

Fruit to Increase To Your Credit

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into Philippians 4:10-19, focusing on the importance of investing in spiritual things that yield eternal rewards. It emphasizes the concept of bearing fruit through acts of love and support for others, highlighting the significance of unity in church support and the longevity of commitments. The sermon encourages believers to seek opportunities to do good, be filled with fruit, and understand the eternal consequences of their actions, especially in helping those in need.

Scripture: Philippians 4:17, Matthew 10:42, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Luke 14:13, Ephesians 6:8, Proverbs 19:17, Luke 12:33, Luke 19:17, Amos 5:24

Topics: "Eternal Investments", "Unity in Support"

Description

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Transcript

Amen. Okay, before I have you turn to my verse, I'm going to give you an opportunity as I like to do at times to guess where the text is. Christ liked to use illustrations and metaphors.

Paul, obviously, imitating the greatest teacher who ever lived, did the exact same thing. Where does Paul go from using a botanical metaphor, talking about something that was dormant, blooming, to then talking about giving a receipt for an investment that someone made, to then finally talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system? All three right in a row, dealing with the exact same thing. He brings in those three images of something that was dormant being revived, giving a receipt for someone who made an investment, and then the Old Testament sacrificial system.

Anyone have any place come to mind? 1 Corinthians what chapter? Okay, well, I'm thinking of Philippians 4. It does the same thing. So turn to Philippians 4. Philippians 4. Philippians 4, verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived.

That is, you might not see it in the ESV in the English, but that is referring to something that was dormant. He's bringing in this metaphor of a plant. You've revived.

You're concerned for Me. You indeed were concerned for Me, but you didn't have an opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens Me.

Yet, it was kind of you to share in My trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with Me in giving and receiving except you only. Even in Thessalonica, you sent Me help for My needs once and again.

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. And here in verse 18 is the idea of a receipt. He uses the same language they had used back then in commerce.

I have received full payment and more. That's his response to this investment. I am well supplied having received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent.

And here he brings in the sacrificial system. A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Well, those words, I know I taught on those years ago, but a few weeks ago, I had them again in my reading.

And I thought, you know what? I really want to think about verse 17 again. I really want to think about what is Paul saying when he says, I didn't seek the gift, but I sought the fruit that increases to your credit. I just want to think about that again for myself.

Not only do I fully understand what is Paul even saying in the text, but whatever reality he is speaking about right here in verse 17, how true is that that I am gripped with that reality in my own life of what Paul is telling this church, he is seeking them. You see that in verse 17? Not that I seek, but I seek. Paul's talking about seeking something, and he's seeking something when he thinks about a church.

And so the same thing you could say would be true of missionaries who we are giving support to. When they think about us, there's something they're seeking for to be a reality. And that was true of Paul as well right here.

So, it's part of what led me to think about this. Yes, it is the day of a business meeting, so I think there is going to be some application here. Yes, there's definitely connections with what Brother Tim shared from 1 Timothy 6 last Sunday.

Paul dealing with the vital importance of contentment in these verses right here. So all of that, you could say, could definitely go together. But Paul desires a form of spiritual credit that accumulates in their account.

You see that in verse 17? I don't seek the gift, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. So there's fruit and increases to an account. Paul's using that language right there in the verse.

And so, these might not be the two main questions that you ask when you approach this text, but these are the two main things that really struck me as I was thinking about this text. They might not be what you would think, but these are my two questions. I find myself asking, what is the fruit? What is the fruit that

Paul says will add to my credit and attribute to my account? I seek the fruit.

What is the fruit? How do we define the fruit? That's one of the questions. First question. The second question, what and where is this credit and account that Paul refers to? The increases going into what account and why does that matter? So, in short, two main questions I have is what is this currency? The fruit.

And I want more details on the bank account that Paul is talking about right here in this text. And so this is something on Paul's mind that he is seeking and desiring for this church. Clearly, this should be something that we as a church are seeking and desiring for ourselves.

And, especially those among us who are supported by the brethren, especially those like Paul laboring as a missionary, they should be able to look and say something similar to those who are supporting them. Now those might not be the two main questions you ask. You might ask, well, James, if we're saved by faith in Christ, why is there even some talk about some credit to an account? And not just here.

