

Giving From a Generous Heart

Exodus 35:20-29; 2 Cor 9:6-8

SS Lesson for 05/06/2018

Devotional Scripture: Psalms 112:1-12

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines what God is telling us about **Giving From a Generous Heart** to Him as we worship. The **study's aim** is to give thought to giving the right amount for the right reason to fit in with God's plan and His best for us. The **study's application** is to structure our giving so as to honor God.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: 2 Cor 9:7

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

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Exodus 35:1-35

With the covenant renewed, the construction of the tabernacle was essential. Most of the material in chapters 35-40 about the construction of the tabernacle is similar to God's instructions to Moses on the mountain (recorded in chaps. 25-31), except that most of chapters 35-40 records in the past tense Moses' and the people's carrying out God's commands. However, the order of the subject matter differs slightly in these two major sections of the book. The book concludes with the record of God's condescending to dwell in His glory among His people (40:34-38). Comments on these last chapters of Exodus are comparatively brief because they have been discussed already. Chapters 35-40, however, are not needless repetition; they stress two important truths: (a) the faithfulness of God, who dwells among His people in spite of their failures, and (b) the obedience of Moses in carrying out God's instructions (cf. 25:9). Seven times in each of the last two chapters the words "as the LORD commanded Moses" (or "as the LORD commanded him") occur (39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). Moses was indeed a faithful servant (Num. 12:7; Heb. 3:5).

35:1-3. **Moses had the whole Israelite community** (cf. V. 4 and 12:3) assemble so he could give them the Lord's instructions. Verse 2 of chapter 35 repeats almost word for word the command in 31:15. Since the Sabbath was the sign of the covenant God made with Israel (31:16-17), its observance was crucial. Moses' words to the people about the **Sabbath** occur here at the beginning of chapters 35-40, not at the end as in God's instructions in chapters 25-31. This is because Israel had demonstrated a tendency to disobey. If the covenant were to be maintained, instructions about the sign of the covenant had to be obeyed. Also because of the people's excitement in constructing the tabernacle, it was important that worship not be neglected even in doing worshipful work. The prohibition against **a fire... on the Sabbath** (35:3) is a corollary to the order not to **work** (v. 2) by cooking food (cf. 16:23).

35:4-9. As **Moses** continued his address to Israel, he urged the people to gather from their possessions the things needed for making the tabernacle (cf. 25:1-9). These materials, to be given voluntarily (whoever **is willing**; cf. 35:21, 29), were **an offering for the LORD**.

35:10-19. Then Moses called for workers (**all who are skilled among you**) to make the various furnishings, utensils, and priests' **garments**. The order in which these items are listed is the same as the order in which they are discussed in 36:8-39:31.

35:20-29. The people willingly committed themselves to the project by offering their goods and services. Whereas 25:3 referred to the need for **gold... silver, and bronze**, a point is added here (35:22) that **gold jewelry** was **brought**. **Women** were involved not only in bringing offerings (vv. 22, 29) but also in spinning **yarn... linen, and goat hair**.

35:30-36:1. This section is similar to 31:1-11. A new element in this description is the statement about the **ability of Bezalel and Oholiab... to teach others** (35:34). This passage (35:30-36:1) stresses the **skill** of the many workmen

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

9:1-2. The Corinthians' need to complete what they had eagerly begun (8:6, 10) concerned Paul. He had not found it necessary **to write** about the need to give aid to Jerusalem Christians. The Corinthians had agreed enthusiastically (8:11) to be involved in **this service (diakonias) to the saints** (cf. 8:4; 9:12-13). They were eager **to help** (cf. 8:4), a fact that Paul had relayed **to the Macedonians** the year before, which in turn had spurred the Macedonians on (**stirred... them to action**). The difference between the Macedonians and the Corinthians, however, lay in their diligence in seeing the project through to completion. Slow starters, the Macedonians finished quickly. But the Corinthians, willing in spirit, needed help in disciplining the flesh (cf. Matt. 26:41; Rom. 6:19).

