

Christian Giving



Basic Text: 2 Corinthians 9:1-13
Focal Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-13

Additional texts:

Malachi 3:10; Matthew 10:8
Colossians 3:17

Lesson Object: To persuade Christians, on the basis of biblical teaching, to make regular, proportionate, generous giving part of their discipleship to Christ.

Most Christians think of Christian living as involving several major areas, including worship, godly living, Bible reading, prayer, and witness. It is important to realize that giving, too, is a practice that the Bible teaches as an essential part of the Christian life.

Many Christians learned as children to come to church on Sunday with an offering envelope tucked in their Bibles. Even if a child did not earn any money yet, his parents were teaching him or her to give something to God in worship. Christian giving is biblical. Two parties benefit when the Christian gives:

- The Christian himself benefits by expressing his love and worship of God in a fulfilling way. Spiritual growth is aided by proportionate and even sacrificial giving. An old adage says, “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”
- The church is empowered by Christian giving. The church acts on a larger scale than the individual believer and depends on individual Christian giving. Every Christian should manage the money God has enabled him to make in such a way that he can be generous with the church. Strong and faithful giving will make it possible for a church to be bold and confident in its ministry and mission.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about many things, including the matter of an offering being taken for the church at Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul discussed the various reasons for giving, and the effect that giving would have, on the givers themselves, on the Jerusalem church, and

on Christians and non Christians far and wide. As we study the verses in several sections, identify the principles Paul taught the Corinthian Christians: **II Corinthians 9:6-7**

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. NKJV

An Evidence of Gratitude

Paul’s instructions first tell us that giving is an evidence of gratitude. God has saved and blessed us. He sent Christ to die and rise again and when we repent and trust in Him we are saved. Our eternal destiny is changed. Every Christian ought to spend his life being grateful to God and showing Him thanksgiving in countless ways.

The key to verses 6-7 is the concept of the *cheerful giver* in verse 7. The reason to give cheerfully is gratitude. This gratitude is implied also in verse 6, which describes the contrast between those who really don’t want to give (**sparingly**) and those who want very much to give (**bountifully**). This verse calls to mind the words of Jesus to His disciples:

8 “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” — Matthew 10:8

Jesus taught us that His giving to us is the model for our giving to others. He described Himself as having given **“freely.”** The meaning of the word *freely* is not simply that He gave what He gave without being obligated to, but also that He gave and gave and gave. And He still does.

Because God has been generous with us in Christ, we should give generously. Jesus told His disciples to **“freely give”** when He was sending them on a mission to preach the gospel and do good to people everywhere. Ministry and missions challenge Christians to be generous; and generous giving is an evidence of our gratitude.

Think of your own giving to the church. Your church participates in the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. Some of your offerings to your church go to the Missouri Baptist Convention, and they send some of those

offerings on to the Southern Baptist Convention. In this “Cooperative” type of “Program,” your offerings support international missionaries, North American missionaries, and mission work in your own Missouri back yard. Think of how much good you could do by *freely giving*. Are you being generous with those who need the gospel?

An Expression of Love

Paul also taught the Corinthians that Christian giving is an expression of love. In further explaining the reasons for and the results of giving, Paul wrote: **II Corinthians 9: 10-12:**

9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

11 While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.

In verse 9 the word *righteousness* is used to describe God’s loving activity toward people. It means not only that He always does the right thing, but that the right thing—*righteousness*—is dispersing gifts and aiding the poor. So when Paul wrote in verse 10 that God plans to “**supply and multiply**” Christians’ “**seed**” so they could increase their “**fruits of righteousness,**” he was talking about their loving activities toward other people. One of those loving activities was their giving to the church at Jerusalem.

The offering for the church at Jerusalem helped the impoverished Christians there. Many foreign Jews had come to celebrate Pentecost. Some became Christians at the first preaching of Peter, and then stayed in Jerusalem where the excitement was. Many did not have jobs, and fell into poverty. Then came persecution.

The Jerusalem church, however, was a sending church for missionaries to all parts of the world. The Christians at Jerusalem certainly wanted to have a part in sending missionaries. Their

involvement in ministry and missions further strained their finances. The offering Paul organized from other churches helped the Jerusalem Christians not only by meeting their physical needs but also by enabling them to continue their own mission to the world.

Paul appealed to the Corinthians’ love. The Jerusalem church represented the “home base” of missions and the heart of the gospel. Corinthians could show their love for the Lord by blessing those who had given so much to the world already through the gospel, and who were now suffering. The offering would “**supply the need of the saints,**” a phrase that echoes the motivation of love. Love meets needs.

