

2 Corinthians 9

Giving is a much abused and, therefore, often misunderstood aspect of the Christian life. The Bible clearly tells us we should give, but so do a lot of con artists who pretend to be servants of Christ. We need to avoid being taken in by charlatans, but we don't do this by ignoring what God really wants us to know about giving as part of the practice of our faith. Along with chapter 8, which we did a couple of weeks back, this chapter is one of the more important chapters that teach us how and why to give.

- I. We should give to be a blessing to others. 9:1-5
- II. We should give in order to be blessed. 9:6-11
- III. We should give to bring glory to God. 9:12-15

Allow God to develop your heart for giving and giving will develop your heart for God.

- I. We should give to be a blessing to others. 9:1-5
 - A. **9:1 Superfluous** or "excessive". It's not really necessary for Paul to write to them on this topic. He knows they are willing to give.
 - B. Paul is doing here what we're told to do in Hebrews 10:24.

Hebrews 10:24 NKJV And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.

- C. The Corinthians' example had already encouraged the Macedonians to give generously. Paul now uses the Macedonians' example to be an encouragement to the Corinthians.
- D. This church had apparently planned to collect money for the Jerusalem churches a year previously. Paul now challenges them to act on their plans. Otherwise both he and they might be embarrassed.
- E. It's wise to plan our giving in advance, rather than being moved by every emotional appeal that comes our way. If we do plan, however, it's important to follow through on the plans that we make. Otherwise they are just good intentions. No one wants to be the person who says they will do things and then doesn't follow through on them.
 - Give and you will be a blessing to others.

Allow God to develop your heart for giving and giving will develop your heart for God.

II. We should give in order to be blessed. 9:6-11

A. Paul throws an incentive or two out there for the Corinthians to consider. I suppose that in an ideal world filled with ideal Christians, we would all probably give out of sheer, loving generosity in our hearts for God and others in need. If you are authentically loving and generous, then by all means, give accordingly. For the rest of us, Paul offers some spiritual motivation which might not initially seem so spiritual. It may even seem a little bit selfish. Still, if the incentives are real, we might as well know what they are. God doesn't want to keep this a secret from us.

B. 9:6 There is a principle sometimes called the *law of retribution*. Paul compares it to sowing and reaping. Your harvest is based on what you plant. We get back what we give out. This doesn't work in an absolutely predictable, mechanical way. But it does essentially hold true and we should be aware of it as we consider how much we give. We have the ability to put the principle to work for us. Scripture also says:

Pr 11:24 NKJV *There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.*

Luke 6:38 NKJV *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

Galatians 6:7-10 NKJV ⁷*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

C. 9:7 We should give both purposefully and cheerfully. God did not require the special offerings Paul is writing about to the Corinthians. Paul is simply encouraging them or advising them to give with generous hearts. They should consider it a blessing to participate.

D. 9:8 As we give, we should keep in mind that God will never be in debt to us. One of the reasons he provides for us is so that we can give to others out of what He provides. He then provides us with more after that, so that we can keep giving in return. The NLT translates these two verses in a very understandable way.

Second Corinthians 9:7-8 NLT ⁷*You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."* ⁸*And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.*

E. 9:9 *righteousness* Cf. Psalm 112:9. The word used there for "righteousness" is *tzedaka*. We talked about this somewhat in Chapter 8. Hebrew doesn't really have a word for "charity" in that sense "heartfelt giving". You give because it's the right thing to do. Coming from that background, in Paul's mind, generosity, or giving to the poor, is morally upright; it's ethical; it's a good work. Generous giving is a sign of a just or righteous life. Note this contrast:

Ephesians 4:28 NKJV *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

F. 9:10-11 Now Paul prays for the Corinthians. He fully expects that God will bless them for the righteousness or justice of their giving. And God will be glorified, which brings us to the final section of this chapter. To sum up this section:

G. Giving is a good investment: God gives us resources to use and invest for Him. Paul employs the visual of sowing seed to explain that the resources God gives us are not meant to be hidden. They are not to be devoured or thrown away. Instead, they should be put to use in order to produce more crops. When we invest what God has given, using it to meet needs in His name, He will provide us with even more resources to give.

Let God develop your heart for giving and let giving develop your heart for God.

III. We should give to bring glory to God. 9:12-15

A. 9:12-14 When we give, needs are provided for, which is good in and of itself. The Bible calls this *righteousness or justice*. What's more, thanks are given to God for the provision, because those who receive it should rightly see that God has provided for them through us, His human instruments. So God gets the glory.

So we give and people will be motivated to give thanks to God and pray for us in return. The consequences are spiritual as well as material.

B. 9:15 **indescribable** Only here in NT. Some commentators actually think Paul may have made this word up. Incapable of being adequately expressed or uttered, unspeakable, inexpressible, unutterable, ineffable (Complete Word Study Dictionary). The gift he refers to is the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 8:9 NKJV *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

- When we give generously we are following the example of Jesus.

Let God develop your heart for giving and let giving develop your heart for God.

Principles in Giving:

1. We should consider giving a privilege (8:4).
2. Our giving should flow from our commitment to Christ (8:5).
3. Giving should be voluntary (8:8).
4. Giving has personal consequences, due to the law of retribution (9:6).
5. Giving should ideally be done with a right heart (9:7).
6. Nonetheless, giving is the right thing to do. It is “righteous” or “just”. (9:10-11)
7. Giving has both spiritual and material results (9:12).

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***Matt 6:19-21 NKJV** ¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*