

Gospel Centered Sharing  
Philippians 4:10-23

Introduction

1. Today we come to our last passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians
2. Every week we have seen a new areas of our lives that is impacted by the Gospel: our friendships, our circumstances, our purpose, our service or ministry, our righteousness, and even how keeping the Gospel at the center of our lives can help us stand firm.
3. Today we're going to talk about sharing from a Gospel centered perspective
4. Notice I said sharing and not giving—there's a difference
5. It's a shame that so much of the teaching on giving in the church today revolves around one of two things:
  - a) Compulsory giving (i.e. the "tithe")
  - b) Giving in order to receive a blessing (or more in return)
6. Instead, what we should be teaching is the concept of Biblical sharing—"giving and receiving" as Paul refers to it a little later in our passage (v. 15)
7. So, you can take your hand off your wallet or purse because I'm not going to tell you how much you should "tithe" or whether you should be basing your giving off gross or net <grin>
8. Instead, we are going to talk about something much more biblical--sharing

A. Gospel centered sharing is motivated by a longing to meet needs (4:10)

1. Paul begins by revealing his joy over something the Philippians had done for him (10): **"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly,"**
  - a. The word "greatly" represents something to the highest degree, like the highest range in a scale
  - b. Louw-Nida suggest rendering it here as **"I am intensely joyous"**
2. So what did they do that brought so much joy to Paul? (10b): **"that now at last you have revived your concern for me..."**
  - a. Paul actually uses a botanical term here, **"to bloom again"**
  - b. So he is saying that their concern for him (lit. thinking of him) had blossomed again
  - c. We know from v. 18 that their concern led them to send Paul multiple gifts to meet his needs while in prison ("**everything**" is plural)
  - d. The language of this verse indicates that they had been concerned about Paul for some time (probably since he was arrested) but simply lacked opportunity to help him (10c): **"indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity"**
3. The first thing we learn from this is that Gospel centered sharing is motivated not from compulsion or legalism, but a genuine desire or longing to share what God has given us as a means to blessing others and meeting needs:
9. This is actually a Biblical principle: look at Ephesians 4:28
10. So, why do we work? So that we might have something to share with those in need

11. Look at what John writes in 1 John 3:17: **“But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”**
12. James refers to that kind of behavior as an example of worthless faith
13. Do you see a pattern here? Our faith—the result of the Gospel—should motivate us to share what we have with others, especially believers

B. Gospel centered sharing is void of entitlement (4:11-14)

Man at gas station—suspected he might be a fraud, but gave him \$20 anyway. He called me a few weeks later to “thank me” but it was clear he was trying to flatter me into giving to him again

1. There are many like this man, inside and outside the church, who live their lives with an attitude or sense of entitlement
  - a. This means that they think they have a right to things they haven't earned, or don't deserve, and they take advantage of the goodness of others
  - b. You're probably all heard the term Millennials, especially during this election season—this refers to those born between 1980 and 2000 (so basically 15 to 35 year olds) and they are now the largest living generation in the US
  - c. Did you know that they are also called the Entitlement Generation, or the Me, Me, Me Generation? (they were raised by Baby Boomers who were called the Me Generation)
  - d. Do you know why Bernie Sanders is so popular among Millennials? Because he's a socialist and believes that government should be one giant entitlement program (free college, free healthcare, free high paying jobs, etc.)—and many Millennial believe they are entitled to such things
  - e. However, there is no place for such thinking among believers
  - f. Paul even warned the Thessalonians about this (2 Thessalonians 3:10-14): **“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.”**
2. So, after Paul shared his joy with the Philippians over receiving their gifts, he was careful to let them know he wasn't flattering them in an effort to pressure them into more giving (11): **“Not that I speak from want;”**—in other words, Paul didn't think he was entitled to their money, or their gifts
3. Rather, Paul had learned to be content no matter what his circumstances (11b-12): **“for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”**
  - a. One of the remarkable things about Paul was that there wasn't an entitlement bone in his body

