



October 4, 2020 - II Corinthians 9:6-14

OPEN

How much money does one have to give to be considered generous? In 2017 Jim Pattison donated \$75 million to the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation. *At that time* it was the largest single donation to any hospital by a citizen of Canada. What if you cannot give a million? What if you cannot give \$1000?

Here is the important thing we need to remember about generosity. We cannot connect to generosity to an arbitrary fiscal amount! However, as we will see from God's Word today, we can make a connection between generosity and thanksgiving – this is what Paul shared with the Christians in ancient Corinth.



How is your “thank-o-meter”? Do you find that it can vary wildly based on whether your current circumstances are good or bad? This why we must go beyond thankfulness for what we get; we must grow grateful for **God Himself**.

In our sermons we have been seeking to find **evidence** in our lives that we are grateful to God. The book of Acts documents that generosity was a mark of the early Church. Understandably, Paul taught 1st Century believers that there was a link between being a follower of Jesus and being generous. In Galatians 6:10 we read “...as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”. But what was the specific context for the Corinthians?

- A fundraising campaign for Christians in Jerusalem - I Corinthians 16:1-4
- A powerful example of the Macedonian churches - II Corinthians 8:2
- A reminder to fulfill what was pledged sincerely - II Corinthians 8:10-12; 9:5

With this backstory in mind, let's read our passage for today, **II Corinthians 9:6-14**. In this passage we learn that thankfulness is active in three vital ways, when followers of Jesus live to give.

ONE: Thankfulness is active in the willingness to give - vv. 6-7

Meagre generosity (if we can call it that) bears meagre fruit. But more than the amount, notice that Christian giving must not be “reluctantly or under compulsion” but should flow from a thankful, grateful heart. Why? “God loves a cheerful giver” (v.7) because that is who *He* is!

In **Generosity: Moving Toward Life That Is Truly Life** (NCF, 2009, 6) Gordon MacDonald writes, “From the moment He impart life to mankind to the climatic gift of salvation through the death of His Son Jesus Christ, God has set the supreme example of radical, sacrificial giving for His followers.”

The term Paul used for **generosity** conveyed the idea of “singlemindedness.” And such is God's generosity. His giving is laser focused on our deepest need. “*Though [Jesus] was rich, yet for your sake he became poor.*” (II Corinthians 8:9) When we participate in the grace gift of Jesus, we will be stirred in our willingness to give. And as we do, thankfulness is made active in our lives.

TWO: Thankfulness is active in the wherewithal to give - vv. 8-11

Verses 8,11 make abundantly clear that the wherewithal or ability to be generous comes from God. He enables us to give because He first blesses us. The reference in verse 9 to Psalm 112 is a powerful reminder of growth in righteous living. As we grow in spiritual maturity, generosity grows. But we must remember that just as God is the author of our transformation, He is the source of our generosity.

Verse 10 expresses this as a “*harvest in righteousness.*” (v.10) What is the result of such a lifestyle? The answer is found in verse 11: “*generosity will result in thanksgiving to God!*” However, this means overcoming the negative examples of generosity.

- Being generous to be noticed and to be congratulated.
- Being generous to be blessed and receive wealth.
- Being generous out of a sense of duty, obligation, or pressure.

THREE: Thankfulness is active in the witness we give - vv. 12-15

What happens when we give? People are blessed. And the blessing “snowballs”. As verse 12 indicates, **first**, the practical needs of others will be supplied. The initial objective of the Corinthian collection was to relieve the physical suffering of the Christians in Jerusalem.

After these needs are met, **second**, there is an “*overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*” (v.12b) This is the same expression as he used in Colossians 2:7. Is it any wonder that Paul welled up in worship? “*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*” (v.15)

Then **third**, our generosity will incite others to praise God. (v.13) Why? It is through the mechanism of generosity we “practice what we preach” – our gifts make our obedience to God tangible. And this is the **witness** which our world needs to see – lives that live what we believe.

And **fourth**, the Body of Christ is built up. Hearts are knit together by generosity. Those helped will “long for” (epipoqountwn) their benefactors. And a groundswell of prayer will occur. (v.14)

REFLECT

Isn't it amazing to observe the transformation in the lives of the disciples. They were self-centered. In John 13 Jesus had to wash their feet as they all waited to be served. But in Acts 2 we see a close-knit family, sharing and caring for one another in selfless ways. Generosity is not about dollars and cents!

Generosity is about giving our lives away – see II Corinthians 8:5. Generosity requires a fundamental shift deep in our hearts accomplished by the Holy Spirit. We need God's power to obey the command to “*excel in the grace of giving.*” (II Corinthians 8:7) When we do, **thankfulness** is proven in us.

“Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.” (II Timothy 6:17-19 MESSAGE)

Consider this little gem: **“Money is like manure. If you let it stack up it will stink! But if you spread it around it can do some good as fertilizer.”**

Here are some additional challenges and encouragement towards a life of generosity.

- God, the first and most generous - see John 3:16
- Jesus, the chief of generous givers - see II Corinthians 8:8-9
- Jesus, ultimate downward mobility - see Philippians 2:5-8
- Jesus, God of basin and towel - see John 13:3-5
- The Holy Spirit, outpouring of god's love into our hearts - see Romans 5:5
- The early church: a culture of generosity - see Acts 4:32-35
- Mary – the fragrance of giving - see John 12:3