

## "Pressing on with the Mission" Funding the Mission Philippians 4:10-23

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] We've been talking about the mission Jesus launched for months now. If I were to ask you what the mission is how would you respond? How would you answer? Every single one of you should know the answer to that question. The mission Jesus gave you is this; make disciples who make disciples. That's the mission. That's our mission. That's your mission. That's this church's mission. If you are a follower of Jesus then you are a missionary. Period. How that gets played out is a little bit different for every person but you are a missionary nonetheless.
- Sunday morning? It's not for consuming a religious product, but to be equipped and encouraged to then scatter and live out this mission as the church the other six days of the week. We throw ourselves into making disciples not because we view people as objects to be won, notches on a belt. We take up the mission because we are compelled by the love of Christ. God's incredible and incomparable love for us through Christ, a love for the unlovely, an unmerited, unwarranted love, a love for us when we are at our absolute worst, a love that sought us and pursued us, compels us to seek out and pursue others so that they too might know that love.
- Paul's letter to the Philippians is written for the purpose of keeping churches on the mission. So throughout you see Paul use words and language that speak of an ongoing relationship he has with the Philippian church for the sake of the mission. This comes through most clearly in chapter 1 verse 5. *I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.* This partnership or fellowship in the gospel, between church and missionary, this theme runs throughout the entire letter. And so over the past number of weeks we've read things like *striving side by side for the faith* (1:27), *served with me in the gospel* (2:2), *join with me in following my example* (3:17), *labored side by side with me* (4:3). All of these emphasizing the partnership between Paul and a church for the sake of the mission Jesus launched. And now in concluding section of this letter we get these words. From **Philippians 4:15**, the *partnership of giving and receiving*.

### Transition

The focus of this last section of Paul's letter, **4:10-23**, is this monetary gift the Philippian church sent Paul for the purpose of funding the ongoing mission of making disciples. And so this is how we'll end our time in this letter. [Slide #2]

### Big Idea

- **The mission Jesus launched takes funding**
- Duh. Right? There is an associated cost to the mission. Making disciples who make disciples doesn't just happen without some financial expense. It takes funding. Right up front here are my goals for this morning. My goals are that by the time we finish looking at this passage A) you would desire to financially fund the mission in some way irrespective of your financial condition. B) That our missionaries, those on the frontlines who have given

themselves full-time to the mission, would have their financial needs met so that they can focus on the mission and not the need. And C) that as a church we meet budget because our budget is a reflection of what it takes to fund the mission here in Richland Center. **The mission Jesus launched takes funding.** The mission dies without funding.

- Look at the text. The conclusion of this letter is in some sense Paul's thank you note to the church for their monetary support. In verses 10-20 he acknowledges their fiscal contribution to the mission. Look at the text. **Verse 10.** *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me.* He's talking about their concern that led to their monetary gift. **Verse 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.* And then Paul goes on to say that because of their financial gift, **verse 18,** *I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.* **The mission Jesus launched takes funding.**
- Before you write me off and tune me out because all you are hearing right now is dollar signs and all you see is another slimy pastor guy making an appeal for people's money, hear me out. Jesus mission takes funding, yes. But the issue isn't simply money. The issue is your heart. Whatever has captivated your heart will also captivate your wallet. Whatever has captivated your heart will captivate your wallet, which is why Jesus says things like Luke 12. *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- The issue isn't about money. In a moment when I explain to you three reasons why you should have a significant financial stake in Jesus' mission, the issue really isn't about money. The issue is who or what has your heart—where is your treasure? And if Jesus has captivated your heart, if he is your treasure, then your treasures, your monies are at his disposal, offered up to him in service of his mission. And if you aren't presently funding Jesus' work then maybe that says more about where you are at spiritually; maybe the spiritual status of your heart is not as healthy as you think.

### Transition

This morning I want to try to answer the question of why fund the mission? Why should you be financially vested in this thing called Jesus' mission? Here's why. Look at the text.

### Organizational Sentence

- **Three reasons why you should have a significant financial stake in Jesus' mission**

### Main Points

#### Transition

Verses 10-13. **Reason number one.** [Slide #3] You need to take the initiative and fund the mission **because it is painfully difficult for those on the frontlines to ask for help.** Listen.

