

We have been on the topic of giving for several weeks now. This is the most extensive passage on the subject in the New Testament. We see the foreshadow of it in the Old Testament in the abundant giving for both the tabernacle and the temple, each of which is a picture of the future church, the heavenly city in which God will dwell, and even now dwells in the hearts of the people of faith (Exodus 36:6,7ⁱ). There were also prescribed offerings which were to care for the priests and the daily needs of the temple. So today, the offerings care for the people of God to advance the kingdom of God and care for our meeting places and ministers as well as helping the poor. All of these are the temple of God today.

Paul has been sharing about how the offering for the Jerusalem church would be collected from the believers in Corinth. He has emphasized how we are to accept the grace to be generous. In today's passage he explains the benefits of giving.

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Corinthians 9:6 Paul presents a maxim which is another of the truths we are to be guided by and refer to often. It is one of those passages we underline so we can find it again, as these eternal truths renew our minds (Romans 12:2ⁱⁱ). He presents it as an agriculture parallel. If you plant only a few seeds, you will not get much of a harvest. But if you plant a lot of seeds, you will get a bigger harvest. It reminds me of Proverb 11:24. *²⁴ One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

Hughes writes, *the proverb literally reads "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows with blessings will also reap with blessings." This goes back to the giver's heart and God's grace and the manner of giving. "God gives back 'blessings' to those who give as a matter of 'blessing'" (Hafemann). So it is not how much we give but rather that we give as generously as possible with an attitude of the joy of blessing.*ⁱⁱⁱ

However, we must be careful not interpret this as a way to get rich. Some pastors teach that you should give seed money and you will reap a lot more money. That is not how the Apostle describes it. In Ephesians he tells us that we work with our hands so that we can be able to give to those in need (Ephesians 4:28^{iv}). He is not suggesting a Ponzi scheme. I have seen generous people blessed so that they can be even more generous. Dr. Mathai told me the churches that give the most to missions seem to have all their needs met and end up giving even more. We have seen that to be the case here. We do not give to get, but we give because we share God's heart for missions to help the poor and advance the gospel.

Should the poor be encouraged to give? Sow a blessing, reap a blessing. Remember the widow's mite (Mark 12:43,44^v). She gave all that she had, and Jesus praised her for it. Giving demonstrates faith. If what we have belongs to God, we should give whatever the Lord leads us to give. The next verse tells us how.

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7 The Holy Spirit impresses on our hearts what we should give. Unlike the Old Testament set percentage

(Deuteronomy 14:22^{vi}), God may lead us to give more or less. If it is less, then it may be because there is another need coming that we are unaware of. This is the New Testament direction. Give as the Lord leads your heart to give. If you are reluctant or feel compelled, do not do it. God does not need your money. He invites you to join Him in what He is doing, and He will bless you in one way or another for accepting His invitation. We are to be led by the Spirit and not bound by the Law (2 Corinthians 3:6^{vii}).

Cheerful giving takes place when you realize God blesses you so that you can freely bless others. Again, Paul takes the concept from the Old Testament. God told the people that if they gave freely from the heart they would be blessed (Deuteronomy 15:10,11^{viii}). It is knowing that if He leads you to give, you are doing so at the leading of the One who loves you and who provides all our needs (Philippians 4:19^{ix}). It is realizing that we are giving to Him first, out of what He has already given us. If the recipient wastes it or is ungrateful, that is not our concern. We gave to the Lord, and it is up to Him to deal with the individual. He had His reasons for prompting us to give. If you begrudge giving, the problem is in your relationship with money and with God. Money is not security.

Some people believe we are required to tithe. Giving ten percent is a guideline we see even before the Law was given to Moses. But ten percent was a guide to those who did not have the infilling of the Holy Spirit to direct their hearts. That is why Jesus said nothing about it, except noting what the Pharisees did (Matthew 23:23^x). Verse 7 is the New Testament guide to giving. Give what you decide in your heart if you can do so cheerfully. We are bombarded with requests to give. Many of them use tearful scenes to pull on our hearts. But giving out of guilt thrust upon you and giving what you decide in your heart are two different things. If you are in doubt in your heart about whether God leading you to give or the amount, wait until He resolves that doubt, only do not make that an excuse not to give.

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. 2 Corinthians 9:8 Sometimes we wonder what will happen to us if we give what we are led to give. Will we be ok? Paul answers that concern here. God is able, we might say more than able, to make all grace abound to you. **When we fear giving, we are really revealing our lack of faith in God.** Do we think He cannot meet our needs? That abounding grace promises sufficiency in all things at all times. What circumstances or times does that leave out? None! But recognize that sufficiency is the basic needs being met. It does not include everything we desire unless our desires are aligned with God's desires (Psalm 37:4^{xi}).