- b. He gave up wealth and notoriety (he was a Pharisee who were generally wealthy) to serve Christ and live a life that most of us would consider poverty
  - c. Yet, he learned to be content at all times with whatever he had
4. The secret to such contentment? **“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”** (13)
    - a. We often think of this verse when faced with obstacles
    - b. Did you know that the context, however, is that of contentment?
    - c. In other words, Paul could be content in each and every circumstance because Jesus Christ gave him the strength to be content!
  5. So, while Paul would have been content with or without their gifts, he praised them for their Gospel centered sharing (14): **“Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.”**

C. Gospel centered sharing is generous (4:15-16)
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1. We now learn that this wasn't the first time the Philippians had shared with Paul
2. They had done it many times before (15-16): **“You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.”**
  - a. They had been sharing with Paul since he first preached the Gospel in Macedonia (likely when they came to Christ)
  - b. They were the only church to support him after he left Macedonia, even though there were other churches (2 Corinthians 8:1 he refers to “churches of Macedonia” and we know there were churches in at least Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea)
  - c. They even sent Paul gifts **“more than once for my needs”** when he was in Thessalonica
3. We get an even better picture of the Philippians generosity from 2 Corinthians 8:
  - a. According to 2 Corinthians 11:8-9, some of the Philippians traveled to Corinth when Paul was ministering there, and **“fully supplied [his] need”** so that he wouldn't be a burden to the Corinthians
  - b. Look at the way Paul describes this event—READ 2 Corinthians 8:1-5
    - 1) He calls their sharing an act of **“grace”** which means it wasn't earned by Paul, but was their gift to him and the Corinthians
    - 2) He said that their sharing was done **“in a great ordeal of affliction”** and out of **“their abundance of joy”** but also that their **“deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality”**
    - 3) He said that their sharing went **“beyond their ability”** and that it was completely of **“their own accord”**
    - 4) They actually **“begged us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints”**
    - 5) It's this last phrase that makes it clear that the Philippians sharing was Gospel centered
4. I don't know about you, but the Philippians put me to shame!!!

D. Gospel centered sharing gracefully accepts gifts from others (4:17-18c)
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1. You know, many people have trouble accepting gifts, or help from others—me included

Learning to accept help from others during seminary---and then the Disney trip

2. Did you know, however, that when you refuse to accept help, or gifts, when they are offered can actually rob the giver?
3. Look at what Paul wrote in v. 17-18: **“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 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. Notice that Paul received their gift not because he wanted or needed it
  - b. In fact, he accepted it even though it provided him with MORE than he needed—he used words like **“abundance”** and **“amply supplied”**
  - c. He accepted the gift because he was interested in the benefit to them: **“the profit which increases to your account.”**
    - 1) Lit. he wrote, **“the fruit which super-abounds to your account”**
    - 2) He wasn’t addressing heavenly rewards, but rather what he prayed for in 1:9-11
    - 3) Their sharing was the evidence of the fruit of righteousness Paul prayed for and he didn’t want to rob them of that opportunity by denying their gift
  - d. So, if we are to have a Gospel centered view of sharing, we need to learn not just to share but to receive and not rob others of the fruit they are called to produce

E. Gospel centered sharing is an act of worship (4:18d-20)

1. A fifth principle regarding Gospel centered sharing is that it is an act of worship
2. Look at the last phrase in verse 18: **“a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”**
3. God is obviously pleased when we share with one another:
  - a. Paul uses the symbolism of the Old Testament burnt offering to give us an understanding of how God views it when we use our resources to bless and help our brothers and sisters
  - b. When he was encouraging the Corinthians to help support the Christians in Jerusalem, he wrote that they should give **“not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”** (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
  - c. Jesus told his disciples that when (not if) they give to the needy, they were not to announce it, but do it quietly and in secret because the Father would see it and reward them for it (Matthew 6:1-4)
  - d. Jesus didn’t specify what that reward would be, but Paul gives us an idea in v. 19: **“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”**
  - e. In spite of what Rod Parsley preaches, God does not promise to make us rich when we plant our seed faith gift, but He does promise to meet all of our needs when we worship Him through sharing what He has given us

Conclusion