



Biblical Stewardship



Bible Study Series

Using Generously What God Gives Me - Biblical Background -

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 2 Corinthians 9:6 NIV

It was twenty-seven years since Jesus had walked out of the Jerusalem tomb. During that time Christianity had moved from an upper room in Jerusalem to the heartlands of the Roman Empire. It had even come to the famous Greek port of Corinth, by reputation the sleaziest city in the Empire. There under the preaching of Paul and other Christian evangelists, God worked a mighty miracle: Pagans by the hundreds found forgiveness of sins and a new start in life. People steeped in sexual immorality, drunkenness, and pettiness had been made clean before God and taught to build a life centered on Jesus.

When Paul penned 2 Corinthians in A.D. 57, he was writing to friends and fellow workers. After all, he had lived among the Corinthians for a year and a half. During that time the apostle had established the first Christian congregation in their city and preached with fiery conviction, first in the local Jewish synagogue, and then in the homes of converts. Three years after he moved away he still cared for the Corinthians so much that he walked

over fifteen hundred miles to visit them. Later he wrote them at least three letters, providing them with Christian instruction, practical advice, encouragement, and when necessary, blunt criticism.

In today's lesson, we find Paul reminding his beloved Corinthian congregation that they had made a commitment to raise money for needy Christians in Jerusalem. Now it was time to keep their promise. In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul writes as a fundraiser, encourager, and theologian to produce the New Testament's most detailed discussion on the topic of giving.

1. Christians should give generously. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Taking an analogy from the grain fields that surrounded the city on three sides, Paul reminded the Corinthians of two of the most basic truths of farming: If you want a harvest, you must first plant seed, and if you want a large harvest, you must plant much seed. With these

words Paul was instructing the Corinthians in two profound truths about the Christian life: first, giving should be as much a part of a Christian's life as sowing seed is a part of the farmer's life. By definition, farmers are seed planters; just as fundamentally, Christians are to be givers. Jesus said that we could give something as small as a cup of water in His name and it would someday be rewarded by God (Matt. 10:42). Here Paul tells the Corinthians that Christians should share their money as well. And just as truly as with the farmer's seed, a Christian's generous use of money to support godly causes produces a generous harvest of blessing.

2. Christians should give voluntarily. (2 Corinthians 9:7a)

Paul had been raised in a strict Pharisaical home (Acts 23:6), and was taught to practice the Jewish laws meticulously, including laws concerning the tithe. The Torah required Israelites to give a tenth, a tithe, of their income to the Lord (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22). Perhaps Paul had been so zealous in this that he even made a practice of giving every tenth leaf off of the plants in his herb garden (see Matt. 23:23). But when he became a Christian Paul learned the difference between following the letter of the Law of Moses and following the liberating Spirit of God. Giving to the kingdom of God was not to be driven by a sense of regret, "Oh, I wish I didn't have to give THAT", or motivated by some fear-laden sense of necessity "God will punish me if I don't give Him this.". It also wasn't to be tied to a statistic; instead it was to be based

on what a person "has decided in his heart" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Likewise, Christians today are free in Christ. Since we have died to the Law, with all its requirements, we are not bound to the law of the tithe. Something much greater is to motivate us to give—Christ's love for us which brought us out of death into life. God's great gift of love on our behalf compels us to give generously and gratefully. Rather than give only a tenth of our income, many of us are blessed enough that we can give more than that. In hearts transformed by the blood of Jesus we are to decide what we can give as an expression of our love to the One who gave Himself for us.

3. Christians should give cheerfully. (2 Corinthians 9:7b)

What's more, these love-motivated gifts should be given cheerfully. God is pleased when we take pleasure in giving our money to Kingdom causes. After all, that is the attitude God took when He gave us the greatest gift of all; Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for us because of the joy that lay before Him (Heb. 12:2). When we give to God with joy we are imitators of God.

4. Giving comes from what God has given us. (2 Corinthians 9:8-10a)

We can give to others because God has already given to us. For the Christian, giving is simply sharing with others what God has given to us. And God can make it possible for us to share generously: As Paul stated it, "God is able to make every

grace overflow to you.” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God does not expect us to give what we don't have, but He does expect us to live in such a way that we can always have something to give others around us. God wants us to have “everything we need” (v. 8), but at the same time He wants us to “excel in every good work”, that is, to use our money and other resources generously to bring about good in the lives of others. The apostle expressed confidence that God would “provide and multiply” the Corinthians' resources so that they would be able to do both. And we can count on God to do the same for us today.

When you get a paycheck, see it as a gift from God, not just wages from an employer. Pay your bills with it, lay some aside for the future obligations, and give some of it “to the poor” (2 Corinthians 9:9). Paul urged the Corinthians to give their surplus to other Christians in need – in his day it was persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. Similarly today, God gives to us so that we in turn can pass the financial blessing along to others, especially to those within the Body of Christ, that is, the church. When many Christians work together to give from what God has given them, their gifts can accomplish truly great things for God.

5. Giving enriches us. (2 Corinthians 9:10b-11a)

Want to be *really* rich—rich in the fullest sense of the word? Then give! It's a paradox, isn't it? To be truly

rich you must be a giver, sharing joyously what God has given you. That is what the apostle Paul taught the Corinthians: “You are enriched in every way for all generosity.” (2 Corinthians 9:11). Giving money to help fellow Christians doesn't make you poor, it enriches you, increasing “the harvest of your righteousness” (2 Corinthians 9:10).

When you give more, you create the possibility of gaining more. What kind of gains? More personal satisfaction, knowing that for once you thought about somebody else's needs and not just your own. A greater sense of fulfillment, because you helped meet a need in another person's life. A deeper sense of belonging in the body of Christ, because you gave something of who you are to help another Christian.

6. Christian generosity causes others to glorify God. (2 Corinthians 9:11b-13)

The apostle Paul suggests an additional benefit that accompanies giving to the Body of Christ: it creates “many acts of thanksgiving to God” (v. 2 Corinthians 9:12). Life was not meant to be me-centered”; it's really all about God. The Biblical Psalmist repeatedly commands God's people to give thanks to Him (Ps. 30:4; 105:1; 106:1; 107:1), and Christian giving helps bring about the fulfillment of that command. By “supplying the needs of the saints,” we give other Christians reasons to overflow “in many acts of thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:12).

One expression of our love for Jesus is giving of our resources to help other Christians. In Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25:31-46). He taught that on Judgment Day, God will evaluate us according to how well we used our resources to help other members of His family. Paul told the Corinthians that their gifts were "proof of this service" (2 Corinthians 9:13). Their faithfulness in giving would inspire the needy Christians in Jerusalem to "glorify

God for your obedience to the gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 9:13). Similarly today, when we faithfully give of ourselves and our money to help fellow Christians, we inspire those we have helped to glorify God.

Who benefits from our financial gifts of love given to other Christians? Everyone – we do, the recipients do, and most importantly of all, God does.