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IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

Cheerful Givers

No. 22 **2 Corinthians 9:1-15** **November 1, 2026**
Series: 2 Corinthians **Nathan Carter**

Text

9 *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.* ***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.* ***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,* ***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!*

Introduction

Yes, we're going to talk about giving again today. Paul started into this topic back at the beginning of ch. 8. He's trying to encourage the Corinthian church to finish coming through on their pledge of monetary support for the church back in Jerusalem that was in financial straits.

But here's what I want to do today. I want to expand this to the concept of giving in general, not just financial generosity, but a posture of sharing more broadly – time, attention, resources, skills, emotional support; giving rides, giving food, giving hugs, giving cards… Because being a giving person is about more than just money. It's about giving your very self away. The sermon a couple weeks ago got into the details about financial generosity. I encourage you to go read or listen to that on the website if you couldn't be here or were serving in the Kids Corner. I tried to get very practical about what it looks like to be generous with your money.

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Today I want to apply the concept to all of life. It's possible to write large checks to charity, but still be a very self-absorbed, don't-really-want-to-be-bothered, begrudging, stingy, thoughtless person.

A giving person doesn't try to do the bare minimum at work to get the paycheck and check out. He goes above and beyond to produce excellent work for his boss, his company, and ultimately the community. And then a giving person doesn't come home from work and think that he now deserves some ME time. He pursues his wife and gives her his full attention. He plays with the kids and tries to connect with their hearts. And a giving person doesn't just try to protect his family time, he invites other people over and into his family even though it makes things more complicated. Or he gets his family all suited up and takes them over to someone else's house for Small Group when he really wants a night in to watch the game. Then, a giving person doesn't expect his wife to get up with the sick kid in the middle of the night because he needs his sleep. He gives up his sleep to serve.

A giving person can be a single person who doesn't just expect the world to be there to serve her interests, but finds ways to go out of her way to use her singleness to serve others. A giving person can be a young person who gets up early to meet with a mentor. A giving person can be an older person who gives up the comfort that he thinks he's earned to enter into the struggles and world of younger generations and invest in them, even giving away power. A giving person doesn't feel put out by the demands put on them by others in the community. A giving person returns texts, calls, and emails promptly. A giving person makes sacrifices of energy and equilibrium without grumbling. A giving person doesn't get irritated at other people's weaknesses, but delights to help. A giving person is happy to be inconvenienced.

This passage of Scripture is about giving money, but it has application to so much more. There's even an acknowledgement of this fact in the passage itself. Verse 11 talks about being generous "in every way." Or look at v. 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." *Every* good work: not just giving money, but praying, evangelizing, discipling, showing up, washing dishes, listening, counseling, sharing your burdens, planning, inviting, checking in… all of these things require you to give of yourself, not just live for yourself.

Now being a truly giving person is not easy, is it? It doesn't come naturally to us. That's why Paul has to write two chapters about it this collection for others. In short, his main point in ch. 9 is just this: **there are good reasons to be a glad giver**. **There are good reasons to be a glad giver**, reasons revolving around others, self, and God… and an ultimate reason at the end.

Let's pray and then we'll start looking at these good reasons to be a glad giver…

Reason #1 – Giving (or Lack of It) Affects Others (vv. 1-5)

So **there are good reasons to be a glad giver**, and not just a giver of money, but a giver of yourself, not a hoarder of time and energy and comforts, but giving it away freely. And the first reason is that giving (or lack of it) affects others, and not just in the way you think. I'm not just saying you should give because other people need what you have to give. It's something even more than that.

Let's look at what vv. 1-2 teach. Paul says, "Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 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." The ministry for the saints is talking about the financial offering for the beleaguered believers in Jerusalem. Macedonia is the northern part of what we think of as Greece today; it's where Paul is at when he's writing this letter. Achaia is the southern part, where Corinth is located.

Paul has told the Macedonians that the Corinthians have been ready to give this offering for a while already. He told the Macedonians how the Corinthians were eager to give. And hearing this testimony stirred them up to want to give, which they now have, even though they don't have as much money as the Corinthians. The generosity of the Corinthians was a positive influence on others, an inspiring example.