9:3-4. Therefore Paul was sending Titus and **the two brothers** mentioned in 8:18-24 to aid in arranging the details for the Corinthians' consummation of the collection. Paul had boasted (cf. 9:2) about the Corinthians' enthusiasm to contribute (8:10-11) and hoped that the promising clouds would indeed produce rain (cf. Hosea 6:3-4; Jude 12). If the Corinthian promise to give went unfulfilled, both Paul and the Corinthians themselves **would be ashamed** in the presence of the less able but more noble **Macedonians** who might accompany him on his third visit (2 Cor. 13:1).

9:5. To circumvent that possibility Paul had arranged for Titus and **the brothers** (8:23) to help the Corinthians get their financial house in order. The two "brothers" with Titus may possibly have been the Macedonians Jason of Thessalonica (Acts 17:5) and Sopater of Berea (Acts 20:4; cf. Rom. 16:21). Then when Paul arrived, no collections would have to be made (1 Cor. 16:2) under pressure which might resemble exploitation (cf. 2 Cor. 7:2; 9:7; 12:17-18). Such motivation is unworthy of Christ's servants. Instead, giving should be a willing response to God's grace, **not** something done **grudgingly**. Paul now turned to that subject. In the grace of God Christians are rewarded in three ways for their generosity: (1) the givers are enriched (vv. 6-10); (2) the receivers' needs are met (vv. 11-12); and (3) God, the Source of all blessing, is praised (vv. 13-15).

9:6-7. Why should the Corinthians give generously? (v. 5) Paul gave two reasons. (1) A principle holds true in both the natural and the spiritual spheres: the size of a harvest corresponds to the scope of the sowing (cf. Prov. 11:24-26). A man may enjoy all his grain by eating it, or he may "lose" some of it by sowing it and later reaping a bountiful harvest. A spiritual harvest, of course, may differ in kind from the seed sown. Material seed may reap a spiritual harvest (2 Cor. 9:9; cf. 1 Cor. 9:11). (2) Another reason for giving generously is that God loves generosity. God prizes not the size of the gift (cf. Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2), but the giver's sincerity (**not reluctantly**), spontaneity (**not under compulsion**), and joyful willingness (**a cheerful giver**).

9:8. Ultimately Christians can dispense only what they have received, whether material (Acts 14:17) or spiritual (Rom. 5:17). The good work is done through God's enabling (cf. Phil. 1:6). Regardless of how desperate one's circumstances, a person who wants to give can do so in dependence on God (cf. Phil. 4:11-13; e.g., the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:9-16; and the Macedonians, 2 Cor. 8:1-3). Once again Paul sounded the note that man's inability, by contrast, showcases God's work (4:7). This verse is full of words indicating inclusiveness in God's enabling: **all grace... in all things at all times, having all that you need... in every good work**. In the words "all things," "all times," and "all... you need," the Greek heaps three words one after the other: *panti pantote pasan* **God** is indeed sufficient! His "every" grace *abounds* so that believers can **abound** "in every good work."

9:9-10. The abounding grace mentioned in verse 8 refers to more than provision for one's needs of the moment. Charity reaps an eternal reward (cf. Prov. 19:17; Matt. 25:40). A person who "fears the Lord" (Ps. 112:1) and **gives gifts to the poor** (from Ps. 112:9, which Paul quoted) will be vindicated on the last day (cf. Matt. 6:1). Practical **righteousness endures forever** not only through the deeds but in the doer as he is progressively transformed into Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18). Ultimately a believer's reward is the culmination of the process (Phil. 3:14, 21). The One who supplies what is needed is God alone (Phil. 2:13). God (**who supplies seed... and bread**) enlarges **the harvest** (rewards or blessings) that results from righteous, generous living. The riches of **righteousness** are inestimable (cf. 6:10).

9:11-13. The more one gives to others, the more he is enriched, and thus he **can be generous on every occasion**. Such a generous spirit toward others results in more and more people giving **thanksgiving to God**. One expression of this generosity was the contribution to the Jerusalem saints, administered by Paul. **Not only** would **this service** (vv. 12-13; cf. 8:4; 9:1) meet the pressing **needs of Jerusalem Christians** **but** it would **also overflow in many expressions of thanks to God** and bring **praise to God**. The Corinthian participation in this charitable gesture would demonstrate the reality of their **confession** and the vitality of their spiritual lives.