- Look at the text. Paul says, *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.*

- In a perfect world no person on the frontlines of Jesus’ mission, no church, no missionary, no church planter would ever have to ask for a single dollar because God’s people would have willingly, cheerfully already fully funded the mission. Reality, as we well know, is different. Reality is that economies tank. Reality is jobs are lost. Reality is the roof leaks. Reality is college costs money. The thing is, the mission can’t be put on hold while all this stuff gets sorted out. So what do churches do? What do missionaries do? They wait. They pray. They fight discouragement. They hope. And they learn contentment in plenty and in want.
- Look at [verse 10](#). Paul is super pumped about the Philippian church’s renewed interest in his condition. They’ve always cared for Paul. But now, like a plant or a flower that blooms again, their interest has blossomed to the point of giving a gift.<sup>1</sup> *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.* Their renewed interest has led them as a church to give a monetary gift sent through Epaphroditus the church’s messenger. And Paul, on the frontlines of the mission, in prison because of the gospel, *in chains for Christ*, [Philippians 1:13](#), this man is in great need. He rejoices in his suffering. He is being poured out like a drink offering. And he needs help. But Paul hardly ever comes right out and asks for that help. In fact, just the opposite. Paul frequently mentions in his letters he felt an apostolic responsibility to not be a burden. He’s always downplaying his need. And he does it here. [Verse 11](#). *I am not saying this because I am in need.* Later in [verse 17](#) he says *he’s not looking for a gift*. He doesn’t want to ask for money. He doesn’t want to be a burden.
- But that doesn’t mean he doesn’t need help. He does. [2 Corinthians 11](#) alludes to the help Paul needed; the mission takes funding. And when that help finally comes through Paul is stoked. He says *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me*. In other words, what took you so long.
- See, here’s the thing. [Verses 10-13](#) are a window into the heart and soul of a missionary. Those on the frontlines of Jesus mission, foreign missionaries and churches, church planters, they don’t want to ask for your help. Especially if the people they ask are themselves in need. They don’t want to be a burden. They want to be self-sufficient. And they expect, and sometimes wrongly assume, that you care as much about Jesus’ mission as they do; because we are all missionaries. And so the needs often go unsaid. And moreover, those on the frontlines want to model contentment. Like Paul says, [verse 11](#). *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.*
- Listen to me. Contentment in all circumstances doesn’t negate need. The fact that Paul has learned the secret of being content in every circumstance, Jesus, the one who gives him strength, that contentment in Jesus doesn’t negate need. The mission takes funding. The fact that you never hear us as a church ever talk about money doesn’t mean there isn’t a need.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, p. 177.

There's a huge need. Talk to any missionary. Talk to Randy and Kaye. Ask them how truly difficult and awkward it is to travel from church to church and from kitchen to kitchen asking people to fund Jesus' mission in Poland. It is painfully difficult. I know this may be hard to understand but I have known people who have ignored God's calling or quit because of the pain of support raising. And that is not right. We, as God's people, have to take the initiative. We have to ask about needs. We have to go out of our way to probe and prod a bit because if one of the unstated goals is modeling contentment in all things, and it usually is by those on the frontlines, then often times you will never hear about what's really needed.

- Let me say a word about contentment. Zero in on [verses 12-13](#). Paul says here that the secret of contentment in life is Jesus. Paul says he is able to live in either want or in plenty through the power of Christ.<sup>2</sup> I have heard this verse misused and abused almost as much as any other in the Bible. At a popular level [verse 13](#) has come to mean that empowered by Christ nothing is beyond our capabilities. These are exaggerations. I can jump off a skyscraper without a parachute through him who gives me strength. I can guzzle motor oil through him who gives me strength. No. Context.
- What Paul means is that in Christ Paul found the power that enabled him to be content in a remarkably varied set of circumstances, *whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want*. The 'everything' in context is contented living in the midst of having, not having, food or hunger, plenty or want. "Many people know what it is to have these experiences (plenty, want) without knowing how to cope with them."<sup>3</sup> Paul says whatever his circumstances he can cope, with contentment, because of Christ, who gives him strength.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Paul's self-sufficiency, despite his circumstances, was entirely due to the sufficiency of another.<sup>5</sup> Paul is content because Jesus is sufficient.
- Seeing, watching another person totally content, totally satisfied is a beautiful thing to behold, isn't it? Often times, those who are the most content are also the most generous. As the philosopher [Kierkegaard](#) said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive, but then it is also more blessed to be able to do without than to have to have."<sup>6</sup>
- One of the other reasons there are budget shortfalls and church planters and missionaries are too frequently underfunded is because God's people forget that contentment doesn't come from the right set of circumstances but an all-sufficient savior. If Jesus isn't your all-in-all it means at some level you are discontent. And discontentment really makes it hard to focus on Jesus' mission. Funding the mission is the least of your concern when your focus is trying to alleviate the cause of the discontent. As one wise old saint put it, "The person with the discontented heart has the attitude that everything he does for God is too much, and everything God does for him is too little."<sup>7</sup> And that kills the mission.
- However, if your contentment, despite your circumstances, is found completely and totally in another, in Jesus, then chances are your attention and focus will turn to the things he cares about. So it is much more likely that the mission gets funded. Do you see how this works?

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<sup>2</sup> Fee, p. 435.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> O'Brien, p. 527.

<sup>6</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, quoted in "Reflections," *Christianity Today* (6-12-00).

