

Text: Philippians 4:14-20

Theme: Regular and Intentional

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.

In this last message on joyful generosity, I want to talk to you about the importance of our giving being REGULAR and INTENTIONAL. The congregation in Philippi was noted for that.

One of the reasons that Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians was to thank them for the gifts they had sent his way to support his mission work. You can't help but compare the Philippians with the congregation at Corinth. The Corinthians were wealthy and the Philippians were poor. The Philippians gave to the needy saints in Jerusalem beyond their ability. They begged for the opportunity and **"their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity"** (2 Corinthians 8:2). The Corinthians said they were going to give to this offering, but they just didn't seem to get it done.

What was the difference? It seems that the Corinthians had good intentions, but the Philippians were more intentional. What I mean is that the Corinthians were eager to do something, but they never sat down and planned how they were going to get it done. Paul even shared a plan with them, which was to set aside part of their income on the first day of every week. Yet they never got into the routine of planning what they would give and then regularly doing it.

Aren't we guilty of that same weakness of our sinful nature as well? Let me give you an example. You know that reading your Bible is important. It is the most important thing you can do every day. Do you have a plan? If you don't have a plan on when and where and what you are going to read each day, there is a good chance you will not succeed. You will only have good intentions. And even if you have a plan, has your plan ever gone by the wayside so that you have gone a whole week without reading your Bible? It's not easy to have a good plan and the discipline to carry it out. Why? Because you are fighting against your sinful nature and because the devil doesn't want you to stay connected to the Word. He will distract you any way he possibly can.

The same is true of your joyful generosity. Do you have a plan on how much of your income you want to give to the Lord? Does your plan include not only how much, but when and how? Will you set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income before you start spending for Christmas? Remember that you are fighting against your sinful nature all the time, and the devil doesn't want you to give to the Lord and his work. The devil doesn't want God's church to have the resources it needs to do the Lord's work. He would rather have us cut corners than expand our gospel ministry. He will always be tempting you to spend more than you can afford and then have nothing when you have an opportunity to give to the Lord.

And has God forgiven your sins today? Yes, he has. We confess in the explanation of the Third Article, **"In this Christian Church he daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers."** Do you believe this? Of course you believe this. You wouldn't be able to sleep at night if you didn't believe that God forgave all your sins in Jesus. God's mercies are new to you every morning! God's forgiveness for you is both intentional and regular, which is why you can trust in him and not be afraid.

When you give like the Philippians gave, you are reflecting God's abundant grace, his faithful grace, his consistent grace, in your life. You in turn become a blessing to God's church. **"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 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; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."** Think of the impact that the Philippians' regular gifts had on Paul's gospel ministry. He never asked for anything from the people to whom he was preaching. He lived meagerly by making tents for a living. These regular gifts that the Philippians sent Paul gave him relief and freed him to spend more of his time preaching the gospel.

Friends, our church is blessed when you support the ministry of this congregation with your regular and intentional gifts. It always amazes me that a congregation of believers our size receives over a million dollars in gifts and revenue every year for gospel ministry. In the 17 years that I have been in this church, I can never remember a day when salaries weren't paid or our Congregation Mission Offering commitment was neglected. Yes, we have had shortfalls and deficits in the General Fund. At times things have looked bleak and we've put in spending freezes and considered some drastic measures. But in response to God's grace and mercy, instead of cutting ministry and gospel workers, you've always responded with joyful generosity and expanded our gospel ministries. I pray that never changes here at Trinity. Paul thanked the Philippians for their regular support of his ministry, and I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you. Your intentional and regular giving is a blessing to this church.

My friends, life here has been good, and what we are waiting for in heaven will be better still! I pray that through your joyful generosity you will be a blessing for your church and that like me you will see God's blessings in your life as well. Amen.