We have seen that play out in this church. The more we give to missions, the more we seem to have to give. How does that work? God makes all grace abound to us so that we may abound in every good work. It happens corporately and individually. And He does this so all who cooperate with His leading might continue to abound in every good work. God desires to work through us so He supplies that abundant grace and meets our needs – not so we can sit around in satisfaction – but so that we might abound in every good work (Ephesians 2:10^{xii}). We have this short time on earth to glorify God by helping others physically and spiritually. Paul was telling the churches and us today that God is always our sufficiency in all things. That truth should help us receive the grace to give.

⁹ *As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”* 2 Corinthians 9:9 You are probably tired of me driving home the point that Paul backs up his teaching with Scripture from the Old Testament. This time it is from Psalm 112:9, a psalm about the blessings of a godly life. Those who only teach from the New Testament are missing foundational principles. The Scriptures are the authority behind what we teach. If we cannot put a reference behind our statements, we may be on the shaky ground of man’s ideas rather than the immovable rock of Scripture (Psalm 119:89^{xiii}; 94:11^{xiv}).

Jesus taught the same idea of God’s provision for all in the Sermon on the Mount. ²⁵ *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”* ²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* Matthew 6:25,26 God is the righteous provider of all good things (James 1:17^{xv}). This does not mean there will not be times of hunger and famine. Paul said he experienced hunger (1 Corinthians 4:11^{xvi}), and yet he could write this verse and the previous one, *sufficiency in all things* and *He has distributed freely to the poor*.

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.* 2 Corinthians 9:10 Paul is alluding to Isaiah 55:10^{xvii} in which God causes the earth to bring forth seed for the sower and bread for the eater. He is saying that since our God is a God who meets our needs, He will surely provide you finances and time to give to those in need. And the harvest of righteousness is increased. That may mean our righteousness, or the righteousness of those whom we serve, or both as a part of the harvest. The fruit that comes from our generosity will abound to a harvest of righteousness!

Paul tells the Philippians that God supplies every need of ours in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19^{xviii}). But just before that he wrote that he knew how to be content in every situation, whether to be brought low or to abound. He could do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:11-13^{xix}). We can see that what Paul intends to convey is not that everything we want is given to us, but rather that God provides enough so that in His time and direction we can give to the needs of others.

¹¹ *You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.* 2 Corinthians 9:11 As we give at God’s leading, He enriches us in every way. That enables us to continue to be generous in every way: financially, or time, or sharing God’s Word. And when Paul and company deliver that gift to the Jerusalem elders, Paul knew it would produce thanksgiving to God for that desperately needed provision. Jesus said, 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.*” Luke 6:38 Jesus had just been speaking about forgiveness. It is the sowing and reaping principle (Galatians 6:7^{xx}). I know if I share what God shows me in the Word, God gives me more insights to share. If we help others, when we are in need we will be helped. We are being like our heavenly Father when we freely give. James tells us that every good gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17^{xxi}). When we give cheerfully and freely, we

are following the ways of God who gave His only Son that we might have everlasting life (John 3:16^{xxii}).

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. 2 Corinthians 9:12 The grace giving in which they were participating met a need. But that is not all that it did. Paul sees thanksgiving as an important part of the mission. Meeting the need will cause the recipients and the givers to overflow in many thanksgivings to God. I wonder if we count that as an important part of our service to God. Paul taught that we should thank God in every circumstance (1 Thessalonians 5:18^{xxiii}). He ends this passage with a word of thanksgiving. He thanked God in prison in Philippi with songs while he sat in stocks (Acts 16:24,25^{xxiv}). The psalmists tell us that we are to enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise (Psalm 100:4^{xxv}). We are to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of His deeds with songs of joy (Psalm 107:22^{xxvi}). We are to sing to the Lord with thanksgiving (Psalm 147:7^{xxvii}).

Thanksgiving to God is a sign that our hearts and minds are as they should be. Complaining and whining are signs that we are self-focused and angry that everything does not go exactly as we desire (Jude 16^{xxviii}). It is forgetting all the good that is bestowed upon us. It is like Eve in the Garden of Eden blessed with walking with God, the perfect spouse, the perfect environment, and all her needs met and just fixated on the one thing that was forbidden for her good (Genesis 3:6^{xxix}). Instead of a thankful heart for all God's goodness she doubted God's motives for withholding one thing from her (Genesis 3:5,6^{xxx}). We fall into the same cycle when we are ungrateful. So, if our obedience to God ends up abounding in thanksgiving, it means we are setting people's hearts and minds as they should be, grateful to God for His blessings and faith for what we do not understand.

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. 2 Corinthians 9:13,14 Paul has faith to believe that the recipients of the offering will not only be thankful for the physical need being met, but that they will glorify God because the churches submitted themselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit to give graciously. He wrote that the submission of the givers came from their confession of the gospel of Christ. If we proclaim that the Father and Son loved us so much that Jesus was willing to meet our greatest need, taking our sin debt upon Himself and bearing the punishment we deserved, then how can we not be gracious toward others? If God is so generous to us, we are expected to be generous to others.