You say, why are there verses in other places that hit on the reality of eternal rewards? And is that ultimately what Paul is even getting at right here? And I assure you, brethren, if you go back to Philippians 3, Paul is not undoing what he says in v. 8 in talking about a righteousness that is not in himself, a righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. The Bible does not undo the reality of being justified by faith when it talks about fruit and credit and rewards and treasure in heaven and money bags that cannot be taken. The Bible doesn't speak.

It doesn't undo that reality. Speaking of money bags that cannot be taken, my dad was over the other day and he had a book on bugs. And it was very interesting.

Amazingly, it was written by an evolutionist. But I thought, you know what? Is there anything in this book that would have anything to do with this passage? I couldn't really find something. You don't want to stretch something too far.

But it was interesting. It talked about a certain type of termite that history records that these termites have gotten inside of rulers' vaults where they had all this money stored away. And literally, they opened the door at some point a month later.

It's not like they'd check it all the time. Everything was eaten and destroyed by these little termites. I mean, that just gave a visualization to me of Christ saying, you know, where moth and rust destroy, right? And so brethren, there are so much destructive powers even in the physical realm that remind us of the reality that Tim talked about last week.

We're not going to take anything with us. Or is it actually Paul saying there is something we're going to take with us because it's not ultimately of this earth? So, now I'm going to make maybe some more comments in the end on what I just mentioned about that third question that people might have. So, years ago when I taught on Philippians 4.17, I didn't just look at v. 17.

I dealt with all the context. But as I look back on what I shared, I think there was something I said that was wrong, and I missed something that Paul is saying right here in v. 17. And I'm not saying you remember what I taught on years ago on this verse, but what I'm about to represent right now, there's a different distinction than what I gave years ago.

So, the first question I want to look at is what is this fruit? Not that I seek the gift, meaning the gift being the financial gift they just gave to Paul in v. 16. It says they helped him once and again. And he says in v. 17, it's not what I'm seeking.

But there is something I am positively seeking. There is something that I desire for you all. And that is fruit that increases to your credit.

Does that sound like something you want? Fruit that increases to your credit? I mean, do you think I don't care about that? Or is that something where you say, you know what, I want to know what Paul's getting at here. And look, I did get this week two of these things in the mail. 0% APR.

I mean, look, I can rip this up but I don't need this. Don't rip up v. 17 out of your Bible. Don't tear out verses that talk about rewards out of the Scriptures and say, you know what, that's just like the junk mail or this is something that the prosperity gospel abuses, therefore, let's just throw the whole thing out.

Don't do that. Don't look at it and say, it's talking about interest and rewards. Is that what he's getting at here? I don't want anything to do with that.

No. You and I better want something to do with what Paul is talking about in v. 17. And Paul wants us to be concerned about this.

Okay, so, question number one that I have is what is this fruit right here? Not that I seek the gift, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Now, years ago, this is the comment I made that I don't think is the main thing Paul is getting at. And bear with me, because I was thinking about this and I felt like, why does this distinction even matter to really make this emphasis? Well, one, it matters because it matters what the text is saying.

Even if you hear me make this distinction and you say, you know what, I really don't know how that specifically applies. I'm going to try to give an application for you. But even if you leave and you say, well, there wasn't really an application, we just want to be faithful with what God's Word says and not infer something from the text that isn't actually there in the text, right? That should be our desire.

So, years ago, I read it in this way. This is how I understood it. Verse 17, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit.

Now, that is Paul actively in the present seeking something for them, right? So what could it sound like he's saying? This was my understanding back then. I understood it to mean they're giving resources to Paul. Paul is then taking those resources and he's trying to invest those as he labors.

And based on the fruit Paul gets, the church now is going to get an interest in that fruit that Paul gets. That's how I understood what Paul was getting at. Because when you read it, it's like, well, Paul says, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

So you guys have given me. You're supporting me. Now I'm going to go seek to bear fruit and then that's going to in return lead to be credit for you all.

That's how I took it. And I'm not saying the Bible is totally void of that reality throughout the Scriptures, but I don't think that's the point of verse 17. Right here.

And I think that because verse 16, we're going to look at this in a moment. So what I'm trying to say is is Paul trying to draw a connection between the giver's interest and the fruit being connected to the missionary's labor? Is that what Paul's trying to say? Is the fruit them actually helping the need and giving to Paul? Is that what was the fruit for them? Or is Paul actually saying the interest to your credit now, it depends upon how I go and use those resources. Is he making that connection in his mind with this church right here at Philippi? So, if you look at the context, we need to understand what he means by this present act of seeking that he's doing.

