

“MINISTRY, MONEY, AND GOD” **Philippians 4:10-20**

Dr. John Crocker. Crossroads Church, Albert Lea, MN. May 15-16, 2010

I discovered a little slice of wit that fits our theme today: *‘If your outgo is greater than your income then your upkeep will be your downfall.’*

That’s what budgets are for.

Our church has a budget because we have to be sure we have enough income to cover all the ministry expenses.

But a church budget has an added wrinkle—it is also a statement of our faith. We believe God will meet our needs (our budget) if we are faithful in being and doing what God expects of his church.

· The Apostle Paul told the Philippian church that God would meet their needs because they were committed to spreading the good news of forgiveness of sins and new life by faith in Jesus Christ.

19 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Please listen as I read the paragraph in which Paul wrote this:

10 *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.*

11 *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

12 *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

13 *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

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 again and again when I was in need.*

17 *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.*

18 *I have received full payment and even more; 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 his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

20 *To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

· The Apostle Paul wrote this to the church at Philippi, a major city in the province of Macedonia. Paul had founded the church there about 10 years earlier.

But now Paul imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Christ—most likely in Rome.

This church in Philippi heard about Paul’s ordeal, so they sent Epaphroditus to take their gift to him and to assist the needy apostle in any way possible.

Paul was actually placed under house arrest and he was given considerable freedom to preach the gospel and to have an amazing ministry there.

After a while Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter, including thanks for the financial help they had provided.

· Today it’s prudent for us as a church to take a fresh look at this important aspect of Church life—the financial resources that are necessary for our church’s ministries.

Did you know that there are 500 verses in the Bible about prayer; less than 500 about faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions? That's significant. If the budget is what we believe we need as his church, we can have faith that God will enable his people to meet the need.

In Philippians 4:10-20 the apostle Paul identifies two **crucial requirements** if we expect God to meet our budgeted needs as a church.

I. A CONGREGATIONAL COMMITMENT TO GENEROSITY. Philippians 4:10, 14-18

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, encouraging them to be generous in their giving, he summed it all up by saying, *Thanks be go God for his indescribable gift!* (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Our generosity as a church is like a dipstick that measures the level of our gratitude for God's generosity. Let's not be a few quarts low.

Our giving reflects our gratitude to God for his grace.

A Christian farmer felt especially blessed when two of his cows gave birth on the same day. He said to his wife, *One of those calves is for the Lord.* A few days later his wife noticed that he seemed to be troubled, so she asked, *Is anything the matter, Dear.* He answered, *The Lord's calf died.*

When we encourage one another to give generously, we're not urging each other to do God a favor. It's our response to God for his generosity.

The Philippian Christians loved the apostle Paul. He had brought them the good news of forgiveness of sins and new life through faith in Jesus Christ.

They gave freely and generously to support his gospel work.

¹⁰ *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.*

We're accustomed to getting in touch with people immediately, no matter where they are. But the guards had confiscated Paul's cell phone.

Paul feared that the Philippian Christians had lost interest in him and his gospel work. There had been no contact with him.

Then Epaphroditus arrived, and Paul rejoiced they had not forgotten him. They had just not been able to show their care for him earlier.

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 again and again when I was in need.*

¹⁷ *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.*

The Philippian church had a history of generosity. They didn't need anyone to put the squeeze on them to give.

In his letter to the church at Corinth Paul told about the generosity of the Macedonian Christians—including and especially the Philippian Church. He said: *'Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing*

in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.' (2 Corinthians. 8:2-5)

The economy was not robust for the church in Philippi. Paul talks about their poverty. But still they gave generously.

It's difficult to be generous if you don't have enough, and it's almost impossible if you have too much.

For the church at Philippi, giving was an expression of worship. By supporting the work of the gospel, they gave themselves as an offering to God.
¹⁸ *I have received full payment and even more; 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.*

Their offering was literally *an odor of sweet smell* to God.

God didn't reach for a spiritual air freshener to mask a foul stench from the church at Philippi. No, God sniffed and said, *Ah! that smells so good.*

Giving so that others will receive the gospel of God's grace by faith in Christ is worship that is an acceptable offering to God. God delights in it.

· In my opinion, one of the more dangerous distortions of the Christian faith is something called "consumer Christianity." Religious people see Jesus and the church only as a means to meeting their own needs.

How is that a distortion? Authentic Christian faith is grounded in the affirmation that Jesus Christ is Lord. Our obedience to his revealed will that comes from our love is first and foremost, not our wants and wishes.

It is Christ's will that people throughout the world hear and understand the good news of salvation through repentance of sin and faith in him.

· The Philippian Christians wanted people they had never met to hear the gospel and be saved by the God's grace through Christ.

The Philippian Christians were committed to others. They practiced generosity.

· We at Crossroads can have confidence that God will meet our budget needs as a church if he sees that we are committed to giving generously to this church's ministries that are life changing.

II. A PERSONAL LIFESTYLE OF CONTENTMENT. Philippians 4:11-13

German author/philosopher Johann Goethe wrote: *'He who is plenteously provided for from within needs but little from without.'* (Goethe)

The Apostle Paul's contentment came from within. He didn't rely on things and experiences to satisfy him.

¹¹ *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

Contentment does not come naturally.

We're constantly bombarded with stimuli designed to make us discontented. We always "need" a little more than what we have.

It's the little things in life that make it worth the pain: a little yacht, a little raise, a little trip to Spain. (Jean B. Boyce)

You have to learn to be contented.

Paul said, *'I've learned to be content. I don't need much.'*

When I was a young pastor I knew a Christian woman whose husband made a modest living. But she coveted the finer things of life. She cut too wide a peel from too small a

potato. That created financial problems for her family. She became bitter toward God and angry at her husband and resentful of her own children, because she had to work to help pay the bills. She had never learned to be contented. She refused to learn to be contented.

Tragically, that's not unusual today.

People spend money they don't have to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't like.

Paul had learned to be contented.

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

The 73rd Psalm addresses this important issue. Asaph tells of his envy of wicked people who lived luxuriously and didn't struggle with any of life's hardships that beset him. Then he tells how God showed him their ultimate destiny. As a result of that he was able to recalibrate his own attitude. He wrote: *'But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge.'* (Psalm 73:28)

He learned that being in a spiritually intimate relationship with God, with no separation between him and our Holy God is the consummate definition of "good."

Similarly, Paul had found the key to being contented in any situation. What was the key? Knowing that he couldn't be content in his own strength. He relied on God.

· So we have this wonderful assurance:
19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We think we know exactly what we need. We presume to tell God what he should do for us.

God knows best what we need.

God guarantees that our needs will be met when we are faithful and generous with all the resources he has entrusted to us.

God your heavenly Father must have his rightful place in our lives for us to have real contentment.

How would your life be different if you were contented?

Crossroads Church exists to prayerfully introduce people to Jesus our Savior and Lord so that they can have new life and mature to be like him.

All of our income and expenses serve in some way to further this mission.

Will you ask God to meet our needs through your contentment with him, and your generosity?