou not supply my need because I know that your supply is from the abundance of thy riches in glory in Christ.

No wonder Paul is confident. No wonder the apostle's heart is so steady as he writes these words to the Philippians.

No wonder he's sure that God will have enough to meet their need because it's a limitless supply. It is his riches in glory.

[38 : 54] And it means that the supply is just as full tonight as it has ever been. However much you take from it, however much he takes from it to give to you to supply your need, whenever you look to that fullness, it is fullness as full as it has ever been before.

We see the tragic situation in Somalia and Ethiopia and other places where warehouses are so soon depleted as they try to supply the need of these desperate hungry people. How soon these great warehouses run out of the supply of grain that goes to these people are then dependent on more to be sent to them and have no certainty that the warehouse will ever be as full again.

Oh God be that that the warehouse of heaven is not like that. You can take from it as much as will meet your need and more.

He will supply according to his riches in Christ Jesus and the supply is ever as full, ever as plenteous, ever as glorious as it has ever been to us before.

[40 : 20] What then is a greater encouragement to continue as over these past years to support the gospel in a way in which we can financially, materially and spiritually and prayerfully and so on because this is God's promise to you.

My God shall supply you according to his riches and glory shall supply all you need according to these riches.

Rabbi Duncan at one time was hearing somebody quoting this particular verse in prayer I think it was if I remember rightly and the person that was quoting the verse then went on to say that God was giving to his people in this world prison faith.

And Duncan said to him afterwards no he says not prison faith garrison faith what's the difference? Well it's a great difference. Prison faith is something that you throw to a person that's in the dungeon that usually isn't even adequate to meet his needs but garrison faith is the faith that recognizes that this person in the garrisoning that is there the sentry duty that is ours in this world God doesn't just meet our need he exceeds it he fills us abundantly he gives us garrison faith not prison faith not meager rations but that which is according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

[42 : 07] what have we learned from Philippians? I hope we have learned many things but above all I hope we have learned this because this is the very heart of all that we've been trying to learn and to speak from from this epistle of the apostle Paul I hope we have learned the greatness of Christ because as we've seen when Paul looks upwards he sees the majestic Christ he looks back into eternity and he sees Christ this one who was equal with God but made himself of no reputation when he looks upwards as he's writing to the Philippians he sees Christ now reigning over all things so that Paul can say from his dungeon from his prison in this prison that he's writing from that I am set here for the defence of the gospel

I am here under the lordship of my lord Jesus Christ and when Paul looks back he sees Christ because when he looks back he looks back to Calvary he looks back to that hill long ago on which this Christ was crucified and he says that he became made himself of no reputation and was obedient unto death even the death of the cross he looks up and he sees Christ he looks back and he sees Christ and when he looks forward what does he see he sees Christ because he describes him as the one who is coming from heaven the saviour you remember we saw who is coming the lord Jesus Christ he sees Christ ahead of him he sees Christ above him he sees Christ behind him and then he looks into his heart also finally and what does he see he sees Christ and what does he find in his heart as he looks in and as he sees Christ he says the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

Jesus my lord he finds such satisfaction in Christ as yearns for more of him that I might know him and the power of his resurrection Christ Christ above him Christ before him Christ behind him Christ around him Christ in him that's the message of Philippians Jesus our joy Jesus our Lord Jesus our saviour and I hope tonight that you and I together as we leave our studies in Philippians can say of this Jesus my lord and my God O Lord our God we confess that these issues of thy word bring us into matters that pertain to thy graves and therefore that our understanding of them and reception of them is so limited so conditioned by our sin that still works within us by the blindness that still pertains in a measure at least to us for we thank thee

O Lord that thou hast accounted for all of these things in thine acceptance of us and that they do not form any part of the reason of our acceptance we bless thee that our acceptance is in him and he this can fice or as a it says of a his death.

A can help him a poison one so