Not that I seek, but I seek. If you look at verse 16, he just stated in verse 16, and he's done this another time in the same chapter, he's kind of giving qualifications and clarity. When he brings up money, he doesn't want to be misunderstood.

Paul keeps doing that. There's a lot of sensitivity right here. But verse 16, even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again.

See, that's just what Paul said in verse 16. He said, you guys sent me help for my needs once and again in Thessalonica. Verse 17 is piggybacking on what he just stated.

So when he goes into verse 17, he's clarifying in the next verse that by saying, you helped for my needs once and again, I don't want you all to misunderstand me as saying that I seek the gift. Not that I seek the gift. So verse 17, he's clarifying that his mention of sending them help multiple times, he's not bringing that up because he seeks another gift from them.

You see, Paul says this isn't all about getting another gift from them. It's not about the gift. I'm talking about the gifts you gave me because there's something I want to point out to you all that I really want you Philippians to recognize and see.

That's what I think Paul is really getting at here. So verse 17, I think he's explaining what he is seeking for them, not what he is now going to seek for them with the gift they just gave him. Now look back at Philippians 1. We're going to try to understand what the fruit is.

Look at Philippians 1. Verse 11. We find the exact same word for fruit right here. This is in his prayer.

He's been praying this for the church. He's stating them what his prayer has already been. And verse 9, it's my prayer that your love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

And then look at verse 11. What's he wanting from this love abounding? What's he wanting from them approving what is excellent? He says, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. And what's this fruit ultimately for? It's to the glory and praise of God.

So Paul's looking at a church and he desires for them to be filled with fruit. He's already told them that's exactly what he's praying for them to be filled with fruit. Okay, so you go back to chapter 4. Paul is thanking them for the gift they gave, letting them know he's not seeking another gift that's not his motive.

All he's doing in verse 17 is saying, look, I'm not wanting another gift. My thing, what I want, is what I prayed for in chapter 1, verse 11. I want you all to be filled with fruit.

And by you all helping in my needs, look at verse 16, even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Then he's saying, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit, so you get credit by bearing fruit. Well, what is the fruit that Paul most likely is talking about in verse 16? What's the fruit that's on his mind that they were bearing, that they had just produced, that was according to his prayers, that was their love abounding more and more? What was the fruit? What's verse 16 say the fruit is? They helped him in his needs once and again.

They helped Paul financially with his needs. It's not that complicated, right? They were filled with fruit by having love abounding and helping him with his needs. How did some believers help Paul with his needs in 2 Timothy 4? What did they send to Paul? A cloak? Sending Paul a cloak is bearing fruit.

And then Paul says what happens to this fruit? At the end of verse 17, it increases to your credit. You mean I give a cloak to a man in prison and I'm being filled with fruit as I do that, that's ultimately to the glory and praise of God. And Paul looks at that and says there's an increase by helping in this individual's needs.

See, this isn't that complicated. I believe what Paul is getting at right here. There's bringing a cloak as 2 Timothy 4 talks about or any other helping of the saints.

So Paul's saying I don't desire your gifts. What I desire more is you to have credit to your account, and by you giving to me, more is credited to your account. He's stating there is an increase in rewards.

That's what happened when they sent him help at Thessalonica. So I think Paul's giving the believers God's perspective on their partnership in the Gospel. Paul doesn't just stop and say thank you all for the gift that really met a need.

How you helped me once again at Thessalonica. He actually says you want to know something about your gift? You know what God thinks about the gift? It's fruit that increases to your account. There is eternal rewards being given.

There's something that God puts a value on that act of love that was abounding more and more. There's something to the glory and the praise of God that's happening here. And he goes on to describe it that way with this whole sacrificial statement in v. 18.

He says, I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. And then he doesn't go in and talk about well, we'll see how much interest you all get based on how well I steward the money that you've given me.

That's not what Paul says. He then calls their gifts a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. They're helping his needs.

He looks at this and says this is pleasing to God. This is acceptable to the Lord. Paul was well supplied.

It's an interesting statement, right? Am I well supplied? Someone could make a statement. I'm not well supplied. Paul could look at them and say I am well supplied.

Now, why does this distinction matter? And I felt like the last couple of minutes were sloppy, so let me try to restate this one more time. Just to make sure. My past understanding was I connected too much the fruit that the believers bore to be with the results Paul produced.

Because I read, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Sounds like a future seeking that Paul is doing to bring the believers an increase. That's how I understood it.

