

PUTTING MONEY IN THE OFFERING PLATE IS A WAY TO HELP SPREAD THE GOSPEL

It is good to be reminded from time to time that God has a **goal** for your life if you are a **believer**. **What** is that goal? What is that over-arching objective that God is aiming for in your life?

In a word...**growth!** God wants you and I as His children—**if we indeed** are His children; to **improve**—not stay the same! He wants us to **change** from what we are now to something different!

I Peter 2:2 “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may **grow** thereby:”

In what way does God want us to change and grow and improve?

Not in height...or width...or health...or wealth. And not necessarily in happiness!

God wants us to grow in our closeness...and experience...and familiarity with Him!

II Peter 3:18 “But grow **in grace**, and in **the knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ....”

--To grow **in grace** means to mature—to “grow up” as a believer.

--To grow **in the knowledge** of Christ means more than just learning facts about Him **in our head**.

It means to **grow in our relationship** with Him.

How does that happen? The same way it happens in relationships **with people!**

You spend time with them...and share your heart with them...and **experience life** with them.

Does God want to have that kind of closeness; that kind of familiarity with us? Yes; He does!

But whereas some human relationships are “toxic”—and one person’s “goal” in the relationship may be selfish—God’s goal is **perfect** because He is perfect!

God’s goal is to make us more **Christ-like**; it is to make us more **holy**. God’s goal is to “conform us to the image of His Son” we are told in Romans 8:29.

So God uses His Word when **you read it**—and He uses His Word when **it is preached**—to point out areas in our life where we need **to change**. My hope and prayer is that you come to church with a humble desire to hear what God says to **your heart**—and that you choose **to do** what He speaks to your heart about!

In **what** areas of your life? In **all areas**—including how we spend money! And so we have been talking about “God, Giving, and Gifts.” Lately, we’ve been looking at **reasons** we should give money to church. So far, we’ve looked at 5:

1. Because it is a way to give to God
2. Because it is a way to worship God
3. Because it is a way to maintain our meeting place; our church building
4. Because it is a way to take care of God’s servants
5. Because it is a way of helping the needy and widows

This morning, we are going to look **at one** more reason:

“Because putting money in the offering plate is a way to help spread the gospel!”

1. The meaning of the gospel

What is the **gospel**? The Greek word that **gospel** comes from literally means “good news” or “good tidings.” What is the **good news** that we are supposed to spread?

I realize it’s August—not December—but remember what the angel said to Joseph regarding the baby Mary would have? **Mt 1:21** “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall **save** His people **from their sins**.”

The angel gave the shepherds a similar message, didn’t he?

Luke 2:10-11 “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy**, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord.”

In I Cor 15, we have a **definition** of the gospel. Let's turn there. I Cor 15:1, 3-4 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you **the gospel** which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand...³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died for our sins** according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that He **was buried**, and that He **rose again** the third day according to the scriptures."

The gospel, then, is the good news that Jesus Christ left heaven and came to earth for the purpose of taking the penalty for our sin upon Himself and dying in our place as our sinless substitute so that we can be forgiven and become a child of God!

And this good news is not just to be **received by us** as individuals—it is also to be **spread by us** to others! I'm calling that... **2. The mandate to spread the gospel**

Are God's people supposed to spread the good news that Jesus came to save sinners? Yes; they are! **How** do we know that is what we are supposed to do? Because **Jesus Himself** gave us that responsibility!

It is called "the Great Commission"—and the "marching orders" of the church!

Mt 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Mark 16:15 "And He [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into **all the world**, and preach the gospel to **every creature**."

Luke 24:47 "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name **among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem."

Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and **unto the uttermost part of the earth**."

You probably noticed in these verses I just gave you that the gospel is to be preached **everywhere**—to **everyone**—in the **whole world**. But as individuals, **no one person** can travel the whole world and preach to **every** person in **every** place. So God calls **certain** people to labor in **certain** places to share the good news **with the people** in that place! Jesus referred to them as "labourers in His harvest."

And just as **pastors** should be supported **by the people** they serve spiritual "food" to, the same is true for **missionaries**! The challenge for missionaries, though, is that it often takes years—or even decades—for the church to grow to the size where they can financially meet the needs of the missionary.

That, of course, is where **churches come in!** The church can—and should—financially support missionaries. And when we do that, we are helping fulfill the mandate of "preaching the gospel to every creature." That makes sense logically, but does God in His Word **specifically tell us to** financially support missionaries?

