

“HOW GOD MEETS A CHURCH BUDGET”

Philippians 4:10-20

**THEME:** Church budget for the new year.

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I found a clever little saying that I want to share with you: ‘If your outgo is greater than your income then your upkeep will be your downfall.’ It’s not really profound, just witty.

That’s why people and organizations need some kind of a budget.

That’s one reason why our church has to have a budget. We have to do our best to get enough income for our planned outgo, or expenses.

But for us there’s an added wrinkle—our church budget is also a statement of our faith. We believe God will meet our needs (our budget) if we do his will.

- The Apostle Paul told the Philippian church that God would meet their needs because they were committed to spreading the good news of forgiveness of sins and new life by faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>19</sup> *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Please listen as I read the whole paragraph about this in Paul’s letter:

<sup>10</sup> *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.*

<sup>11</sup> *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

<sup>12</sup> *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

<sup>13</sup> *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

<sup>14</sup> *Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*

<sup>15</sup> *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;*

<sup>16</sup> *for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.*

<sup>17</sup> *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.*

<sup>18</sup> *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.*

<sup>19</sup> *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

<sup>20</sup> *To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

- A little bit of background. Paul wrote this to the church at Philippi, a major city in the province of Macedonia. Paul had founded the church there on a visit about 10 years earlier.

But now Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel of Christ—most likely in Rome.

This church in Philippi heard about Paul’s ordeal, so they sent Epaphroditus, one of their members, to take their gift to Paul and to be as much help as he could be to the needy apostle.

After a while Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter, including thanks for the financial help they had given him.

- It’s close to the time of the year when we as a congregation make a commitment to a budget for all our ministries in the new fiscal year that starts September 1.

We want the budget that you will deal with on August 26<sup>th</sup> to reflect God’s will for our church.

If the budget is what we believe we need as his church, we can have faith that God will meet the need.

The apostle Paul identifies two **crucial requirements** if we expect God to meet our budget needs as a congregation.

**I. A CONGREGATIONAL COMMITMENT TO GENEROSITY (4:10, 14-18)**

Our generosity as a church is like a dipstick that measures our gratitude for God’s generosity. It’s not good to find that we’re a few quarts down.

Our giving reflects our love for God.

- The Philippian Christians loved the apostle Paul. He had brought them the good news of Jesus Christ. Their lives had been transformed. They knew what it meant to have peace with God.

They supported Paul, whom God had called to bring hope to the nations.

<sup>10</sup> *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.*

Doesn't this sound a bit like a rebuke—maybe a mild rebuke?

We're so accustomed to contacting people immediately, no matter where they are. But they had confiscated Paul's lap top and cell phone in prison.

Paul wondered if they still cared about him or about the gospel. No message had come through to him.

Then Epaphroditus arrived, and Paul realized they had not forgotten him. They had just not been able to show their care for him earlier.

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According to a Danish proverb: 'A willing helper does not wait to be called.' (Danish proverb)

- The Philippian church had a strong history of generosity. They didn't need anyone to put the squeeze on them to give.

In his letter to the church at Corinth Paul told about the generosity of the Macedonian Christians—including and especially the Philippian Church. He said: *'Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.'* (2 Corinthians. 8:1-5)

It was an expression of their worship. By supporting they work of the gospel, they gave themselves as an offering to God.

<sup>18</sup> *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.*

It's literally 'an odor of sweet smell.'

When God turned his attention to the Philippian church, he didn't have to reach for a spiritual air freshener to mask a foul stench. No, God sniffed and said, *Ah! that smells so good.*

Giving so that others will receive the gospel of God's grace in Christ is worship that is an acceptable offering to God. It's something you give to God, and God delights in it.

- I hear a lot these days about Christians becoming self-focused, so that what we're seeing more and more is a "consumer Christianity." The chief concern of people in American churches seems to be about getting their own needs met.

But the power of the gospel should inflame a passion in us that others will receive and believe in Jesus Christ.

The Philippians wanted people they didn't even know and might never meet, to hear the gospel and be saved by the God's grace through Christ.

- Let us not become focused on our own preferences and desires. The example of the Philippian church is here in Scripture for us.

As a congregation the Philippian Christians were committed to thinking of others. They practiced generosity.

- God will meet our budget needs as a congregation if he sees that we are committed to giving generously to gospel ministries that change people's lives.

[The other crucial requirement if we expect God to meet our budget needs as a congregation]

## **II. A PERSONAL LIFESTYLE OF CONTENTMENT (4:11-13)**

The great German author/philosopher Johann Goethe wrote: *'He who is plenteously provided for from within needs but little from without.'*

The Apostle Paul is an excellent example of this. Contentment came from within. He didn't rely on things and experiences to satisfy him.

- Contentment is not natural. Being discontented is more the norm.

You have to learn to be contented.

You learn it by experience—as Paul learned it.

<sup>11</sup> *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

Turn on your television, or open a magazine, or look at your neighbor’s lifestyle—and you are bombarded mercilessly with stimuli to make you discontented. You always “need” something more.

Some smart aleck said, *‘Money can’t buy contentment, and I’d like to have the chance to prove it.’*

But Paul said, *‘I’ve learned to be content. I really don’t need much.’*

Years ago I knew a woman—a Christian, a wife, a mother, whose husband made a modest living. But she liked the finer things, and she cut too wide a peel from too small a potato. That created problems. She became bitter toward God and angry at her husband and resentful of her own children, because she had to work to help pay the bills. She had never learned to be contented. She refused to learn to be contented.

Paul had learned to be contented.

<sup>12</sup> *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

<sup>13</sup> *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

- I am not given to writing out my prayers, but a few months ago I felt inclined to write out what I was praying. I want to share part of it with you: *My Father, I want to be real with You, because I know that’s the only way to be with You. I don’t want to ask You for anything, except for everything that I need just to be near to You. I don’t know what those things are, but I think of contentment—not feeling as if something important is missing in my relationship with You. When I am contented with You, then You—and only You—decide what else is necessary. You as my God and my wise, loving Father decide what I should also know, or experience, or see, or feel, or lose, or receive, or change. Please help me to want nothing more than the contentment of being with You. When I am contented with You, I do not worry. Give me the strength to accept what you choose to do and the wisdom to see nothing more than your presence behind it. I don’t need to understand why.*

As I was writing this prayer, which I pray several times a week, I thought of Asaph’s words in Psalm 73. After telling of his envy of the wicked and the wealthy who didn’t seem to struggle with any of life’s hardships, God helped him to understand their destiny. Asaph wrote these words, *‘But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge.’* (Psalm 73:28) He came near to God and he was contented.

Paul had learned the secret of how to be contented in any situation.

The secret is complete dependence on his Lord Jesus Christ. That’s who empowers (*endunamoó*) him.

How would your life be different if you were contented? God your heavenly Father must have a huge role in your daily life for you to know that kind of contentment. How big is God in your life?

First Free has a reputation of generosity. We are here to bring people into a life changing and growing relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. All of our income and outgo serves in some way to further this mission.

- There are some major commitments our church has to keep before the end of this fiscal year, so please consider prayerfully what you can give to help us this month.

We’d also like to begin the new fiscal year in September with a strong commitment. Will you ask God to meet our needs through your contentment with him, and your generosity?