

Managers of God's Resources

Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:1 – 15

Introduction – Part One

- This morning we begin a three-week series on Being Wise Stewards and this morning's topic is managing God's resources in the area of generosity.
- Next week, we will look at how to manage God's creation
- On June 11th, we will look at managing our spiritual gifts.

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 9: 1 – 8

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. 6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And 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

- Let's look at some statistics about generosity in our country.

Illustration: Barna Survey – November 2019

Who are the most generous givers? As a nation, America tops the charts. The three most charitable cities in America are all in Idaho. On average practicing Christians in those Idaho cities give \$17,977. That beats out the giving from people in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, which averages \$3,308 per person.

Age also makes a big difference in giving. Eighty four percent of millennials give less than \$50 to charity per year even though charitable giving ranks high on their priorities.

Today, the average church attender gives 2.5% of his or her income annually. During the Great Depression, that number was 3.3%. Thirty seven percent of

those who consider themselves evangelical Christians don't give at all to their churches. Only 2.7% of evangelical Christians practice tithing.

Purpose: Every Christ follower must learn to grow in their area of generosity as a mark of maturing in Christ.

Background

- To get a real understanding of the passage we are going to look at in detail this morning, it would be good to read 2 Corinthians 8.
- The Jewish believers in the church at Jerusalem, the mother church from which church planting with Paul grew out of, was struggling due to a famine and the folks in the church were extremely poor as well. They struggled to get work because they were believers in Christ. Their Jewish families and the Jewish culture rejected them because they believed in Christ.
- Paul started with the church in Corinth in asking them to put together an offering to be sent to the church in Jerusalem. The Corinthian church enthusiastically agreed and began to put an offering together.
- Word spread to the churches in Macedonia – Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea and they joined in with the plan to send money to the church in Jerusalem although they were suffering severe persecution and were impoverished due to the persecution. Nonetheless, they were inspired to give after hearing that the church in Corinth was leading the way in taking an offering for their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ in Jerusalem.

Transition: That brings us up to speed to look at chapter 9 of 2 Corinthians

Your giving will encourage others to give – 2 Corinthians 9:1 – 5

- Paul is continuing his thoughts from 2 Corinthians 8:16 – 24 as he begins chapter 9
- **Give what you promised – 9: 1 – 3**

2 Corinthians 9:1 – 3

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be

- Notice that word in verse one – “superfluous”. Paul is saying that what he is writing is more than needed, desired or required.
- The Corinth church made a promise and a commitment to give this important offering, but now, the efforts have stalled and Paul is trying to remind them of their commitment.

- What factors interrupted the Corinthians' good intentions? No one knows. But one likely possibility was the presence of the false apostles who received support from the church and may have diverted to themselves some of the monies intended for that collection (cf. 2:17; 11:20). As a result, Paul's refusal to accept support was a sore point with the Corinthians (cf. 11:7–12; 12:13–18).
- Paul is saying he is sending Titus and possibly Jason from the church in Thessalonica and Sopatar from the church in Berea. These churches were in the Macedonian region referred to in chapters 8-9. (Acts 17:5; 20:4; Romans 16:21). He doesn't want the promise of the church of Corinth giving coming up empty because it would bring shame to the church if the Macedonians give and their church does not.
- We notice here Paul is using the enthusiasm of the Corinth church to give to encourage the Macedonian churches to share in this offering. He bragged about the Corinth church while in Macedonia.
 - Notice that Paul never told the church at Corinth how much to give.
- While Christians must not compete with each other in their service for Christ, they ought to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). When we see what God is doing in and through the lives of others, we ought to strive to serve Him better ourselves. There is a fine line between fleshly imitation and spiritual emulation, and we must be careful in this regard. But a zealous Christian can be the means of stirring up a church and motivating people to pray, to work, to witness, and to give. – Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 659). Victor Books
- We see Paul doing that in this instance here with the Corinthian and Macedonian churches. He is challenging them to do good works.
- We need to make decisions on how much we should give. It is up to God's commands and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to determine what we are to give. It starts with the local church, giving a tenth of your income to God for the ministry of the church you belong to.

1 Corinthians 16:2a

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper

- Give to bless those in need – 9:4 – 5

2 Corinthians 9:4 – 5

4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction

- The intent here is to have the collection complete when Paul arrives in order to take it on to Jerusalem
- In verse five, Paul is pointing out that completing the offering would show that they were a generous church and that the voluntary gift reflects their desire to bless the Jewish believers in their time of need.
- They did not want to be seen as stingy and giving a last-minute gift that was coerced by Paul.
- “Gift” here means bounty or bountiful gift. Paul may be asking and challenging the Corinthian believers to go beyond their promised amount of money in their giving of the offering. Notice in verse one of this chapter, Paul uses the phrase “ministering to the saints” out of your giving.
- Paul’s desire was that their gift would be given out of grace. Paul introduced grace giving in chapter 8

2 Corinthians 8:6-9

6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. 8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich

