

2 CORINTHIANS 9 | *Cheerful Giving*

Readiness

1 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.

Cheerfulness and Sufficiency

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.¹ 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 (ὕποταγή)² that comes from your confession (ὁμολογία)³ of the gospel of Messiah, 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!

¹ God loves a cheerful giver because he is a cheerful giver.

² “[I]n our lit. only pass. **the state of submissiveness, subjection, subordination**, as opposed to setting oneself up as controller.... The system of ordered relationships requires recognition of one’s proper place in the structure. Since Paul is subordinate to the ‘truth of the gospel’ he cannot comply [in Ga 2:5] with some demands imposed by leaders in Jerusalem who have the obligation to recognize their place in the order of things” (BDAG, 1041-42).

³ “[E]xpression of allegiance as an action, **professing, confessing...the subjection of your professing of the gospel** (=your professing of the gospel finds expression in obedient subjection to its requirements)” (BDAG, 709).

Lessons for Life

- 1. It is sometimes appropriate to stir up the church's giving through comparison (v. 2).**
 - a. When we prompt or urge one another to give, we are enriching one another, not impoverishing one another. It's good for us to hear a challenge to give more, even in uncertain economic times. We must not resent it.
 - b. We must distinguish between motivation and manipulation, just as we do between confidence and arrogance.

- 2. If we promise to give, we must in willingness fulfil that promise (v. 5).**
 - a. Our enthusiasm for giving does tend to fade over time. We need to be reminded of needs and our responsibility.
 - b. We may have the desire to give but may be slow to carry it out for want of organisation and coordination.

- 3. As a general truism, we reap what we sow, whether sparingly or bountifully (v. 6).**
 - a. One of the great spiritual principles of life is that God blesses people in proportion to their blessing of others (cf. Prov. 11:24-25; 19:17; 22:8-9; Luke 6:38; Gal. 6:7). The blessing can be physical or spiritual.
 - b. "Is a proper motive for giving to get something in return? Both Jesus and Paul urged us to lay up treasure in heaven, namely, to make investments of time, effort, and resources counting on the fact that they will yield eternal rewards (Luke 12:31- 34; 14:14; Matt. 6:4, 6, 18-21; 1 Tim. 6:18-19; cf. Prov. 19:17; Matt. 10:42; Luke 6:38)."⁴
 - c. This is not karma, by the way! There is a big difference between karma in a pantheistic worldview, and grace and justice in a trinitarian worldview. The idea of karma is that the impersonal universe, which is god, somehow ensures good comes to those who do good and evil to those who do evil. But for us, it is not the impersonal universe doing this. The universe doesn't care, as atheists know well. The law of sowing and reaping is there because of the God who is really there, the Creator who is sovereign, righteous, just, omnipresent, and gracious. He intervenes personally, in history, to bless those who bless others.

- 4. Giving is for every believer, no matter how rich or poor (v. 7).**
 - a. Paul doesn't distinguish between the rich and poor in Corinth. Every believer is encouraged to give what they can. Remember the widow's two copper coins.
 - b. If we can't give money or possessions, we can give our time.
(1) "The most precious thing a human being has to give is time."⁵

- 5. Giving is not a tax, and there is no set amount. It's up to each one of us to give the amount we have decided on (v. 7).**
 - a. A tithe of 10% is a good starting place, but, to be frank, most of us can give more. I once met an older couple who regularly gave 90% of their income.

⁴ Thomas Constable, *Notes on 2 Corinthians*, 134-35.

⁵ Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri*, 28.

- b. I recommend each of us have a plan to one day give a very large amount for the relief of the poor or the advance of the gospel.

6. We are like God when we give cheerfully, because God is a cheerful giver (v. 7).

- a. God loves a cheerful giver because he is a cheerful giver.
- b. The one word that best sums up our faith is *grace*. In giving cheerfully and freely we display the heart of the Christian faith.
- c. The idea of cheerful giving has been there from the beginning.
 - (1) **Dt 15:7-11** 7 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that Yahweh your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. 9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, The seventh year, the year of release is near, and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to Yahweh against you, and you be guilty of sin. 10 You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.
- d. Our attitude when we give is of great importance.
- e. The “cheerfulness” of our giving is more of a deliberate decision than a feeling. We choose, when we give, to be cheerful, not reluctant or stingy.
 - (1) “This doesn’t mean we should give only when we are feeling cheerful. The cheerfulness often comes during and after the act of obedience, not before it.”⁶
- f. God pays attention to whether we have an open hand or a closed fist.

