

Introduction: As we worked through the Paul's letter to his beloved church in Philippi, we did not consider how their relationship illustrates God's perfect 'love triangle'. (A variation on September *Vestry Voices*) *** The Messiah, God's only Son whom He has anointed as The Savior King is at the top. Along the bottom is the miraculously converted Saul of Tarsus (*Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-21; 26:1-23*), who became the church planting apostle Paul, AND the church he planted in Philippi. IN the middle is The Gospel (Good News) of The Savior. *** This Gospel changed Saul from a persecutor of The Church of Jesus to a disciple of Jesus now known as Paul. He was commissioned to bring God's salvation IN The Messiah to the nations, even Macedonia in Europe. The left side of the triangle is the new relationship between Paul and Christ. The right side of the triangle is the new relationship of the converts to obedient faith IN Jesus of the church in Philippi with Christ. *** The whole letter reveals the mutual friendship of love between the apostle and this church. And, because of his love for them, the apostle Paul exhorts them so they will continue to grow in THE Faith. (1:27) *** In this passage he reminds them that they supported him financially from the first day they heard The Gospel. Luke writes that this support began with Lydia who was a woman in a prayer group whose heart was opened when Paul presented The Gospel to them. Later after a miraculous earthquake while Paul and Silas were in chains, the jailer and his family were also converted to THE Faith. The account of the planting of the church ends with the church gathered in Lydia's house. (*Acts 16:11-40*) *** This passage is also at the center of three parallel paragraphs that sum up what Paul tells his beloved fellow workers that God wants them to know and do.*** First, he acknowledges their gift given because they once again had opportunity to support him as he is a prisoner in Rome. He also transforms Stoicism by proclaiming Christ is his support in both success and trials. *** Here he acknowledges their fellowship in his suffering as a continuation of their history as the only church to support him financially. But, he says he seeks that their fruitfulness will increase their account (with God). *** Third, he writes their gift has filled him, and God will repay them by supplying their needs to His Glory! *** In light of all this, we will now examine this passage in detail.

I. They did well to have fellowship with Paul in his affliction; and, they were the only church to share financially in his preaching The Gospel. (Verses 14-16)

A. Nevertheless you all have done well, having shared with me in affliction. (*Verses 14*)

Completes fellowship: This harkens back to his introductory prayer where he thanked God for their fellowship with him in The Gospel from the first day to now as fellows together in Grace. (1:3-7)

Affliction: He literally says they had fellowship with him in his tribulations. (1:29-30; 2:17)

B. But you Philippians also know that in the preaching of The Gospel, after I left Macedonia only you all shared with me financially. (*Verses 15-16*)

1. But, you have also known, Philippians, that in the first preaching of The Gospel. (*Verse 15a*)

2. At which time I went out from Macedonia not one church shared in the matter of giving and receiving. (*Verse 15b*)

Chrysostom: What a great eulogy (good word)! What the Corinthians ... could have done had they been inspired by hearing this! But no other church took the lead before the Philippians acted. From the beginning of The Gospel they were already zealous on the saints' behalf. Even when they had no good examples before them they were the first to bear fruit.

Berea: After Philippi, Paul went to Berea. They searched The Word to verify the truth of Paul's message, but they quickly escorted him out of town by night because of opposition. (*Acts 17:10-15*)

3. Except (if not) you all alone. (*Verse 15c*)

'Threefold cord': Here is an example of the strength of the 'love triangle'. It illustrates the truth of the preacher that a 'threefold cord' is not quickly broken. (*Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*)

Chrysostom: The principle by which they entered into this partnership was: Give useful gifts and receive back better spiritual gifts. You know how those who buy and sell hold conversation with one another to exchange their wares. This is what is happening here. There is nothing, nothing at all, more profitable than this sort of buying and selling. It begins on earth but ends in heaven.

4. Because also in Thessalonica, once and twice, to my needs you all sent. (*Verse 16*)

Thessalonica: Philippi was 95 miles to the east. This was a one way journey of three days on the modern Roman highways. Paul was only in Thessalonica three Sabbaths, from fifteen to twenty one days. (*Acts 17:2*) So the giving would have taken more than nine days: one round trip of six days, time to get another offering together and a three day return trip to Paul.

Chrysostom: What great praise is this! When he was dwelling in the great capital city, he was being nourished by this little city in Philippi. He does not want to encourage them to be slack in generosity by telling them he has no needs whatever. All he has to do is indicate the bare outline of his needs.

Also: In addition to the financial offering to support his Gospel work, Paul also supported himself by working night and day. (*2 Thessalonians 3:7-10*)

Bottom line: Their partnering with Paul by sharing with him financially in his Gospel preaching mission is the center of the 'love triangle' with Christ at the top and Paul and the church at the bottom. Paul said they did well by doing this.