This shows that giving is contagious. When you're around giving people, it makes you want to be giving. It spreads. You want to pass it on. This is how we're wired – we're communal, we're looking to others for cues. We need role models. Have you ever known someone who was so giving, so mindful of others, even you? Those kinds of people are amazing, aren't they? You want to be like them, don't you? Your lifestyle of self-giving can have such an influence and set the tone for others. So one reason to be a **glad giver** is the way it affects others positively.

But conversely, a life of selfishness can also ruin a community, whether a neighborhood or a church. People who only seek to please themselves pull others down with them. Selfishness spreads. For example, if you're only with your church 60% of Sundays, it contributes to a culture where people think *I don't have to be present every Sunday* and when people are operating like that it makes it a very thin community.

And a church characterized by people who are self-serving also brings shame on the reputation of the church. Look at vv. 3-4. "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." Issues have come up over the last year. Paul is concerned that the Corinthians might not be as ready as he was telling everyone else they were. So he was sending Titus and the famous guy and the earnest guy from ch. 8 to make sure that the Corinthians are following through on the collection. "Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready," he says, "we would be humiliated – to say nothing of you – for being so confident." An un-giving church would contradict what Paul has been claiming.

It's like if today I tell a non-Christian to come check out our church and see how much we love each other and they come and find impenetrable cliques, it kind of calls into question the claims of Christianity. Or if I invite a young Christian who just moved to the neighborhood to our church and say we have great community, but nobody talks to them on Sunday because everyone just wants to get home as fast as they can or talk with their friends. And nobody is willing to spend time meeting up and seeking to do some spiritual good to this person who comes every Sunday for six months, it's kind of embarrassing, right?

Your giving (or lack of it) affects others, in more ways than one. Do you want to be someone who stirs others up or brings them down and brings a bad name to Christianity? You're either doing one or the other.

Now, the point in saying this is not to manipulate or guilt you in to talking to a visitor with a fake smile on your face and a sense of obligation after the service today. Paul makes it very clear in v. 5 that giving should not be something you *have* to do, but something you *get* to do. He writes, "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." This team of three was to go ahead and make sure the collection was ready so that Paul wouldn't arrive and find nothing and it look like he was forcing it. He wanted it to be voluntary, something they wanted to do themselves. We struggle with being giving people like this, but recognizing how our giving (or lack of it) affects others is one reason we can look to in order to motivate us. But there's more.

Reason #2 – Giving Is Good for You (vv. 6-10)

Reason #2 – Giving is good for you. Look at v. 6. Paul says, "The point is [just] this [cf. Heb. 8:1]: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Sowing refers to planting seeds in the ground; reaping is harvesting them after they've grown. It's a principle from nature. If you go out to a field in the spring and put a few pieces of seed in the ground, come fall you won't have much to show for it. But if you put lots of seeds in the ground, you will get back a lot more.

What does this mean for a life of giving? It means that "[w]hat is given is not lost."[1] It means that a life poured out for other people is the most full life. You lose your life to gain it; you try to keep it, you lose it (cf. Lk. 17:33). If you are the kind of person who is always thinking of others, who opens yourself up to being hurt and inconvenienced, you will have rich, meaningful, satisfying relationships. If you are the person who is self-protective and closed off, you will be isolated and lonely and turn into a cranky curmudgeon. You will never regret giving. You will regret hoarding. You can't go wrong investing in relationships, for you will gain a return on investment. John Calvin advised that "whenever fleshly reason calls us back from doing good through fear of loss, we should immediately oppose it with this shield: *But the Lord declares that we are sowing*."[2]

This is the teaching of the OT Law – Deuteronomy 15:10 says, "You shall give to [your brother] freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake."

This is the teaching of the OT Wisdom Literature – Proverbs 11:24 says, "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." And Proverbs 19:17 says, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed."

This is the teaching of Jesus himself – Luke 6:38 says, "[G]ive, 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."

Again, what the Bible is talking about is not a kind of giving that is forced, but something that is free. It can't be a cold and calculating greedy kind of giving that just wants some kind of gross ROI, some kind of sick prosperity gospel trick. It should be one that genuinely sees this as good. Paul says in v. 7 – "Each one must give as he has

decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." This means there's not a quota. And it means, as one persons has put it, "Genuine, free, unremorseful giving is distinguished by the mark of cheerfulness. In it the giver finds real pleasure. It is for him, quite literally, an *exhilarating* experience."[3] Truly "[i]t is more blessed [happy] to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). It's so much better, more joyful to look back at a day, a week, a year, a life that was spent for others than to have wasted your life living for yourself.