What I'm just trying to say is I don't think that's Paul's point right here. He's saying the very gift, the helping of his needs, that was the fruit. That was the sacrifice pleasing and acceptable to God.

He's not trying to tie it all up into how faithful he is in those labors. Are there going to be gifts that you have given with a genuine heart? You gave to someone. You even maybe wondered, is the motives right or whatever? Your heart was right before God.

That is pleasing and acceptable to God. Even if that organization or that individual goes and they squander that money and they misuse that money. I don't think Paul is trying to say all this fruit is connected to the quality of the laborer.

Not that the quality doesn't matter. He says in John 2-3, support those among you who are worthy. There's something about wanting to have quality people.

We should desire that. But, I think in the past, I too much drew an inference from the verse. I even brought in that example where in the Old Testament, you've got the men and they go to war.

And then they get back and they don't want the men who stayed with the baggage to share in the load. And David rebukes them and says all are going to share equal. And I think I pulled in that.

I'm not saying there isn't that reality. I just don't think that's Paul's main point right here in this text. God is primarily looking at the pleasing sacrifice you offer more than the person you gave it to and how they steward it.

And I think we can get caught up in that. Even in smaller ways, with homeless people on the street or something and they're asking for something in need, am I going to err on the side of being more liberal? Or am I going to try to discern the legitimacy of their need and ask a thousand questions or something like that? Look, if in your own heart, you want to help them with that need and you want to give to that person, they might go squander it on alcohol and drugs. But I would argue that your heart there in giving that gift, that was pleasing and acceptable to God.

Even if they went and squandered it, it doesn't mean we throw out discernment. No, not at all. We want to be fellow workers for the truth.

We don't want to support shysters or people who are crooked or anything of that reality. But God's looking at you offering and helping others in need. The God who supplies all of your need and as you offer that gift, as you give to that situation, that is bearing fruit.

That is pleasing and acceptable to God. You know what's amazing here? How many churches at this point were supporting Paul in this whole partnership of giving and receiving? Not at this point, but in the past. Look what Paul says right there.

Verse 15, when you Philippians yourselves, and you know you Philippians yourselves, in the beginning of the Gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only. And you say, wow, they were the only ones who really partnered to meet Paul's needs. And you hear that? Giving and receiving.

Giving to Paul and receiving. Many would argue that that is also pointing to this reality of fruit that increases to your credit right there in that verse. No other church partnered with Paul in this way early on.

And then he goes on and he says, even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs how many times? Once and again. You see, that's the thing on his mind right here. And he's just telling them, guys, you gave.

You helped my needs. That is fruit that increases to a credit and an account before God. God looks at it in that way.

There is a comfort for the Christian as they're pouring out of their wallet, as they're pouring out support for individuals, that God has a perspective. I would say regardless of ultimately how that individual manages the gift, again, that doesn't matter, but right there as you gave that before the Lord, the left hand didn't even know what the right hand was doing and your heart was in an act of worship giving unto the Lord in that specific way. The Lord looks at that.

And He says that's fruit. And that's what Paul was saying. I'm praying you'd be filled with fruit.

He basically was praying, I'm praying you all will help the needs of people. Right? Because if the fruit is they helped his needs once and again, and look, that's what he says at the end of Titus, right? Let our people do what? Let our people help those with urgent needs and not be what? Unfruitful. You see, Paul looks at fruit as you helping the needs of others, and he wants you to know that you're helping the needs of others has an eternal consequence.

It's not just something that you help them with a cloak right now while they're freezing in a prison cell. He's saying, brethren, God looks at that in a specific way, and you need to look at that in that way as well. So that should obviously make us want to, if there's a place for us to have revived concerns, what if there's some area of support that we're dormant in? Or an area of being involved in giving and receiving with certain individuals.

And it used to be this blossoming garden. And maybe, it's just like the Philippians, he recognizes, they didn't have opportunity. I mean, there's certain seasons where there's opportunity to support in a certain way, and there's other seasons where there isn't the opportunity.

It wasn't that the Philippians didn't have the desire. They had the desire. They just didn't have the opportunity.

Another thing here, their generosity towards Paul served as a tangible expression of love in the Gospel that was actively at work among them. Every time they gave to Paul, Paul's saying, every time you gave, it served as evidence of a kind of fruitfulness. I was praying for you all.

Think how you're praying that they'd be filled with fruit. And then they meet your needs once and again. And you're thinking, these people are bearing fruit.