Paul was **both** a pastor and a missionary, so some of the verses we looked at last week certainly apply. Here again is **I Cor 9:13-14** "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? ¹⁴ Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which **preach the gospel should live of the gospel**."

In addition to these clear-cut instructions, I found it quite interesting to notice how many times Paul refers to being supported by churches. We aren't going to look at all of them, but I do want us to look at a few.

3. Monetary support of missionaries who spread the gospel

A. Paul and Silas sent out and supported by the church of Antioch

We're in I Cor 15, please turn toward the front of your Bibles to Acts 13. Here we have the call of Barnabas and Saul to the mission field. Please follow along as I read vs 1-3. In vs 3, we see the church "sent them away." But in vs 4, we see the Holy Ghost—the Holy Spirit—is the One who sent them out.

Is there a difference in the word "sent"? There is! The Greek word used of them being "sent away" by the church carries the idea of **releasing** them. It was used of a military Commander dismissing his soldiers.

The “sent” **in vs 4** uses a **different** Greek word and means exactly how it is translated—send forth; send away.

The church **releases** them; God the H.S. **sends** them out. So we have here an example of what I referred to earlier—God calling certain people to go to a certain place to share the gospel with people in that place.

Now let’s turn to Acts 14. Notice vs 21 “And when they had **preached the gospel** to that city...”
Preaching the gospel is what they were obviously doing!

Now vs 24-28. Here we see them going back to Antioch—the church that sent them out—to report to them “all that **God had done** with them, and how **He had opened the door** of faith...”

Good reminder, isn’t it? They didn’t brag about what **they had** accomplished; they acknowledged it was **God’s doing**. If God chooses to **use us**—and we see evidence of that—we need to have the mindset Paul and Barnabas displayed here. It is God’s doing—and God deserves the credit and praise—**not us!**

Now Acts 15:1-3. The main thing I want you to see is vs 3 “And being **brought on their way** by the church...” What does that mean? It means the church **provided for their journey**; they financially supported them! Remember that phrase, we will see it again in a little bit.

Now take your Bibles and turn to Romans 15, beginning with verse 20. Here we see Paul’s desire not only to **preach the gospel**—but to go to places where the gospel is unknown!

That’s not all, though. We also see... B. Paul’s desire to be provided for by the Romans
Drop down to vs 23. Amazing statement, isn’t it? There are no more places where Christ is unknown!

Now vs 24. Did you notice the phrase in the middle of the verse “brought on my way thitherward by you”? Sounds a lot like Acts 15:3 – “brought on their way by the church.”

What Paul is saying, then, is this: ‘When I go to Spain, I plan on stopping to see you. And when I do, I hope not only to see you, but to have you pay for my travel expenses to Spain!’ That is what is meant by “brought on my way thitherward by you.”

Paul **received** support from his sending church in Antioch—and also **desired** support from the Roman Christians. We also know of... C. Paul’s desire to be provided for by the Corinthians

Let’s turn now to I Cor 16. We looked at this briefly last week when we talked about the collection Paul was taking up for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Please jump ahead to verses 5-6.

Paul was going to winter with the Corinthians, but afterward they were to “bring me on my journey.” What does that mean? It means some from the church of Corinth would go with him—but it also means he wanted them to provide the things necessary for his journey when he left there!

So there were churches that supported Paul—and there were churches that were encouraged to support Paul. But there is **one church** that kind of stands out as an example to all the rest.

I’m calling that... **4. The model church regarding the support of missionaries**

What church was that? The church in **Philippi!** Let’s turn in our Bibles to chapter 4 of Paul’s letter to the Philippian believers.

In vs 10, we see... A. Paul’s rejoicing in their present care for him
Paul was thankful for the gift he had received from them—we will see that more as we go on in the text—but his rejoicing wasn’t just about **the gift**. He was thankful for **what prompted their gift**—their care **for him** as a person! We see that in the middle of the verse—“your care of me hath flourished again...”

But...it was more than **the gift**—and more than **their care for him**—that caused him to rejoice. He was thankful because their support of him showed they **believed in what he did!**

What did Paul do? **Spread the gospel!**

Flip back to Chapter 1, verse 3. “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” Why?

Vs 5. “For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

What does “fellowship” in the gospel mean? “Fellowship” in the NT is more than just sitting around the table sharing conversation and food! It means contributing help to...and participating in...and sharing in something.

What did the Philippians contribute help to? What did they participate and share in? **The gospel!**

--In 1:12, he wants them to know that the gospel is being spread—even though he is in prison!