9:14-15. Because the Corinthians sent material aid, they reaped the intercessory **prayers** of the Jerusalem Christians who in praising **God** invoked His blessings on their Corinthian brethren. This spirit of selflessness is a consequence of God's **surpassing grace** (cf. "grace" in 8:1, 9; 9:8) supremely expressed in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ (8:9). This section on giving concludes (9:15) where it began (8:1), with the grace of God. **Thanks** in 9:15 is the word *charis* ("grace, favor"). Believers are to bestow "favor" on **God** because of His favors bestowed on them. **His greatest gift** (*dōrea*) is eternal salvation, spiritual riches, through His rich Son who became poor (8:9). Such a gift is **indescribable** (*anekdiēgētō*, "unable to recount or tell fully," used only here in the NT). Those who have benefited from such a spiritual gift (stemming from God's grace) should not hesitate to benefit others with material gifts. The Corinthians finished this work and sent a gift to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Perhaps one of the most frequently heard reasons unbelievers give for avoiding church is the claim "They're always after your money." There may be some truth to this charge; there is at least a long history of pressure tactics used by some preachers and Christian leaders to get people to give more. But what most unbelievers fail to understand is this: God does not want their money! God does not want our money, either, at least not in the way many imagine. Unsaved people think they can buy God's favor, and too many believers fall into thinking that they can earn more of His favor by giving more. Yet we can do absolutely nothing to earn the great riches of favor and grace that He has already freely given us. Jesus earned that for us; we can add nothing to what He has done. God does not need our money, for He already owns all that we have and can ever hope to have. Everything we enjoy is a gift from Him. If God does not want or need our money, why does He ask His people to give a portion to His work? Why was there such emphasis on tithes and offerings, and why do we receive innumerable solicitations for help from churches and Christian ministries? The relief offering that Paul was raising for famine-stricken believers in Judea provides a clear answer. Paul knew full well that God could have provided for these people's needs any way He desired. The apostle did not need to cajole or beg believers in other regions for help. He did not threaten loss of favor with him or with God for not coming through. What Paul was doing was offering the opportunity to be part of the blessing God would shower on His needy people. The words of our text were written to believers who had already determined to be part of God's blessing but who now were having trouble following through with their commitment. Paul was urging them not to fall behind in it. Above all, he wanted them to remember that it was their decision: everyone was to give "as he purposed in his heart." Paul was not going to prescribe to any of them how much, if any, to give. That was up to them and always had been. Paul did not want any of them to give because they felt pressured to do so, telling them not to give "grudgingly, or of necessity." The latter term speaks of being under compulsion, of feeling forced to give against one's actual preference. Most of us have felt the stress of a high-pressure pitch for donations; those who succumb to such appeals do so with a mixture of resentment and guilt. That is exactly the opposite of what God wants. The giving that God invites us to take part in may indeed represent genuine sacrifice, but He does not want to see us chafing under it. On the contrary, "God loves a cheerful giver." This is more than someone who pastes a smile on his face as the basket goes by. A cheerful giver is one who recognizes the blessing of God in all that he has and enjoys, whether little or much. Further, he has learned that giving itself is a blessed privilege and wants to be part of it. God has set his heart free to be generous.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In 2012, Chuck Feeney made a remarkable and highly publicized announcement: he had decided to stop giving. That marked the end of a 30-year campaign to give away the large majority of his considerable fortune. The son of Irish-American immigrants, Feeney was born during the Great Depression and served as a radio operator in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean conflict (1950-1953). To make extra money, he started a small side business selling duty-free alcohol to American soldiers; by 1960, at the beginning of the travel boom, Feeney had begun to build an international empire of duty-free shops. But in 1984, Feeney changed course, deciding to give rather than receive. After selling his share in his company, he established a foundation to promote global education, public health, care for the elderly, and peace efforts. Feeney's foundation closed in 2016 after fulfilling its objective of distributing \$8 billion (U.S. currency). In many ways, this low-key approach reflects the biblical perspective. Feeney's foundation used the slogan "Giving While Living" to summarize his view that people should not simply amass wealth to leave to their heirs, but instead use what they have to do good while they are alive and well. God consistently calls us to give while living, viewing the financial resources we have as assets to be used for his purposes.