The greatest need of people today is to know Christ. Baptists are committed to the Great Commission, which is to make disciples of all nations. What percentage of its budget does your church give through the Cooperative Program to missions around the world? —5%? 10%? 15% or more? Does your church give a fixed dollar amount? Is your church doing all it should do to share the gospel through monetary support of missions? Are you personally doing your part to love the lost by meeting their eternal need?

An Essential of Obedience

According to the New Testament, the primary motive behind a Christian’s actions should be love. But Paul reminded the Corinthians that another reason was obedience to God. Christian giving is an essential part of overall obedience to Christ. Paul described some of the effects he expected the offering for Jerusalem to have: **2 Corinthians 9:13 NKJV**

13 ...while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men...

Notice that Paul called Christian obedience “**the obedience of your confession.**” The NIV translates this phrase, “the obedience that accompanies your confession.” The Christian’s confession of Christ as Savior and Lord means that he accepts the love of God for him and that he commits himself to loving God and loving others

with the same kind of love. It is a contradiction to say that a Christian does not love.

Furthermore, Paul said that by *giving*, the Corinthians would prove their love. **“The proof of this ministry”** (13a), or **“the service by which you have proved yourselves”** (NIV) refers to the offering, telling us that it demonstrates the true Christianity of the Corinthians. It is believed that some leaders in the Jerusalem church were doubtful about the genuine faith of the church at Corinth. Paul wanted the Corinthians to demonstrate to the mother church that Jesus was genuinely at work in Corinth.

You can show the people of Missouri the love of God by supporting the work of the Missouri Baptist Convention through your Cooperative Program gifts (your church offering). The Missouri Baptist Convention conducts evangelistic softball tournaments, attracting people with sports and communicating the gospel at events. The Convention holds marriage conferences and festivals to promote strong families. Convention-sponsored retreats, campus ministries, the children’s home, and much more, show our state the love of Christians and of Christ. When you give, you love.

An Example of Surrender

Not only is giving essential to obedience, but it is an example of the Christian’s surrender to the Lord. The King James Version translates verse 13: **2 Cor.9:13 KJV**

13...by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men

In this verse, the King James word “professed” is a word meaning *promise* or *claim*, while “subjection” means *obedience* or *submission*. The Corinthian Christians, like Christians everywhere, claimed they were submitted to Jesus Christ. Participating in a vital ministry to people in need would give strong evidence that their claims were true.

This passage, like the rest of the New Testament, does not rely on the Old Testament law of tithing to motivate Christian giving. Instead, the New

Testament majors on giving from the heart, giving out of thanks, and giving as a reflection of how God has blessed the individual. It is important, however, to emphasize the role of the Old Testament law in the development of Christian conduct.

One of the more famous Old Testament passages about giving is **Malachi 3:7-12**. In particular, verse 10. Repeating the specific law given in **Leviticus 27:30** (“the tithe...is holy unto the Lord”) and **Deuteronomy 12:11** (“bring...your tithes”), Malachi speaks for the Lord: **Malachi 3:10 NKJV**

10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, And try me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

While the New Testament Christian is not obligated to follow Jewish law in order to become a Christian or grow spiritually, a Christian cannot ignore the eternal principles God’s law teaches. God gave the law to reveal the most important principles governing worship and human conduct. In its fulfillment by Jesus, the law did not become irrelevant. Instead, the law became a lasting example whereby we know what kind of worship and conduct the Holy Spirit will lead and enable us to do.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit gave us the standard of the tithe as a model of Christian giving. The Christian who truly surrenders his life to Christ will consider the tithe as the beginning point of his giving.

Going beyond the tithe, the surrendered Christian will live by the even higher standard taught by the New Testament as expressed in 1 Corinthians and Colossians:

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. — 1 Corinthians 10:31 NKJV

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. — *Colossians 3:17 NJKV*

Is it possible for a Christian to claim his treasure is surrendered to God and yet to give less than the tithe? The surrendered Christian will go beyond the tithe whenever possible and glorify God with his money through sacrificial giving.

Christian Giving is a Challenge to Mission-mindedness.

The words Paul wrote to the church at Corinth were designed to challenge them to think of their responsibility to the larger Christian community and to the demands of missions. While the Corinthians had their own community as their immediate mission field, they had to think of the continuing ability of the church at Jerusalem to survive and to do missions as well.

When Baptists send mission teams to other states or to foreign countries to do medical work, erect church buildings and establish seminaries, they are enabling churches in faraway places to keep the mission of Christ spreading around the globe. This is exactly what the Cooperative Program does, enabling you, through a single gift, to support ministry, evangelism and missions from the need right next door to your church to the need of people on the other side of the earth.

In the light of what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to Corinth, what do you believe is your own part in Christian giving?