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YOUR CREDIT

How's your credit score? It can be an issue if you want to apply for a loan. Did you know God keeps track of credits too? Interestingly, in God's economy, "credit" relates more to what you don't have than to what you do have. It's not about accumulating. God credits you for giving, not getting. The apostle Paul talks about it in Philippians 4:14-20.

In verse 14 he again thanks the Philippians for their kindness in remembering his needs. While in prison, Paul was unable to support himself through tent-making or missionary travel. In verse 15 he reminds them that only they, the Philippian church, have partnered with him in giving and receiving. You are blessed if you or your church has such a special relationship in regularly supporting missionaries! This strengthens their ministry, your church, and your own personal faith as well.

Paul wisely reminds them of benefits of generous giving to God's kingdom. In verse 17 he says, **"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit."** He's just written several verses telling them how God supplies his needs, and how he has LEARNED to be content, not wanting more, whether he has much or little. He does "all things" through the strength of Christ within him.

His point is that your giving is more beneficial to you than for those you give to. Though Paul is the recipient of their gifts, he's careful to note that it's about giving, not getting. Even for him! He didn't need THEIR gifts. He needs what they gave, but it is GOD who supplies.

And because they gave, in verse 18 he calls their gifts **"a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."** Such giving comes from a heart trusting God to provide, even as you give to others when you're not sure how your own needs will be met. God takes care of it. Giving is the experience of learning how and why God provides.

That's because God is the owner of everything. When you open your heart and your wallet, you release what belongs to God, not you. So the "credit" Paul talks about here is what Jesus in Matthew 6:19 calls **"laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven."** That's not some kind of credit that earns salvation. You are saved only by the work of Christ in paying for your sins. That's the root of faith. The fruit of faith is expressed in trusting God to provide your every need, and generously sharing God's grace with others.

In other letters, Paul expresses the wisdom of giving regularly, the first day of every week. He talks about cheerful, generous, sacrificial, consistent giving. It's an expression of trusting God to provide. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul affirms, **"GOD is able to make ALL grace abound to you, so that having ALL sufficiency in ALL things at ALL times, you may abound in EVERY good work."**

That's a powerful passage that many Christians the world over have experienced as a personal promise from God. Scripture teaches that God blesses His people SO THAT you can bless others. That's why.

Our church enjoys a special relationship with a mission church in Peru. We have learned that God gives to us so that we can give to them - and then we see them giving to others too. Like Paul, the recipients don't view what they get as something to accumulate, but something to share with others. Our friends in Peru, who own less than you stuff into your carry-on luggage, willingly give to others in need, in spite of their own needs, because they consciously trust the Lord to provide.

And just as Paul has been learning contentment, as he receives their gifts, Paul wants them to learn the secret of contentment as they give their gifts. It all points to God, their provider. And in verse 19 he writes, **"And my God will supply EVERY NEED of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."**

Next time, we'll explore "every need." Meantime, give giving a try. Check out <http://www.crown.org> for more help. Trust God to meet your needs, as you generously give to help supply the needs of others. Your community provides plenty of opportunity!