The exodus from Egypt and the receiving of the law at Sinai marked the beginning of the nation of Israel. We should remember Abraham's descendants had lived in Egypt for many generations, and over time they had become quite familiar with the religious views of their Egyptian overlords. Perhaps for this reason, the first two of the Ten Commandments stressed that God's people were not to worship like the Egyptians, who believed in many gods. The Israelites were to serve no gods other than the only true God and were not permitted to make idols or other physical representations of him (Exodus 20:1-6). To further assist in the religious reeducation of the people, God commanded Moses to construct a sanctuary, a national center of worship. That large, semiportable tent-complex came to be called the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8, 9; 26:1). Significantly, God did not miraculously provide the construction materials for the project. Instead, he called for an offering "from everyone whose heart prompts them to give" (25:2). That challenge takes us to the result.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Old Covenant Giving (Exodus 35:20-29)

20 And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.

21 Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

22 They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who made an offering of gold to the Lord.

23 And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought them.

24 Everyone who offered an offering of silver or bronze brought the Lord's offering. And everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it.

25 All the women who were gifted artisans spun yarn with their hands, and brought what they had spun, of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.

26 And all the women whose heart stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goats' hair.

27 The rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate,

28 and spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29 The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the Lord, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.

Giving willingly (20-22)

Giving willingly sometimes requires giving all one has (Mark 12:41-44)

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. 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."

Giving willingly is always recognized by God (Mark 14:4-9)

4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Giving willingly requires giving of oneself first to God (2 Cor 8:1-5)

1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Giving willingly is the manifestation of a contented spirit (Phil 4:10-14)

10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Giving willingly must be done honestly and sincerely (Acts 5:1-5)

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Giving willingly through sacrificial giving (Phil 4:16-18)

16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Giving from the work of our hands (23-28)

Giving oneself fully to the helping of others (1 Cor 15:58)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Giving of one's self in service to others (2 Cor 8:1-5)

1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Giving of one's possessions (Prov 3:9)

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

Giving of one's resources to honor God (Mark 14:3-7)

3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.

Giving of one's resources to provide for the needy (1 John 3:17)

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Giving obediently (29)

Giving obediently by not putting trust and hope in wealth (1 Tim 6:17)

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Giving obediently by using God's provisions wisely (Matt 25:24-27)

24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

Giving obediently by being a trustworthy good steward (Luke 16:10-13)

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Giving obediently by sharing with God's people (Rom 12:13)

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Giving obediently by supporting of family (1 Tim 5:8)

8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

New Covenant Giving (2 Cor 9:6-8)

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.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Giving generously (6)

Giving generously by contributing to the needs of others (Rom 12:8)

8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Giving generously by meeting needs (Acts 2:44-45)

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Giving generously by according to ability (Acts 11:29)

29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

Giving generously by sharing with God's people in need (Rom 12:13)

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Giving generously to the poor and needy (Deut 15:11)

11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Giving cheerfully (7)

Cheerfully because it pleases God (2 Cor 9:7)

7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Cheerfully through following the prompts of heart (Exodus 25:2)

2 "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give.

Cheerfully because of giving with honest intent and with joy (1 Chron 29:17)

17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

Cheerfully because of giving it freewill (Ezra 1:6)

6 All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

Cheerfully through giving beyond ability (2 Cor 8:3)

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

Giving results in blessings (8)

Blessings of resources that come from God's hands (1 Chron 29:14)

14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Blessings of being refreshed (Prov 11:25)

25 A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

Blessings from God for sharing (Prov 22:9)

9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Blessings of giving (Acts 20:35)

35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Blessings of having gifts accepted by God (2 Cor 8:12)

12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Guiding Principles to Counter Greed (9:6-15)

6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. 7 Let each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER." 10 Now 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 everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, 14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

The last words of verse 5 inform us of one of the principle problems at Corinth (and elsewhere) which adversely impacts grace giving: *covetousness*. Here, Paul says he has sent the brethren so they can assist the Corinthians in arranging beforehand their previously promised gift, which is not affected by covetousness. *Covetousness is the illicit desire to have what belongs to another. Generosity is the godly desire for others in need to have what I possess*. One cannot be covetous and generous at the same time. And so Paul turns our attention to those guiding principles concerning generosity which counter covetousness in the closing verses of chapter 9.

