

# Partakers of Our Missionary's Grace

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*"I thank my God  
upon every remembrance of you,  
always in every prayer of mine  
for you all making request with joy,  
for your fellowship in the gospel  
from the first day until now;  
being confident of this very thing,  
that He which hath begun a good work in you  
will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:  
even as it is meet for me to think this of you all,  
because I have you in my heart;  
inasmuch as both in my bonds,  
and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel,  
**ye all are partakers of my grace.**  
For God is my record, how greatly I long after  
you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.  
Philippians 1:3-8*

There is a wonderful missionary insight hidden in the book of Philippians. As you read this article you will see how supportive this church was to Paul's missionary work and endeavors. Paul says in Philippians 1:7 that they were partakers of his grace. What does this mean? It simply means that they were able to partake of the grace God gave to Paul.

## For Those Who Stay

Before we move on in Philippians, let's take a look at Acts 13:1-3: *"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.' And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."*

It was not only Paul and Barnabas who seem to have been qualified to the work, but others among them were already teachers and prophets also. Yes, God chose Paul and Barnabas to be sent out for the work they were called to. But that does not mean that the others were not qualified. It only shows that God chose some to go and some to stay home.

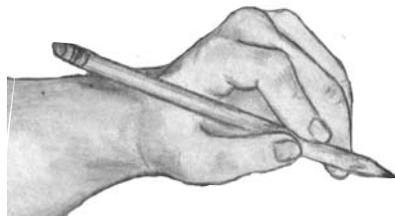
This is more specifically written to those who have been called to

stay at home and be a support to those who are sent. The church at Antioch is the one that sent Paul out to do his apostolic work, but more is recorded about the church at Philippi concerning this area of support. So if you are at the place where your congregation has not yet sent out missionaries, don't be discouraged. You can still actively support missions and missionaries on the field. The church at Philippi is a beautiful example of this. But at the same time I want this also to be an exhortation to support those whom you have sent out from your own midst.

You may have a particular interest in a certain missionary family and would like to get involved in their lives and ministry in this area of support. Paul brings out in Philippians 1:7 that he feels they are so much a part of his work, even in his persecutions and the stand he has been taking defensively for the gospel. He feels they are right with him and bonding their hearts with his in the work. They are putting themselves in the thick of it with him, so to speak. Therefore he ends the verse by saying: "You are partakers of my grace." You're actually partaking of God's grace that He's giving to me." Do you want to be a partaker either of your own missionary's grace or some other missionary family? The example in Philippians bears out that this is possible on both sides.

## Help Is on the Way

Another area you can bless missions or missionaries is in offering your young men and women to help out in the work. Philippians 2:25 gives us some light on this subject: "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to



*my wants.* " They sent out Epaphroditus to help Paul in his work. Paul brings out in verse 25 and the following verses what a godly man this was:

*"For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me"* Philippians 2:26-30.

Epaphroditus blessed Paul enormously in the work. Paul called him "my brother, and com-

*panion in labor, and fellow soldier."* When sending out those from your midst, remember this principle: missionaries' lives are very full, and to have people come to the field with major issues or needs in their lives can be a great hindrance to them rather than a blessing. The missionaries need someone with the characteristics of Epaphroditus -- someone who doesn't need a lot of spiritual input into their own lives, but is there right alongside the missionary in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

## Communication

Another aspect we see in the life of Epaphroditus is that he was the messenger for the Philippian church. Back then they didn't have email and probably no mail service. But they had a strong desire to keep up communication with Paul. Remember this as you endeavor to bond with your missionaries. Communicate with them. Tell them how much you care and are praying for them when they go through hardships. Partake of their joys by writing an email and letting them know what rejoicing it brought to your own heart when you heard a certain village responded well to the gospel. Let them know how God answered your prayers concerning certain aspects of the work you were praying for. Communication is so important if you want to be a partaker of your missionary's grace.

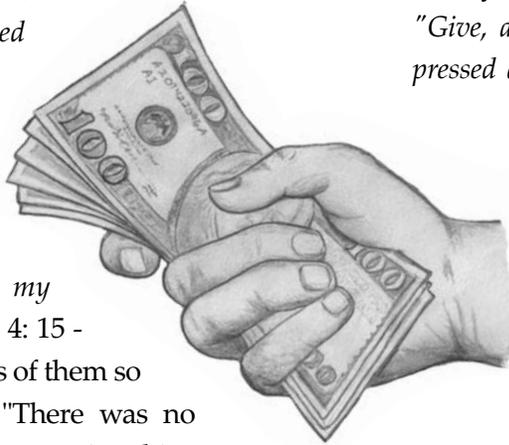
# Sacrificial Giving

Also we see that they were a church that sacrificially gave to Paul and the work: *"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel...no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity"* (Philippians 4: 15 - 16). In fact, Paul speaks of them so highly that he says: "There was no other church like you concerning this area of giving. When I went to another area, once and again you sent toward my necessity. You were very faithful in putting shoe leather to your words of kindness to me."

Remember 1 John 3:17-18: *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."* Yes, it may mean not buying that new car or new tractor. It may mean buying more things at thrift stores. Sacrificial giving means sacrificial living.

Look how God looks at this kind of sacrifice. Paul says: *"But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God"* (Phil. 4:18). It's a sweet smell to His nostrils; it's very acceptable to Him, and it's well pleasing. God does not look at this kind of sacrificial giving lightly.

Paul goes on to tell the church in verse 19, *"But my*



*God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* "Don't you worry; your needs will be met." In essence, he is saying that whenever this kind of sacrificial giving takes place, the principle of "give-and-it-shall-be-given-unto-you" kicks into effect. Luke 6: 38 brings this out very clearly as a N.T. principle:

*"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."*

Again, are you partaking of your missionary's grace through sacrificial giving?

## Prayer Power

Lastly, pray for your missionaries. When the Bible says, *"Pray without ceasing,"* it likely implies that prayer should flow forth from our hearts as naturally as breathing--and how much more should one pray for those who are laboring in building God's kingdom. Throughout the epistles Paul did not often ask for prayer, but when he did, it was usually about the work he was involved in and the spreading of the gospel:

*" P r a y i n g always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that*



*utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:18-20). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:2-4).*

Paul was concerned about his presentation of the gospel. He was concerned lest the fear of man would keep him from sharing it in its power and fullness. He was also concerned that he would be able to wisely turn the key to unlock the hearts of his hearers. Again, as you pray for your missionaries in this way, you cannot help but be a partaker of your missionary's grace.

## Summing Up

Partaking of your missionary's grace can basically be wrapped up in three words: **communication, sacrificial giving, and prayer**. Are you willing to give to your missionary family that has been sent out, or another one God has called you to support? Remember this beautiful example laid out before us in the book of Philippians as you consider this matter. Would God have you involved in some missionary's life? May we all be laborers together in the work of God's Kingdom. Through this the heathen will be reached, souls will be saved, and God's name glorified. This should be the motive and desire for all of us as we think of becoming partakers of our missionary's grace.

Note: *A Prayer Guide for Charity African Missions in Ghana* is available.