But you don't understand! I'm so poor. I'm so tired. I'm so busy. I'm an introvert. I'm just a simple person without much to offer. We can find all kinds of excuses not to be a giving person. But here's the promise, v. 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." Give what you have, freely, generously, joyfully, and see what happens. It will be replenished and more. God is a never-running-dry well of energy and he will supply what you need.

I can't tell you the number of times that I've felt empty, like I have nothing to give, and I turn to God for help and he comes through. I could just give up and plop on the couch and glut my own appetites (which feels horrible, by the way). But I choose to give of myself and in doing so I find the Lord replenishing me. Christians never have nothing to give "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). And what is the Holy Spirit like? "A spring of water welling up to eternal life" that never runs dry (Jn. 4:14, cf. 7:38).

In v. 9 Paul quotes from Psalm 112 to get at this same idea. Those who give, never run out.

In v. 10 it says that "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." So, it's not even that we have to front the initial investment. It's all of God! He gives us the seed to sow and then makes it grow and give us the energy to harvest and keep on planting. We don't have limited resources. We don't have to have a scarcity mindset or ration ourselves. This is a **good reason to be a glad giver** – the infinite God will supply all your needs!

Giving on your own strength won't work. You'll run dry. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). But united to him, you will bear fruit. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Ph. 4:13). And like working out a muscle, giving is good for you. You will see God provide in some amazing ways and you will not be depleted, but energized.

Reason #3 – Giving Glorifies God (vv. 11-13a)

There are good reasons to be a glad giver. Giving affects others. Giving is good for you. And next we see that giving glorifies God. This should be our greatest goal in life – to see God seen as the good and great and glorious God that he is; for people to praise and honor and thank him.

Let's read starting in v. 11 – "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." A giving person is an anomaly, a demonstration of the supernatural work of God. A truly giving person who is doing it by God's power and not mustering up his own strength, will not receive the praise for their giving. It will point people to God. If your giving results in people

praising you and thinking you're awesome, then guess what? You're not really giving to others. You're giving to yourself. Think about that.

But someone who is truly giving, who takes seed that God provides and strength that God provides and sows bountifully, will show the power of God and get praise for God. Verse 12 – "For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in the many thanksgivings to God." This gift from the Gentiles to the Jews wasn't just from those without money to those struggling; it was across one of the greatest racial/cultural divides in human history. This kind of stuff is not normal. It's not natural. It's supernatural. And it brings glory to God. Giving to those who can repay you, who are like you is nothing extraordinary. But this kind of giving displays the glory of God.

Verse 13 – "By their approval of this service, they will glorify God." Do you desire God's glory? That is yet another reason to be a **glad giver**. It demonstrates the otherworldly reality of God and gets people's attention and results in thanksgiving and glory for him.

Ultimate Reason – The Gospel of God's Grace (vv. 13b-15)

There are good reasons to be a glad giver. Your giving (or lack thereof) affects others. It's good for you. And it glorifies God. But none of those are the ultimate reason for being a **glad giver**. The ultimate reason is the gospel of God's grace. This is the reason behind all the reasons. The underlying motivation.

Verse 13 continues – "…because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ." There are many reasons to submit that are still sinful. You can submit just because you're worried what people might think about you. That's a selfish distortion of reason #1 we looked at in vv. 1-5. You can submit just in order to try to get mercenary rewards, a kind of health-and-wealth gospel calculation. That's a selfish distortion of reason #2 that we saw in vv. 6-10. You can also submit just out of sheer duty and deference to a supreme authority that you fear. That's a distortion of reason #3 that we saw in vv. 11-13a. That would be a Muslim kind of motivation for submitting to Allah (that is the literal meaning of the world "Muslim" – one who submits).