They're caring. They're serving. And this fruitfulness is said to be recorded in the divine ledger as interest, a clear sign of their growing spiritual productivity.

And this fruitfulness, as you saw in chapter 1, this filled with fruit, is ultimately to the glory and the praise of God. And how does Paul view this church here? What does he say in chapter 4, v. 1? Therefore, my

beloved brothers whom I love and stand for, my joy and crown. So Paul actually, it's not just that these believers get this, that they're actually having fruit that increases to their credit, but the church itself living out the Gospel, staying faithful to the Lord, Paul looks at that and sees part of his own reward there because he looks at believers as being this crown.

And that's part of the fruit the Apostle's even looking at. And so Paul's looking and he's encouraged because he sees his labor was not in vain among them, unless they had believed in vain. And then Paul's also encouraged because they themselves are occurring interest in and account for themselves.

Paul's primary concern is not reward, but the gift that yes, leads to that, serves as proof their relationship with Christ. It's thriving and it's continuing to progress. So I think if you look at this whole letter, what did he pray earlier? He said that I'm remaining for your progress in the faith.

Paul already set his goal here. His ultimate priority is their well-being. It's not his material needs.

And it's not just focused on their eternal reward. He's wanting to see them make it. And they're meeting his needs as an evidence that his labor wasn't in vain and that these individuals are also having fruit that is giving evidence that they're progressing and God's going to look at that and there is going to be reward.

So where does this v. 17, Philippians 4, not that I seek the gift, I seek the fruit that increases to your credit, that occurs to your account. So where is this fruit going? You can think of when does this account get brought up? When's the bank statement going to be seen? You're kind of investing in something and you don't have access to it. There's certain accounts you and I have access to and we can look at all the numbers right now.

I can go to Frost Bank and I can look at all the numbers. You know who's going to pull this account out? Matthew 24. We get a real good picture there of the judgment.

We get a real good picture of the Lord. He's bringing out the account. And clearly, we don't know all the fruit being born right now because what's the people's response when He says that I was hungry and you fed Me? Yeah, when did we do that reality? They're not even fully aware of it.

You see, their life is just gripped by love for Christ and serving one another. They're not keeping an account because they know the Lord is ultimately keeping an account. And so the Philippians on that day, one of those things that's going to be there is going to be the fact that they helped Paul in his needs once and again.

And not only did they do that, they did that when no other church for whatever reason was willing and led to partner with Him in giving and receiving except them only. And they allowed Him to be well-supplied. That's going to come up right there in Matthew 24.

And there's going to be acknowledgment before the Lord for this reality. This whole word account in v. 17, it's the same as Philemon 1.8. This is talking about a physical account. But Paul said that if He's wronged you at all or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

Right? You've got a physical account. I'll pay that debt. Paul's talking in that way in Philippians 4.17 about the fruit and the service and the love that you and I show that it's not just in a vacuum where we're seeing those results now, but God is looking at that, recording that, aware of that, and ultimately, there's going to be a reward.

Luke 12, what does Jesus say? Give to the needy. Provide for yourselves with money bags that do not grow old. With a treasure in the heavens that does not fail.

Give to the needy. That's exactly what Paul says in v. 16 right here. You sent me help for my needs.

Paul had needs. They helped him. And they're bearing eternal fruit that's getting interest to an account that God sees and God views.

This is an incredible reality of the Christian life. Ephesians 6 says you will receive back from the Lord for any good that anyone does. Proverbs 19 says whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.

Matthew 10.42, whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. So the Bible makes it clear we're not saved by merit of our works. But the Bible also makes it clear that works done in faith out of a motive for God and for His glory are going to be a basis for rewards in the life to come.

And the Bible talks that way all over the place. And kind of like Jim talked about prophecy last week. We can overreact.

We can throw something out because it scares us. And are there ways you can abuse prophecy? Are there ways you can abuse this whole topic of rewards? Absolutely there are ways. Matthew 10.

I already looked at that. 2 Corinthians 5 is another one. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Evil? Receiving due as a Christian for what was done that was evil? Well, Paul in the first letter, he mentions this reality of things burning up, of suffering a loss. I think that's what he's getting at there. There's going to be things that aren't going to last there.

It's not talking about a punishment for the Christian for evil, but things are going to be burned up. And Luke 19. Whatever is symbolic of the cities, if that's what's happening there, he talks about people having authority over five cities and ten cities.

There's a difference for the faithful servant. The Bible speaks in that way. It talks in that way.