--In 1:19, we see they prayed for him

--In 2:25, Paul refers to the fact that the Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to them not only as a messenger—but also to “minister to my wants”—meaning provide for his needs.

Let’s go back to Chapter 4. In vs 3, we see Paul asking that women who “laboured with me in the gospel” might be helped.

--In 4:14, they communicated with him in **his affliction**—referring to his imprisonment. So they didn’t abandon him while he was in person. Instead, they encouraged him because they believed in what he was doing—**spreading the gospel**—and wanted to help him do that!

It should also be noted that Paul was thankful **to the Lord** for what they had done. Paul recognized that if people provided **for him**, it was because God had provided **for them**—and laid it on their hearts to give to him!

B. Paul’s remembering their previous care for him

Look now at vs 15. “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel...” “Beginning of the gospel” does not mean immediately after Jesus’ death and resurrection—and it doesn’t mean when Paul first became a missionary. It is referring to what he said in chapter 1:5—their initial response to the gospel.

As we read on, it is interesting to realize that they were **givers** right away. Shame on me, I guess, for waiting 6 years before preaching on giving!

--Now the middle of the verse: “...no church communicated”—meaning shared with me—in regard to giving and receiving—except you! That’s why I’m calling them the model church!

--Vs 16. Needless to say, Paul had remembered their previous care for him and gifts to him.

After rejoicing in their **present** care for him—and rehearsing their **previous** care for him, he then reminds them of **blessings they will receive** because of their faithfulness in helping him spread the gospel.

C. Paul’s reminders to them of blessings they will receive

1) Fruit would abound to their account. We see that in vs 17. What does that mean? It means that **them** helping **him** spread the gospel was “laying up treasures in heaven”—**for them**. It was fruit to **“your account.”**

2) God was well-pleased with them. We see that in vs 18. Paul was **full to overflowing** because of the gift that they had sent him through Epaphroditus. But because Paul **served God**, their gift to take care of Paul’s needs was also a **gift to God**. It was a sacrifice that was well-pleasing **to God**. Paul wanted them to know that.

3) God would provide for their needs. We see that in vs 19. “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

This is one of those verses that I believe often times gets taken out of context. Why do I say that? Let’s think it through a little bit.

--Is this verse **true**? Yes; it is!

--Is it something that **any true child** of God can claim for themselves? Yes—and no!

This is a **conditional promise**—just like Matthew 6:33—although not quite as obvious as Matthew 6:33.

--What is a conditional promise? It is an **“if/then”** promise. In other words, “if” you do what God says, God will do what He has promised in return. **Mt 6:33** “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

--“All these things shall be added unto you” is the **promise**. We know from Mathew 6 that the “these things” refer to—**as a minimum**—having food to eat...and something to drink...and clothes to wear. I believe it is much more than that, though, and refers to all our financial needs—needs; **not wants**—being met.

--But is this promise a guarantee to **everyone**? No; it is only for those who “seek first God’s kingdom!” Now let’s look again at Phil 4:19. **Who** is this promise to? It was **to the believers** at the church in **Philippi**.

--**Why** was the promise given? Were there any **conditions**—any “if’s”—that it was based on? There is, isn’t there? Not in the verse itself, but in the context—the verses around it.

What were the things the Philippians had done—or **were doing**? Contributing financially to support Paul as he spread the gospel!

So even though these Philippian believers are ***now in heaven***—along with Paul—this promise **does apply to us**—if we financially help take care of missionaries who spread the gospel!

What are the blessings that Paul reminds the Philippians about—and that we can claim—if we are financially helping those that spread the gospel?

- 1) Fruit to our account—meaning treasures in heaven.
- 2) The assurance that we are pleasing God.
- 3) The promise from God that He will supply all our need according to His limitless riches.

How do you financially help those who spread the gospel? One way is by putting money in the offering plate!

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. Remember what Jesus says about sharing the gospel! We need to learn to do that as individuals—and we need to financially support those who do that.

Romans 10:13-15 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how shall they preach, **except they be sent?** as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

2. Second, if you are a believer, have the same goal for your life that God does—growth! Ask God to give you a willingness to grow and change—and then do what He tells you to do!

3. Third—and please take this the right way—my hope is that if you are an unbeliever, some of this sounds strange to you. Why?

--Because if you don't have Christ—if He is not your Savior—this talk of giving money doesn't make sense!

--On the other hand, if you really understand that you were hell-bound—and have been rescued from hell because Jesus died for you—no sacrifice will be too great.