The first governing principle of sowing and reaping can be stated very simply: ***The way you sow is the way you reap.***

There is a sense in which we should "give away" our excess material possessions to the poor and expect nothing from them in return. It is also true that when we do so, we know we will be rewarded by our Lord for our generosity in heaven:

17 He who is gracious to a poor man *lends* to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed (Proverbs 19:17).

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and

repayment come to you. 13 But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind*, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:12-14).

In introducing the principle of sowing and reaping here in our text, Paul informs us that giving away some of what we have is the means by which God provides more for us to give. The one who sows sparingly, reaps sparingly. The one who sows bountifully, reaps bountifully. According to the principle of sowing and reaping, to give generously is the way to have an abundant return. The key to sowing bountifully is to delight in doing so. The reason we sow sparingly is because we sow begrudgingly. What we enjoy doing (giving generously), we do more abundantly. What we dislike intensely, we avoid. And so Paul urges the Corinthians to give generously, out of a heart filled with gratitude and joy.

Some people simply do not enjoy being generous. It causes them great pain to give up more of what they possess in order to bestow it upon someone who needs it more than they do. Once I suggested to a friend who was dying that she give away some of her possessions while she was alive, so that she could enjoy the act of giving while she was still alive. I had seriously misjudged the situation. This woman did not want to give anything away before she died, because she found no pleasure in giving. Only after her death, when she could keep her possessions no longer, would she reluctantly will them to someone else. How sad.

Giving generously is not only to be an act of joy, it must also be an act of faith. Let’s face it, when we give generously to the poor, it would seem there is no way we will ever see anything in return. But Paul introduces a *second principle of giving*: ***When we sow generously, God allows us to reap bountifully, so that we may be able to give even more.***

Giving generously is giving graciously. When we show grace to others by giving generously, God replenishes our grace, so that we have yet more to give (verse 8). God graciously provides for us to be gracious, as we exercise grace toward others in generosity. It is He who **“supplies and multiplies our seed for sowing”** (verse 10).

Like most spiritual principles, this principle is just the opposite of what we would naturally think and practice with regard to generosity. We believe we can show generosity to others only after we have obtained all that we think we need for ourselves. I am willing to give to others, once I am assured that I have enough for myself. But I never quite reach the point where I think I have enough for myself, and so I keep postponing my generosity to others. Paul tells me that I must first be generous to others, and then after I have sown generously, God will cause me to reap in abundance, so that I may give even more. I must give joyfully and in faith, looking to God to provide for my own needs, as well as for my continuing generosity to others.

As I consider this principle of sowing and reaping, I am reminded of the story of Elijah and the Gentile widow of Zarephath, as recorded in 1 Kings 17. This woman was not given an abundance of food and then instructed to feed Elijah. She was virtually out of food and was instructed to give first to the prophet, and then to trust God to provide for her and her son. This woman’s provisions were always running out. She seemed to be taking food from the mouth of her child in order to first feed Elijah. But in generously giving to Elijah, she found that God provided for her needs and those of her son. We must not wait until we have plenty and then give to those in need, but we must give what we have to give, trusting God to provide for our own needs.

In verse 9, Paul cites Psalm 112:9: “He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever.” This psalm describes the righteous man’s generosity as sowing or scattering seed abroad. It is the basis for the imagery Paul employs in 1 Corinthians 9:6. This Psalm speaks not only of the righteous man, but of The Righteous Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This psalm, like so many others, moves from the godly man to The Godly Man. Only our Lord Jesus Christ is righteous. And so in the midst of describing what a righteous man looks like, the psalmist turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, showing Him to be the standard-bearer for generosity to the poor. Whatever Paul has called upon us to do with regard to the poor, it is in the final analysis only imitating our Lord.

The imagery of sowing and reaping is further refined by this *third principle*: ***When we sow generously, what we reap is far more than monetary.***

Frankly, the religious hucksters are not entirely wrong in what they say or imply. When we give generously to God, God is generous to us in return. But the hucksters are wrong when they imply that God prospers us so that we may indulge ourselves. Paul indicates that God is generous to us so that we may be able to give generously to others. Paul also differs from the “good life gospellers” in that he does not speak only of material benefits and blessings. Paul teaches us that we reap God’s blessings in a number of forms.