And so the belief that there's no distinctions between Christians and heaven, it's essentially stating that a Christian's actions following their conversion have no long-lasting consequence. I think it can produce the same thing as believing in annihilation. That everyone's just going to be annihilated in the end.

God has authority to do as He pleases with His creation. It wouldn't be unjust if He chose to elevate the thief who was crucified with Christ to the same level of honor as the Apostle Paul. But that's not the message that we find in the Scriptures.

We find the Bible again and again brings up what you're going to reap, what you sow, and that God will reward each one in line with their works. Luke 14, when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.

For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. See, the Bible talks about an eternal account of money bags that are not on this earth. Of something that you right now can't open it up on the computer

and see everything that is there.

But Paul and Christ want you to know as much as you did it to the least of these, your heart overflowing because of the sacrifice of Christ and you helped someone in their need once and again, God looks at that and He says, that's precious, and not only is that precious, you're bearing fruit that is increasing to an account. And I'm going to remember that. I'm going to remember that cup of cold water.

I'm going to remember those needs that you met for this believer. And you know what? It's amazing too in the context, right after v. 18, He actually gives you some real ammunition to want to help the needs of others because He says, and my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus. And so if you think, well, I don't feel like I can be liberal and free in how I give to the homeless on the street or give to those in need or something, remember this, God will supply all of your needs and He's got the ultimate riches.

I mean, whatever you give, whatever you give forth, whatever you sacrifice for those who are in need, maybe it's a missionary like Paul and the situation that he was in and no one was supporting him and you send him help once and again, even right after he's left Philippi, God looks at that and says, I'm going to provide your needs in order to be able to help these individuals with their needs. Now let me read a quote. John Piper, he said, I think there really are distinctions of reward in heaven.

They're not poisonous and we're not going to feel envious or resentful. And I realize I'm just touching the surface. A lot more can be said on this.

But Piper, he quotes Jonathan Edwards. Listen to this Edwards quote. Christ tells us that He who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward.

But this could not be true if a person should have no greater reward for doing many good works than if he did a few. It will be no dampening to the happiness of those who have a lower degree of happiness and glory. And he's just saying that based on how Christ says you're going to have authority over five and ten.

Whatever that symbolizes, there is created this degree of rewards. And you think in the reverse. Is there a degree of punishment in hell? Yes.

Him who knew his Master's will and refused to do it, there will be a more severe beating. In hell, there is a degree of severity of punishment. And you reverse that.

In heaven, the Bible talks about a degree. And so Edwards is just hitting on it. As you try to think about this reality of rewards, don't get caught up in this false idea of somehow that corrupting heaven like it could corrupt you here.

He said, it's not going to dampen that there are others more advanced in glory above me. For all will be perfectly happy. Everyone will be perfectly satisfied.

Well, if everyone will be perfectly satisfied, then I guess it doesn't matter what I do in this life. No, no, that's not a right response either. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels for larger than others.

And there shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign throughout the whole society. Those who are not so high in glory as others will not envy those who are higher, but they will have

so great and strong and a pure of love for them that they will rejoice in their superior happiness. Their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves.

So instead of having a damp to their own happiness, it will actually add to it. They will see it to be fitting that they have been the most eminent in works of righteousness, should be most highly exalted in heaven. And they will rejoice in having that done because that is the most fit thing to be done.

And I would say in a similar way when you think about how can it be that the believer in heaven could look upon the damned in hell and not weep when they see their own family members there in the unquenchable fires? Well, because God's perfect holiness and justice is being satisfied as His wrath is being poured out upon those individuals for all of eternity. In the reverse way, no Christian in heaven who looks at one who had more rewards is going to look at that and see it is anything but right and good and perfect and fully from the Lord. There is going to be a perfect harmony in that society.

Those that are most happy will also be most holy. I don't know entirely what he's getting at there. And all will be perfectly holy and perfectly happy.

Yeah, all will be perfectly holy. Thank you. And perfectly happy.

But yet, there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness to the measure of each one's own capacity. And therefore, those that are lowest in glory will have the greatest love to those that are highest in happiness because they will see the most of the image of God and have the greatest love to them. They will rejoice to see them most happy and highest in glory.

And Edwards doesn't have a footnote for all of the verses that back up every one of these statements he's making. But just a little more from the thing. It's quite a thought he's trying to represent whether you agree with every nuance of it or not.