But what is a submission that comes from a confession of the gospel? It's something altogether different. What is the gospel? It's the message that though we are sinful, selfish to the core, as seen in really just caring about what people think of us, what we can get out of life, and deep down wanting some glory for ourselves by being good and earning God's approval, which is all really just an offense against God that deserves his wrath… Though humans are loveless, self-addicted, glory thieves deep down in opposition to God, God has made a way for sinners to be saved from his wrath and welcomed to share in all the wealth of his presence. How? By giving of himself.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (Jn. 3:16). "He… did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). And Jesus came and lived a perfect life of selfless love, giving and giving and giving – healing when he was tired, feeding when there was not enough food… And then he gave his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). Jesus said, "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn. 10:18). It was not exacted from him. He didn't do it reluctantly, unwillingly. He gave it freely, gladly. "[F]or the joy that was set before him endured the

cross" (Heb. 12:2). And on that Cross he paid the penalty we could never pay, absorbing the wrath of God in our place so we could be completely absolved. And in exchange giving us his perfect record of righteousness so that we could be completely accepted. What grace! What lavish giving! And on top of that the Father and the Son have *given* the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 7:39).

When you are the recipient of such infinite generosity, that changes you, it melts your heart, it frees you. You no longer have to work to earn your salvation, it's a gift, an infinite and irrevocable donation that's dependent not on your character, but on God's. And that's amazing. And that allows you to give, not caring what people think; give, not needing anything in return because you've already been given everything; give, not in servile fear, but truly delighted in God and desiring to see him magnified. That is the submission that comes from believing the gospel of Christ. **There are good reasons to be a glad giver**, and the gospel is the best.

The gospel of a giving God produces generosity and willingness to contribute to others. And it creates a supernatural community where you have Jews longing for and praying for Gentiles (see v. 14). And why? What stands behind all this? "[T]he surpassing grace of God upon you." Grace – undeserved favor. That is uniquely attributable to the Christian God, the Triune God, the Giving God!

Do you know this surpassing grace? Have you fessed up to your sin, your ingrained selfishness that on your own doesn't give a rip about other people, but only yourself and doesn't love God but only wants things from him? Have you gotten a glimpse of your sinful soul and then gotten a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ, the God who didn't have to, but gladly chose to give grace to sinners like you in sending his Son to live and die and rise again on your behalf? Have you received the gift of salvation with open, empty hands? That's really the ultimate reason and motivation for becoming a giving person yourself.

And the first and most important thing that we give is thanks to God. Thanks, not works. God doesn't need your works. He's not in any need. Verse 15 – "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift." "This is the first time the Greek word translated 'inexpressible' appears anywhere in the Greek language. Paul could find no word to express the ineffable character of God's gift, so he made one up – a word that says, in effect, that the gift can't be described."[4]

Don't take this as a sermon that's telling you to do better, try harder, give more. That won't work. You'll either get burned out and give up. Or you'll be reluctant and unhappy. Or you'll be a people pleaser. Or you'll be giving to yourself, not really to others. Or you'll be pridefully gathering glory for yourself. Hear this as a sermon about the gospel, the inexpressible gift of grace that is Christ.

And it turns out, that works. It truly motivates and creates in us a genuine desire for others' good, a faith in future grace, and a delight in God's glory. How do I know? Flip over to the end of the letter to the Romans. Chapter 15, vv. 25-27. There Paul says, "At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia *and Achaia* have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it." Paul's appeals were successful! Praise God.

The Lord's Table

You've heard the gospel in the sermon. Now we see and taste and smell and touch the gospel at the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table is a means of grace where God's people (that is, those who have been marked off by baptism and membership in a local church) commemorate what Christ has done to save them and commune with him together as a supernaturally formed family.

Instead of coming forward today, in order to highlight the picture of a gift that you simply receive, I want you to stay in your seat and sing these two songs as the elders deliver the elements to you. If you're a member of this church or another gospel preaching church, then you can take the bread and drink (brass tray has wine, silver tray has grape juice) and hold on to it until everyone is served and we will all eat and drink together.

On the eve of Jesus' crucifixion "he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to [his disciples], saying, 'This is my body, which is GIVEN for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Lk. 22:19-20). Thanks be to God for this inexpressible gift!

Now let's stand to sing this last song. And as you do, the Welcoming Team will pass around an offering basket and if you feel led to give money for the work of the church, you can drop it in there.

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, November 1, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

[1] Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 329.
[2] John Calvin, as qtd. in ibid.
[3] Ibid., 331.
[4] R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 176.