Churches do well when they share in preaching The Gospel

II. I do not seek the gift, but your increasing fruitfulness. (Verse 17)

A. It is not that I diligently seek the gift. (*Verse 17a*)

B. But I am diligently seeking increasing fruit into your account. (*Verse 17b*)

Fruit: The primary fruit they bore was the righteousness of Christ. (1:11)

Purpose: Paul stated his purpose in writing was that they would make progress in THE Faith. (1:27)
Here he is diligently seeking their increase.

Accounting: Paul uses double entry bookkeeping language. As their account grows in fruitfulness they become Paul's reward. (4:1) As they hold fast to The Word of Life, Paul's labor is not in vain. (2:16)

Much more: They are increasing in sharing the affliction of Christ on His Cross. (verse 14; 1:29-30; 2:6-8)

By this they have Christ's Resurrection Life IN them (3:8-10) so they also bear the fruit of The Holy Spirit which is LOVE, and this leads to the fruit of the souls of new disciples IN Christ.

Application: May we accept suffering with Christ on His Cross so that we will have increased fruitfulness in our church account as we encourage others to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Those who give while sharing in affliction bear Gospel fruit

III. Fruitful Gospel preaching.

A. Live out the three-way bond of the 'love triangle' today.

1. The Gospel of Christ does not change so we can be citizens of heaven as the Philippians were. (3:20)
2. The Kingdom of Heaven is still advancing by the force (of God's Spirit), and we can be joined to The King working with others in Christ's Church to promote The Gospel. (Matthew 11:11-15)
3. This is done when the whole church works together led by pastor-teachers and evangelists to build up the church. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

4. And when God's people use the gifts of The Holy Spirit as Christ has given them to His Body.

Spiritual gifts: These are: wisdom (correctly applying God's Word to our lives); faith (to pray God's will is done); healing; miracles; prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:7-11); financial giving (Romans 12:1-8).

5. Finally, we must all know Jesus and His Gospel so we share Him with others in words and deeds.

Gospel: We are all born spiritually dead, unable to love God with all that is in us. IN LOVE, God sent His Son, born of a virgin mother, to live a perfect life. He paid the penalty of death on The Cross as an acceptable sacrifice for our not obeying God's great LOVE commandment. If we humbly receive His sacrifice by faith we can be forgiven. He rose from the dead to make His Resurrected Life possible to all who receive Him by surrendered obedient faith. God then brings our dead spirit to life by The Holy Spirit who then lives in us. He helps us to understand and live by The Word He inspired. This is the working of God in us as we cooperate with Him by faith. (2:12-13)

Application: May all of us desire to participate in The Gospel Mission using our spiritual gifts. And may we commit to obey the command that we will all be faithful financial stewards. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

Those who give while sharing in affliction bear Gospel fruit

B. Obey by faith the Upper Room commands of Jesus. (John 15:9-16)

1. As we remain in Jesus' LOVE, we can keep His commandments and remain in God's strong, life-giving, life-changing LOVE. (Verses 9-10)

The obedience of love: Obedience to God's commands comes from our responding to His LOVE for us IN Jesus Christ with the obedience of faith as the demonstration of our love to Him.

2. If we do this our joy will be full IN Jesus. (Verse 11)

Joy: This is one of the four themes of *Philippians*.

3. We are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved us (by dying for us). (Verses 12-13)

Sacrificial LOVE: Christ's LOVE suffers for others. We can expect to suffer as we partner together to bring The Gospel to others. This too is a theme of *Philippians*.

4. Finally, He says his disciples are now His friends chosen to bear fruit that will remain; and, when they ask His Father in prayer to be fruitful, He will give them fruitfulness. (Verses 14-16)

Servant friends: Faithful obedience to Jesus makes His servants into His friends.

Chosen to bear fruit: God chose us to witness that all who hear Jesus' Word and believe in The One who sent Him pass over from death to life. (John 5:24-25) All who pass over become our fruit.

Perseverance in prayer: We must pray according to Jesus' promise without giving up!

Bottom Line: Let us all seek God in prayer in order to be fruitful citizens of God's Kingdom IN Jesus. We will be fruitful when we unite in suffering to advance The Gospel so people will cross over from death to life as they hear the Word of Jesus and fully surrender to Him in faithful obedience.

Those who give while sharing in affliction bear Gospel fruit

Conclusion: The church in Philippi has done well to share in Paul's afflictions, but from the beginning of The Gospel there, as soon as he left them they were the only church to support him financially. He closes by saying he is not seeking their gift, but fruit increasing to their account.

Those who give while sharing in affliction bear Gospel fruit