And on the other hand, those that are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, so they will be fullest of love as they will excel in happiness. But they will proportionately excel in divine benevolence and love to others and will have more love to God and to the saints that are lower in holiness and happiness. His point is there's no envy in heaven and there's perfect unity in heaven.

All that drowns you out. That's his point. Even though there's the reality of a degree of rewards.

But, again, don't look at that and say, oh, it doesn't matter. Look, if you were a lost person, and the Bible talks about such a thing as more severe beating in hell, you wouldn't want that. It's describing something.

In the same way, if the Bible talks about greater rewards, well, I'd say you should want that. And you and I should want to live in such a way to be offering pleasing sacrifices to the Lord that are acceptable in His sight. Doing it in a non-hypocritical way.

Doing it for the will of God. Yes, even if you find out certain of those resources were not adequately used, whatever that situation was, you are bearing fruit and Paul wants you to know, believer, what he says right here in v. 17. This is the reason I'm bringing up the fact you helped my needs once and again at Thessalonica.

I'm not bringing it up because I want another gift from you. That's not the goal. I've received full payment and more, but I want you to know the thing that I've been praying for you is that you'd be filled with fruit.

And this is what I'm seeing in you helping my need. You've done fruit. And I want you to know that that fruit is increasing and it's going into an account.

There are rewards from the Holy, Holy God. He hasn't just saved you not by works of righteousness that you have done, but He saved you unto being zealous for good works. And the amount of zeal you have for good works, it matters.

There should be a desire to say, no, I'm not going to be passive in this area of seeking opportunity of good to one another. Because God's looking at it. God's watching the good that I do.

He's keeping an account of these realities. And you can say it sounds Catholic. Brethren, don't let Catholicism, don't let works salvation distort in your mind the reality that God is looking at your works.

He's going to bring up an account on Judgment Day and He's going to say you were hungry and you fed Me. He's going to bring all these realities out. We can't let this kill that.

So, is there somewhere in your life you need a revived concern for someone? Or, take Paul what he says right there, the opportunity. Is there anywhere where you look and you say, you know what? I can't say like the Philippians that we didn't have an opportunity. We did have an opportunity, but we didn't do anything about it.

Paul understands that they didn't have an opportunity and they had a desire. Well, what if there's a situation in my life where I have the opportunity and I'm not doing anything about it? So that's one question of application for you, brethren. And I would say it really matters that you should think about that question because Paul is saying, if you're missing an opportunity that God is putting in your lap to help the needs of someone, there's fruit to be gotten.

And Paul's praying that you would be filled with fruit. He's praying your love. It's amazing, the thing that leads to being filled with fruit, the first thing he prays for is our love to abound more and more.

This isn't a law. Your love abounding more and more, you will go do good and you won't overly think about the good you're doing. It's out of love.

So that would be another application here. You should pray to be filled with fruit as Paul was praying. We should be praying that for one another.

You should be praying Philippians 1 for the church. I know I've heard this verse quoted at prayer meetings before. It's right to pray that the brethren's love would abound more and more.

It's right to pray that we'd have knowledge and discernment that we would then, in return, approve what is excellent. Right? We don't want to just approve what's good. We want that which is most excellent.

We want that which is most excellent in the business meeting. We want that which is most excellent with our own personal finances. Another thing, remember, brethren, v. 18, God looks at the offering you're giving as a sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

Helping someone in their needs. God looks at that and says that smells really good. That's a pleasing aroma in My sight.

You know, you don't always feel that. It doesn't matter what you and I feel. What does God say? Another thing from this passage is v. 15.

It's interesting. It hit me. It was a church sending this support together in a corporate way.

No church entered into partnership. And that's what we're going to do this evening, right? This afternoon. It's not going to get into the evening, Lord willing.

We're a church, right? That's constantly what Paul talks about. It's churches supporting just like we've been doing as a church. Supporting these individuals.

I was sharing with someone the other day, a lot of the churches in Missouri, they don't corporately support missionaries and say we're going to do for a certain amount or whatever. They just kind of leave it up to whatever individuals in the church. That's just how they've done things.

And I was trying to think, well, is that really the best route? Paul's saying here a church partnered with him. I mean, it sounds like we're doing this afternoon. We're all getting together and we're committing to send support in a specific way.

And so I think that's a right thing that's happening right here. There's something glorious about a unified church submitting to one another and being in an effort together in an expression of support for individuals. Another thing to think about from Paul that really struck me.