- The idea of grace giving is simply this. If Christ became poor by humbling Himself to come to earth, to walk among men doing miracles and sharing the Good News about the kingdom of God, and then die on the cross for our sins and rise again for us as Christ followers, how can we not show grace to others since God gave each of us the opportunity to have the gift of eternal life and an abundant life here and now?
- One aspect of that grace is giving
 - **Tithes to the local church**
 - **Offerings to the local church and to other Christian and charitable organizations**
 - **Sacrificial giving**
 - **Faith promise giving**
- Notice the last couple of words at the end of verse 5. The gift should not be an exaction. That means exploited or forced or victimizes by putting pressure on someone to give. That is the wrong thing to do to get people to give.
- God wants us to learn to be grace givers. To give and show grace upon others as God continues daily to show His grace to us.

Application: Giving to God for His kingdom work is done out of a heart of generosity because of all that God is doing on our behalf.

Transition: Your giving will encourage other Christ followers to give, second;

Your giving will bring blessings on you – 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 11; Luke 6:38; Ecclesiastes 11:1; Galatians 6:7

- In the grace of God Christians are rewarded in three ways for their generosity: (1) the givers are enriched (vv. 6–10); (2) the receivers' needs are met (vv. 11–12); and (3) God, the Source of all blessing, is praised (vv. 13–15)
- Paul uses agrarian principles to explain this matter of grace giving and the benefits of it to the Christ follower.
- The principle of increase; we reap the amount we sow – 9:6

2 Corinthians 9:6

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully

Quote: “Giving is not something we do, but something we are. Giving is a way of life for the Christian who understands the grace of God.” – Warren Wiersbe

- The farmer who sows much seed will have a better chance for a bigger harvest. The investor who puts a large sum of money into good investments will certainly collect more dividends. The more we invest in the work of the Lord, the more “fruit” will abound to our account - Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 1, p. 660). Victor Books.

Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

- Prosperity Gospel preachers use this verse erroneously to support their doctrine. We do not as Christ followers give to get, but as a side benefit, God will bless us if we give to the church and the needs of others.
- Notice there is the word “measure”. God will reward the believer but not always materially or with money. He can reward you with favor in other areas of your life. At work, spiritually, the ideas are endless and as personal as the person who is giving.

Illustration – Church at Mt. Ephraim Baptist / The Blessed Life by Pastor Robert Morris.

- If we forget this principle of grace giving, we can be reminded of it by memorizing Romans 8:32

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

- In both nature and grace, God is a generous Giver; and if we want to be godly, we must follow this divine example.
- The principle of intent; we reap as we sow with right motives – 9:7

2 Corinthians 9:7

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- Grace giving means that God blesses the giver as well as the gift, and that the giver is a blessing to others.
- The key here is to give with the right motives. That's why many times, giving anonymously is best. You are not trying to seek applause or notoriety with your gift. By giving anonymously, you are showing that you don't care who knows where the gift came from.
- It is not the amount that is important but the heart attitude

2 Corinthians 8:3 – 5

3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

- The motive for the farmer planting crops is not really a concern for him. If he sows good seed and has good weather, he will reap a harvest whether he is working for profit, pleasure or pride. It doesn't matter how the farmer uses the money he earns from the harvest because the harvest most likely will come.
- But for the Christ follower, motive in giving or any activity in the Christian life is vitally important. We must do everything motivated to please our Heavenly Father.
- As I have said before, the Greek word for cheerful in verse 7 is the word hilarious and is translated here at a cheerful giver. The implication is that from a heart of gratitude and joy, we give of our finances to God.

Illustration: WWII orphans – We are most like God when we give

- The principle of immediacy; we reap even while we are sowing – 9:8-11

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

8 And 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. 9 As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God

- Farmers have to wait for a harvest but the Christ follower who is a grace giver begins to receive blessings from God immediately.

Quote: “Because giving Christians constantly receive divine resources, they are delivered from hoarding and are able to give more.” Moody Bible Commentary

- Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9 in verse 9 of this chapter
 - This is why we know this verse is not speaking about the Prosperity Gospel because it talks about the future benefits that go on into eternity and some of those benefits may not be realized until then or not immediately. Rewards in the NT are future oriented.

Matthew 6:20

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

- See the benefits of grace giving here. We start to share God’s abundant grace – verse 8. – all grace, all sufficiency, all things, all times, every good work.
 - Sufficiency – adequate resources within, contentment with what they have.
- God will not make every generous grace giver wealthy but their needs will be supplied. They are confident in God’s endless supply so they give.
- Christ followers who are grace givers will grow rich in their character morally and spiritually
- Christ followers who are grace givers will share in grace and righteousness – verse 9. They will not have any fears of God’s provision if they are living right with God. They are fully dependent upon God because of His righteousness in the them.

Philippians 3:9

9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith

- Christ followers understand that God owns it all and they are merely the managers of His possessions and they seek wisdom to know what to do with them from the owner. They see things as instruments to do God’s work.

