

"I Seek For The Fruit ..."

"Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account. But I have all things and abound. I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:17-19).

We are told the expression, *"the fruit which increaseth unto you account,"* is one which would be understood as the interest which accrues to a "Certificate of Deposit." Their *"gift"* was a deposit in the favor of God.

For Paul to say, *"not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account,"* shows his care for those who were in Christ because of his labors among them. The selfless care of Paul was expressed; nay demonstrated again and again. He wrote the Corinthians, *"I seek not yours, but you for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children"* (2 Cor. 12:14). In his epistle to Thessalonians he said, *"We were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children. Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; working night and day, that we might not burden any of you"* (1 Thess. 1:7-9). He repeated the same idea in his second letter: *"Neither did we eat bread for naught at any man's hands, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you"* (2 Thess. 3:8). Following Paul we see him making tents at Corinth (Acts 18:3f). On his third journey he *"reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus and this continued for the space of three years"* (Acts 19:10f). Very likely this latter effort was preaching the word for the account continues to say, *"So that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greek"* (Acts 19:11). Nevertheless, he told the Ephesians elders, *"Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me"* (Acts 20:34). In truth, while there is strong implication that Antioch had supported him and Barnabas on their first journey, such is not precisely stated. Other churches did assist him for he wrote the Corinthians, *"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you"* (2 Cor. 11:8). But, the only church which by name is said to have aided him was Philippi (Phil. 4:18).

What a privilege for such a church to provide assistance to the venerable apostle to the Gentiles. That was a privilege he permitted very few! There were many reasons why Paul declined financial help from brethren. First, he

was a debtor to preach and he received no glory in that -- it was a stewardship entrusted to him. The glory he received was to be able to make the gospel "*without charge*" (1 Cor. 9:16-18). Second, he refused support of some to cut off an occasion from others who would point to his support, justifying support for themselves (2 Cor. 11:12).

Philippi, a poor church -- yet a sincere, transparent group of Christians who loved him because he brought light to their darkened world of sin. It was a joy, a privilege for them to help him. And they were honored by Paul in that he not only gratefully accepted their gift; he referred to it as a sacrifice which would provide a sweet smelling savor in the nostrils of the Almighty! Philippi -- what a blessed church!

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