<sup>7</sup> Don Kistler, *Tabletalk* (9-18-01), p.15; submitted by Aaron Goerner, New Hartford, New York.

- The mission takes funding. There's no two ways about it. This aspect of money and the mission is not a necessary evil. Money is not evil. It's the misuse of it that's evil. And finding our contentment in Jesus so that we can be freed up to fund Jesus' mission is about the absolute best thing you can do with your money. May our contentment in Christ alone fund his mission to the joy of single person on the frontlines.

## Transition

Look at verses 14-17. Reason number two why you should have a significant financial stake in Jesus' mission. [Slide #4] Set your heart on the **spiritual dividends gained by funding the mission—not the financial cost**. Listen. Verses 14-17.

- *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.*
- Paul is happy about the support he received from the Philippian church. However, funding the mission is a two way street. The church gave. And they also received something. *Not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving.* In other words, funding the mission is not just about money and funding the mission. You get something in return.
- Verse 17 hints at what that might be. Look at the text. Paul says, *not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.* What Paul is really after is not the gift; he's learned contentment in all things, whether he's fully funded or not. What Paul is really concerned about is that the Philippian church gains the spiritual dividend that comes through giving, through funding the mission. As he puts it, *I am looking for what may be credited to your account*, the fruit that increases to their account.
- That word, *to your account*, is a commercial metaphor. It's a business word. Through their gift the Philippians had opened an account with Paul.<sup>8</sup> What they gain from their partnership with Paul for the sake of the gospel was compound interest credited to their account. Their gift yielded for them an ongoing, permanent gain in the spiritual realm.
- Listen. I could throw all kinds of statistics at you as why you should fund the mission. For instance, as a proportion of their budgets evangelical protestant churches spend twice as much on buildings and operations compared to mission and benevolence.<sup>9</sup> Twice as much. On average, only 14% goes toward mission and benevolence.<sup>10</sup> That is shameful. Statistically I could show you how congregations who are financially weak spend less on the mission. It's always the first thing that gets cut; which in my mind is counterintuitive.<sup>11</sup> Maybe that's the reason those congregations are financially weak. You sow sparingly you'll reap sparingly.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Reinecker, p. 563.

<sup>9</sup> David Roozen, *American Congregations 2008*, Hartford Institute for Religion, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> David Roozen, *American Congregations 2008*, Hartford Institute for Religion, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> David Roozen, *American Congregations 2008*, Hartford Institute for Religion, 2009, p. 28-29.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:6

- But the biggest reason for funding the mission is through what is gained. When you fund Jesus' mission more people come to know Jesus and move from death to life. And you can't put a price on the spiritual dividend that comes by partnering in that kind of gospel centered work.

### Transition

Three goals for this morning. A) you would desire to financially fund the mission in some way irrespective of your financial condition. B) That those on the frontlines, those who have given themselves full-time to the mission, would have their financial needs met. And C) that as a church we would meet budget. Three goals and three reasons why every single one of us should have a significant financial stake in Jesus' mission. The **third and final reason**. Verses 18-23.

[Slide #5] **God will meet your needs as you fund the mission.**

- It's been said by many, who know from experience, that you can't out give God. Try it. I dare you. The reason we can be sacrificial is because God will meet our needs as quickly and as fast as we fund his mission.
- Paul says in **verse 18**, look at the text, *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.*
- The principle in **verse 19** is the same principle that Paul mentions in **2 Corinthians 9**. Remember Paul's words there? *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*
- The principle is this. Those who are generous toward God find that he is generous toward them. The reason you can commit to funding Jesus' mission is because God's own resources are more than adequate to meet your needs. *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* Your willingness to give sacrificially, to fund Jesus' mission won't put you, the giver, at a disadvantage. God will see to it that your needs won't go uncared for or unrewarded.<sup>13</sup> You've got to trust him on this.
- There is so much work to be done. Churches need to be planted, both here and abroad. Missionaries need to be sent, both here and abroad. Bibles to be translated. Flights need to be booked. Needs to be met. Service to be rendered. All that requires funding. The mission dies without funding. So excel in the grace of giving because *my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* There are missionaries who are desperately underfunded and deeply discouraged because of it. Church budgets are in the red. People are in poverty. Did you know that in 2002, 34.6 million Americans were living in poverty?<sup>14</sup> Making disciples who make disciples doesn't just happen without some

<sup>13</sup> Marshall, p. 122.

<sup>14</sup> Associated Press, New York Times (11-2-03)

financial expense. So excel in the grace of giving because *my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

### **Conclusion**

- Press on with and fund the mission because *my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Whatever has captivated your heart will captivate your wallet. May our hearts be so entranced with the *glorious riches* we have *in Christ Jesus* that our earthly treasures, our monies, are at his disposal, offered up to him in service of his mission.
- *To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*