7. As we give, we are to be confident that God can and will provide absolutely everything we need to abound in all the good works he has for us to do (v. 8).

- a. David says:
 - (1) **Ps 37:25-26** 25 I have been young, and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread. 26 All day long he is gracious and lends, and his descendants are a blessing.
- b. Solomon says:
 - (1) **Pr 11:24-25** 24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. 25 Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.
 - (a) I got these two verses from Sophia’s latest Grow magazine.
- c. Jesus says:
 - (1) **Lk 6:38** 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.
- d. We are to remember the lesson of the twelve baskets (Mt 14) and the seven baskets (Mt 15).

⁶ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, 27.

- e. If we give what we have today, God will supply us with more, but not so that we may be rich, but so that we may give even more. He gives more to us so we can give even more.
- f. If we receive a large amount of money, we are to increase our standard of giving, not our standard of living.
- g. The gift is in the giving. We get more out of giving than the recipient.
(1) **Ac 20:35** 35 ...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

8. We are to be like the righteous man of Psalm 112 (v. 9).

- a. **Ps 112:1-10** 1 Praise Yah! Blessed is the man who fears Yahweh, who greatly delights in his commandments! 2 His offspring will be mighty in the land. The generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright. He is gracious, merciful, and righteous. 5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. 6 For the righteous will never be moved. He will be remembered forever. 7 He is not afraid of bad news. His heart is firm, trusting in Yahweh. 8 His heart is steady. He will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. 9 He has distributed freely. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. His horn is exalted in honor. 10 The wicked man sees it and is angry. He gnashes his teeth and melts away. The desire of the wicked will perish!
b. Giving generously is what the righteous do. It is a way of life for them.
(1) **Ps 37:21** 21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives.

9. If we sow lots of seed through giving, God will give us more seed to sow, resulting in a bumper crop of righteousness (vv. 10-14).

- a. That bumper crop includes: (1) practical provision for believers who need help (v. 12); (2) gratitude towards God (vv. 11-13, 15); (3) a relational affection for one another (v. 14); and (4) intercessory prayer (v. 14). The promises of giving are fantastic.
- b. **Jn 15:4-11** 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ...8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.
- c. This passage is often used to support the "prosperity gospel," the idea believers have a right to health and wealth through the 'sowing of seeds' through financial or material gifts. We must say a strong "no" to this. We give not so that we may be healthy and wealthy, and have Rolls Royces and Rolex watches, but so that the real needs of

believers can be met, so that God may be honoured, and so that we can eventually give even more.

- d. If we are on the receiving end of giving, we are to express our gratitude and affection for the donors and offer up prayers for them.

10. Our giving proves our submission to our confession of the gospel of Jesus (v. 13).

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- b. ὁμολογία: “[E]xpression of allegiance as an action, **professing, confessing...the subjection of your professing of the gospel** (=your professing of the gospel finds expression in obedient subjection to its requirements)” (BDAG, 709).
- c. Is our faith alive? Do we love God and God’s people? We prove it by generous giving.

11. We are to thank God for his incredible gift to us—Jesus and the gospel (v. 15).

- a. **Jn 3:16** 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

12. The Corinthians followed through. Will we?

- a. **Ro 15:26-27** 26 For Macedonia and *Achaia* have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 27 For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

13. Discussion Questions.

- a. What’s one thing you want to take away from this message?
- b. Is there anyone or any organisation God is prompting you to give to?
- c. If you suddenly received a lot of money, would you increase your standard of living or your standard of giving?

14. A Prayer.

- a. Father, make us to be cheerful givers, ones who give as an act of grace born out of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. May grace be the predominant word of our lives. Thank you, Father, for your enriching, surpassing, and inexpressible grace! May there be fairness among your saints in our city, in our nation, and around the world. Help us to give more than we think we can. Help us to sow abundantly that we may reap abundantly. May we be a people of an open hand, not a people of a closed fist. To your glory, in the name of your Son, and by the Spirit, we pray. Amen.