We reap God's blessings as a harvest of righteousness (verse 10). Giving to the poor is not only what God does (Psalm 112:9, cited above in verse 9), it is what God requires and desires of us (see Romans 12:13; Galatians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Hebrews 13:16; James 1:27). When we give to those in need, it is regarded by God as a spiritual sacrifice, pleasing in His sight (Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:16). And thus, gracious giving not only demonstrates the grace of God, it is regarded by God as an act of righteousness, inspired and enabled by His grace.

Furthermore, generous giving to the needs of the saints produces the fruit of praise and thanksgiving to God. When needy saints receive a generous gift from fellow-believers, whom they do not even know by name, they recognize that God is the ultimate source of the gift. And so they respond with thanksgiving and praise to God for His grace in their lives (verse 11). Gracious giving does far more than just meet a physical need; it is the source of many thanksgivings to God. Now that, my friend, is reaping abundantly!

Generous giving did something else for the recipients which was very important. Those in need were not just "the poor"; they were the poor in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 24:17; see Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:24-27). These were the Jewish saints who had great difficulty accepting the fact that Jesus Christ came to save both Jews and Gentiles to make them one in Him (see Luke 4:16-30; Acts 10-11; 22:22). The generous contribution of Gentile saints is proof that their profession of faith is genuine, and that their unity in Christ is real. Because of this, these Jewish saints glorified God.

Giving to the needs of others produces spiritual blessings for the giver as well (verse 14). This financial gift bonded the Jewish saints in Jerusalem and Judea with the Gentile saints abroad. Because of this, the prayers of the poor Jewish saints not only expressed praise and thanksgivings to God, but also petitions for the well-being of the Gentile saints who had given to them.

I would have to say from experience, both as a giver and as a recipient, that giving to those in need creates a very special bond. I graduated from seminary a good number of years ago now, and I think it is safe to say that those relationships which continue are often those which involved the exchange of money. It is no wonder that the Greek term *koinonia* is used for the sharing of funds in the New Testament (see, for example, Romans 12:13; 15:27; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:15). What a way to demonstrate our unity—by sharing with the saints.

The final and *fourth principle* regarding generosity is recorded in verse 15 and may be summed up this way: ***No matter how generous our giving to others might be, it pales in insignificance when compared to the ultimate generosity of God, who saved us through the sacrifice of His Son.*** Paul is never far from the cross of Christ, even in a matter which seems as mundane as money. The gift of the Corinthians is but a drop in the bucket when compared to the gracious gift of salvation. The gift of salvation should never cease to produce awe, wonder, and gratitude. Our gifts to others should be a kind of commemoration of the gift of God in Christ. Our generosity is rooted in the generosity of our God in the person of our Savior, Jesus Christ:

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/keeping-your-commitments-2-cor-8168211915>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The challenges of Moses to the Israelites and of Paul to the Corinthians were for different reasons. The Israelites were challenged to give to construct a place of worship by which they, the givers, would benefit. The end result could be seen and touched as a physical reminder of God's presence. By contrast, the Corinthians were challenged to give to meet the needs of people they had never seen and might never see. Although the anticipated outcomes of the two giving plans were different, they shared a common factor: willingness—actual on the part of the Israelites; anticipated on the part of the Corinthians. When we find ourselves faced with an important and valid opportunity to give to meet a need, we should examine our attitude before we examine our bank account (2 Corinthians 8:12). A good place to start to test for a proper giving attitude is to recall the ultimate example of having a willingness to give: Jesus. "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (8:9).

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. The money that we give to the church is an offering to God (Exod. 35:20-21)
2. All people can bring an offering to God, regardless of how rich or poor they are (vss. 22-28)
3. God's blessings should make us willing to bring Him an offering (vs. 29)
4. Our willingness to give determines our likeliness to receive (2 Cor. 9:6)
5. Giving should come from the heart and bring joy to both receiver and giver (vs. 7)
6. It is wise to give offerings to God, who provides all your needs (vs. 8)