

# Philippians 4:15-19

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/phil/phil-4/philippians-415-19/>

*Paul praises the Philippians for being the most generous church in all his ministry. They have given him financial support from the beginning. Paul never asked them for funding, but they gave to him out of their own desire to share in his ministry work. Paul describes their gift-giving in terms of a pleasing sacrifice to God, which they will be rewarded for when Jesus returns.*

Paul now goes into a bit of history of their support for him. He says *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.* During Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas, who were joined by Timothy, went to Macedonia, or northern Greece (Acts 16). Macedonia was a Roman province and the location of the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. When Paul and his company departed from Macedonia, only the Philippians continued their financial support of Paul. *No church shared with Paul in the matter of financial giving and receiving other than the church at Philippi. It was them alone.*

The Philippians even provided financial support for Paul when he was still ministering in Macedonia, *for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.* During his second missionary journey, Paul and Silas went first to Philippi, then after being mistreated went to *Thessalonica*. While they ministered there, the Philippians sent financial contributions a number of times. It was likely that the Philippian believers were themselves being persecuted. But they apparently understood the mindset ("phroneo") Paul taught among them, and wanted to participate in Paul's support. Perhaps they understood the biblical concept that "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41). It seems this is likely, given that this is the principle Paul will state next.

Paul is grateful for their support, and commends them for participating with him in the ministry, but *Not that I seek the gift itself.* The primary benefit for Paul is to see his beloved children in the faith prosper. Paul's main reason for gladness in receiving the gift is because *I seek for the profit which increases to your account.* The *account* Paul refers to is their heavenly *account* of good deeds. The mindset ("phroneo") that Paul has advocated is rooted in rewards from God, in pleasing Him by our faithfulness in obedience. Paul will be released from prison, have a time of liberty, then be rearrested and killed. He wrote 2 Timothy shortly before his death, and said this about his own *account* in heaven:

*"...for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12b).*

Paul considers that all his works, his deeds done in obedience to Jesus are like deposits into his heavenly account that Paul has "entrusted." And Paul believes that God will "guard" his savings account, so that he can "withdraw" it when he gets to heaven.

When the Philippians support Paul financially, it brings them *profit* that *increases* their *account* in heaven. This seems to be a picture of a successful business. When a business has sales that exceed revenues, it is profit that increases the business's equity account. Similarly, when these Philippians give of their earthly means to support the cause of the gospel, they are adding *profit* to their *account* in heaven. They are making deposits of heavenly treasure.

Regarding the specific gift given by the Philippians, Paul says *but I have received everything in full and have an abundance*. He is saying "I got everything you sent, and you provided even more than I needed." He emphasizes the point by repetition, saying *I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent*. Epaphroditus was the messenger that carried the financial donation from Philippi to Paul in Rome. He then got sick and almost died, and appears to have been sent back to Philippi by Paul with this letter. Paul assures them that this gift was enough to meet his physical needs, through the phrases *have an abundance* and *am amply supplied*.

Paul then calls the financial gift given by his Philippian partners *a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God*. In speaking of a *fragrant aroma*, Paul might have in mind the incense offered first in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. Or perhaps the burnt offering, which is said to be a "soothing aroma" to the Lord (Exodus 29:18,25, 41). Just as a ram offered on the altar creates a soothing aroma as the smell ascends to heaven, this financial gift to Paul ascends to heaven, and pleases God. It is also like a *sacrifice* that is *acceptable*. For the sacrifices to be acceptable, they had to be given in the proper fashion, with the proper attitude. Paul here is saying "You did great, you did this just the right way, with the proper motive."

Now Paul makes a statement that is quite counter-intuitive. He says *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*. Wait, isn't Paul the one with needs, and those needs just got met by the Philippians? Yes, indeed, that is the case in terms of material goods. But as has been amply demonstrated throughout this letter, the mindset ("phroneo") that Paul has, which he recommends the Philippians also adopt, is that spiritual things are of much greater importance. It is the spiritual that lasts. The physical things of this age will fade.

But Paul does not omit physical things. He simply says *my God will supply all your needs*. This is a definitive statement. The application would be that if the Philippians adopt the mindset Paul has recommended, to adopt the attitude Jesus adopted, and rejoice in all things, then whatever comes into their lives they can consider as "This is all I need." With this attitude, the statement *God will supply all your needs* is a certainty.

If we choose to adopt a mindset of fully trusting in God's benevolence, then we can always be confident that whatever we have is all that we need. God provides what is appropriate for the time. However, Paul adds a qualifier. Paul adds the provision that he desires their needs be granted *according to His riches in glory*. God's riches are unlimited, and God will *supply* all that is needed now, and will reward those who trust Him, following His ways, also according to *His riches in glory*. The phrase *in glory* can refer to God in any dimension. This current creation displays His glory (Psalm 19). However, given the context it could be that Paul has in mind the *riches* God has in the *glory* of His presence. Paul might be referring back to the attitude of Jesus,

who left His home in glory in order to come to earth, only to gain even more glory when He returned to God's presence in heaven (Philippians 2:5-11).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>15</sup> 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; <sup>16</sup> for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. <sup>18</sup> But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**