Psalms 24:1

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein

- Note that as you read the scriptures, God has a special place in His heart for the poor, the widow, and the orphans.
- The farmer always has to decide how much seed he will keep for food and how much to plant. If he has a lean harvest then he has less seed.
- The Christ followers who believe in grace giving never have to make that decision. There is always a supply coming from the Father if you are living a responsible Christ – like life.
- As we sow as it tells us in verse 11, we are enriched as we enrich others. The purpose is to show God our thanks to Him by our actions in helping others.

Application: As we freely give of God's resources given to us, God will continue the flow of blessings to us.

Transition: Your giving encourages others to give and brings blessing on you and your family. Lastly today;

Your giving will meet the needs of others – 2 Corinthians 9:12 – 15; 8:1 – 5; Acts 2:44 – 45; 20:35b; Matthew 6:19 - 21

- Your gift glorifies God – 9:12 – 13

2 Corinthians 9:12 – 13

12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others

- Two additional benefits of grace giving. People's needs are met and thanksgiving is directed to God.
- We cannot outgive God.
- Verse 12 says "a ministry of service." – Like a priest offering up a spiritual sacrifice to the Lord, our offerings are spiritual sacrifices lifted up to God.
- The Gentile believers could have made the excuse for not giving to the needs of the Jerusalem church
 - It's not my fault they are in a famine or poor
 - The churches who are closer to Jerusalem should help and not us
 - We believe in giving but we need to take care of our needs first.
 - Example – Bethany Baptist / PV Elementary – when we had a surplus of money in our bank account.
- When we start making excuses for not giving, we move quickly out of the sphere of grace giving. Grace never looks for a reason to give, just an opportunity.

- Our giving should provide for necessities and not luxuries. **Jesse Duplantis and Creflo Dollar.**
- We are to be wise stewards of who we give to and make sure their administration fee is low so that the vast majority of the money goes to the true need.
- Also remember that you and I cannot give to every organization we want to but we need to allow the Holy Spirit to direct us in who to give to.
- Paul was anticipating a time when the Jewish believers of Jerusalem would glorify God because of the contribution of Gentile believers in verse 10 of chapter 9
 - Gentile obedience flowed out from the Gospel that they confessed
 - Gentile generosity to the Jewish believers and to all in need.
 - The anticipation became a reality when Paul later arrived in Jerusalem and gave the Jewish believers the Gentile gifts in Acts 17.

Illustration: I recall reading about a wealthy Christian who daily, at family devotions, prayed for the needs of the missionaries that his church supported. One morning, after he had concluded family prayers, his little boy said, “Dad, if I had your checkbook, I could answer your prayers!” A discerning lad, indeed! We may be the answer to our own prayers or others!

- Your gift unites God’s people – 9:14 – 15

2 Corinthians 9:14 – 15

14 While they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

- Three things bonded the Jewish and Gentile believers through this gift.
 - The offering was taken as an expression of love for the Jewish believers
 - The offering showed that the Gentile believers had been praying for them
 - Jewish and Gentile believers were drawn closer to Christ because there were no distinctions in the church
- This, of course, was one of the major purposes that Paul had on his heart when he challenged the Gentile churches to assist the Jewish believers. The extreme legalists in the church had accused Paul of being anti-Jewish and even anti-Law. The Gentile churches were removed from the “mother church” in Jerusalem both by distance and culture. Paul wanted to prevent a division in the church, and the “relief offering” was a part of that prevention program.
- All these financial gifts were made possible because God gave to them the gift of Jesus Christ.

- Thanks – charis – bestow favor or grace is the idea.
- Indescribable – inexpressible, unable to recount or express fully.
- Christ is the gift that keeps giving and giving and giving even if at times we don't deserve it.

2 Corinthians 8:9

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Illustration: Christian in a Communist country – Iron Curtain days “We are praying for you in the United States, because in some ways, you have a more difficult time being spiritual Christians than we do.” When I asked him to explain, he smiled and said, “You have relatively easy lives, and comfort is an enemy of the spiritual life. In eastern Europe, we know who our enemies are, and we know who our friends are. Where you live, it is easy to be fooled. Yes, we are praying for you!”

Application: We receive a blessing in our heart by being a blessing to someone else.

Key Thought: A person's heart of generosity is revealed through a look at their checkbook register.

I suggest you read 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 again, and that you note the emphasis on the grace of God. If our churches and other ministries would get back to grace giving, there would be fewer high-pressure offering appeals, fewer gimmicks to raise funds, and fewer complaints from the people of God. Instead, there would be plenty of money available for the ministries that truly magnify the grace of God. And I think that the unsaved people in the world would sit up and take notice! You and I are saved because God believed in grace giving. How much do we believe in grace giving?

Questions to Ponder this Week

- 1. Are you setting an example to others by your faithful giving of your tithes and offerings to the church first and then to other organizations?**
- 2. Are you a hilarious / cheerful giver?**
- 3. If God gave generously to us His Son to redeem us, how can we as a Christ follower not give generously to meet the needs of God's people and His kingdom work?**