In Matthew 18 Jesus told of a man whose employer forgave his enormous debt. The man turned around and threw another man in prison for owing him ten dollars. His employer heard of what was done and decided to rescind his forgiveness. He then delivered the man to jailers until the whole debt was paid. Jesus warned that something similar would happen to us if we do not forgive our brother from our heart (Matthew 18:34,35^{xxxi}). The meaning is clearly that our offenses toward God are incomparably

greater than the little offenses of others toward us. God has been so gracious to us that we are expected to be gracious to others.

Paul mentions one more blessing this gift will produce. The recipients will long for and pray for their Gentile brothers and sisters. That is the unity Christ prayed for (John 17:20,21^{xxxiii}). Meeting one another's needs strengthens our bonds of love and reminds us to pray for one another.

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15 Publishers Clearing House has a yearly prize of \$5000 a week for the rest of the winner's life, and they can pass that on to whoever they wish. If your long-lost cousin knocked on your door and told you he had won but he wanted you to have it, and on top of that he was leaving you his mansion on the beach in Hawaii with the car of your dreams, that would be nice. But that is nothing compared to what God has given you. I could try to describe it, but I would always fall short because it is inexpressible! The taxes on the house would be enormous, and the car insurance and taxes would be as well. Then there is income tax on all that money and people constantly asking you for assistance. Meanwhile the house and car will eventually need repairs and upkeep. **Nothing in this world will bring deep down satisfaction and peace. But that is what we have in Jesus** when we receive His gift and embrace all that He means to us.

The Greek word translated as "inexpressible" was first used in this verse. Paul could not find a word to tell of the wonder of the gift of Christ, so he made up a word that means there are no words that can express the wonder it.

As the song says, we have peace like a river, we have love like an ocean, and joy like a fountain in our soul when our eyes are fixed on our Savior. No matter how rough this life gets, we can cling to Him to bring us through. As with the disciples on the lake, He comes to us on the waves of the storm (John 6:18,19^{xxxiii}). The peace, love, and joy are there when our eyes are on Him. That is because He is the unshakable rock (Psalm 62:2^{xxxiv}). But then, I am trying to express it and it is inexpressible.

We have been given eternal life in His loving presence. That alone should be enough of a promise to make us overflow with gratitude every day of our lives. No matter how much we realize the promises of God and our daily blessings, the gifts of grace and salvation are inexpressible. What Paul is getting at is that we have so much in Christ, how can we not be generous toward others at His prompting? All glory be to God!

Questions:

- 1 What was Paul's agricultural illustration for being generous?
- 2 What is the New Testament direction for how much to give?
- 3 How do we know we will be okay if we give as the Spirit leads?
- 4 What was the verse of assurance Paul cited?
- 5 What is the sowing and reaping principle?
- 6 The gift met needs, but what else did it produce?
- 7 What does the Mt. 18 parable tell us God expects us to do?
- 8 How awesome is the inexpressible gift?
- 9 Describe it as best you can.
- 10 What is your key take away?

ⁱ **Exodus 36:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing,

⁷ for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

ⁱⁱ **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hughes, Kent Preaching the Word - 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness.

^{iv} **Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

^v **Mark 12:43-44 (NIV)**

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."

^{vi} **Deuteronomy 14:22 (ESV)**

²² "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year.

^{vii} **2 Corinthians 3:6 (ESV)**

⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

^{viii} **Deuteronomy 15:10-11 (ESV)**

¹⁰ You shall give to him 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. 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.'

^{ix} **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

^x **Matthew 23:23 (ESV)**

²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

^{xi} **Psalms 37:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

^{xii} **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^{xiii} **Psalms 119:89 (ESV)**

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

^{xiv} **Psalms 94:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.

^{xv} **James 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 4:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless,

^{xvii} **Isaiah 55:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

^{xviii} **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

^{xix} **Philippians 4:11-13 (ESV)**

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the

secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

^{xx} **Galatians 6:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

^{xxi} **James 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

^{xxii} **John 3:16 (ESV)**

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.

^{xxiii} **1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

^{xxiv} **Acts 16:24-25 (ESV)**

²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

^{xxv} **Psalms 100:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

^{xxvi} **Psalms 107:22 (ESV)**

²² And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

^{xxvii} **Psalms 147:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!

^{xxviii} **Jude 1:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

^{xxix} **Genesis 3:6 (ESV)**

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

^{xxx} **Genesis 3:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

^{xxxi} **Matthew 18:34-35 (ESV)**

³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

^{xxxii} **John 17:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

^{xxxiii} **John 6:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

^{xxxiv} **Psalms 62:2 (ESV)**

² He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.