He really wanted to guard against anyone drawing wrong conclusions about him talking about finances. Look at the passage again. He talks about their concern in v. 10.

Then he says, not that I'm speaking of being in need. So clarification. And then he goes on, v. 14, it was kind of you to share.

Let me give another clarification. Not in v. 15, but he goes on and gives that in v. 17. Paul's giving those clarifications, those qualifications.

It's interesting his sensitivity right there. So that's something to remember. It obviously was important to Paul to be very careful in how he spoke about this whole topic of money and to qualify some of his statements in order to protect himself from being perceived in a wrong way.

And I appreciate that about the Apostle Paul. You could look at that and say, oh, that's all not necessary, and who at Philippi is going to misunderstand you anyways? Regardless, Paul, he doesn't want to be misunderstood. Well, one other thought right here in closing.

I was looking at a journal of mine recently and it read this. This is from 2019. In the last few days, we had my grandmother's funeral.

When we were all at the house together, one of my uncles mentioned my grandmother had a chance to invest \$20,000 into the restaurant company Cracker Barrel. It was started by her stepbrothers in Lebanon, Tennessee. All of her siblings invested except for her.

She thought to herself, who would want Tennessee food? Eventually, Cracker Barrel attained a \$1 billion market value in 1992. All of her siblings cashed in on their shares and became multi-millionaires. And this is where I put my journal.

Lesson, let us not miss investing in spiritual things that have a great return in the life to come. And you know what? We don't want to be like my grandma. I'm not saying my grandma made a wrong decision in trying to apply this in the spiritual realm.

You could say, who wants Tennessee food? Who wants the Gospel? Who wants this Christ? God's not going to be in this. It's too little. We don't want to think that way and not invest.

It matters not whether they want it or not. Christ commanded us to speak forth the truth. And then I put at the end of the entry, Philippians 4.17, the fruit that increases to your credit.

And so brethren, this verse right here and all these verses in the Bible and many a sermon could be said on this, it's not like the junk mail that you get where it doesn't concern you. This does concern you. It does concern me.

Don't trash these verses and these realities. And brethren, it is an incredible privilege to be able to be engaged in supporting the labors of the Gospel, the Gospel going forth, and helping people in their needs, and doing it once and again. And one of the things that Paul brings up in this letter is the longevity of the Philippians support.

It's interesting. From the first day until now. And so that church at Philippi, they had a commitment for Paul for the long run, and Paul appreciated that reality.

I think that's been a very good quality of our own church is having longevity in many of our commitments. Even some of the commitments where we haven't been able to have the person come here for years, and it could be easy to feel detached with that individual and that missionary, there's something about being with them in the long haul all the way to the end as they're seeking to remain faithful. So, those are some thoughts.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, I pray You'd use this word in the way, Lord, that I hope it would be used for the brethren and even for my own life. Lord, we don't want to forget about the money bags that are in heaven.

Lord, we don't want to be disgusted at this whole topic of rewards. We don't want to run in the opposite direction and throw the baby out with the bathwater. Lord, what can we say? We're grateful that Your grace is at work in our lives to lead us to serve others and help people who have urgent needs and not be unfruitful.

And Lord, what can we say that that fruit, that labor of love, that helping someone in their need once and again, Lord, that Iodia and Syntyche agreeing with one another and having unity in order to then continue and be involved with Paul and all the support and whatever was going on, Lord, we look at that and those decisions really do have eternal consequences. Lord, we don't want to get to the end and have some supposed vault that we thought our treasure was safe and then some termites got in there and destroyed it all. Lord, we realize that is a sobering reality.

And so, Lord, help us today. Help us to be faithful. Lord, as we see opportunities to do good to one another, especially those of God's household, Lord, Paul makes it clear we really want to target those within the church.

We really want to meet their needs. Lord, what can we say? We're grateful that You pay attention to these manifestations of love. Lord, what can we say that there's interest, that there's rewards? Lord, it's

incredible, this reality, Lord, that You'd even save us and then You'd give us something to do.

And then even in heaven, that You've designed heaven, this world of love, where there is no envy, and yet You've also added this aspect to it. And Lord, we don't want to just think of that and shrink back and say, oh, it makes me uncomfortable. Lord, I pray You'd show us more of these glorious realities.

And Lord, help them in a right way to motivate us where they should. So Lord, be with us. Be with us as we fellowship now and into the next meeting.

Lord, we commit ourselves to You in Christ's name.

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