

# Abundance vs. Scarcity

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 for 8/13/2017

*<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."<sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

Can you name the richest American ever? Perhaps you're thinking of Bill Gates the owner of Microsoft, or Jeff Bezos the owner of Amazon. Well, you would be wrong on both accounts. Without a doubt, the richest American ever was a man named J.D. Rockefeller. He lived around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and founded the Standard Oil Company right as cars and gasoline and the need for oil was beginning. He amassed a personal fortune that in today's dollars is estimated at between 300 and 400 billion dollars. That's at least four times the amount Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos have! One day, J.D. Rockefeller was asked, "How much money is enough?" With his hundreds of billions in the bank, do you know what he said? "Just a little bit more."

"Just a little bit more." Does that describe our lives? Whether you have billions of dollars, or a little less, doesn't it always feel like we need just a little bit more? It often seems like there's just not enough: not enough hours in a day, not enough time to finish our work, not enough energy to finish projects at home, not enough money to get what we really want, not enough friends to feel like we're truly loved. We might be close to having enough, but we always seem to be just a little bit short. This appears to be our default human condition: Always needing "Just a little bit more!"

I'll admit I've felt that way, like there isn't enough of just about everything. The perfect word for this condition is "scarcity." We go through life with a scarcity mentality. If we only had a little more time, energy, money, friends . . . but we're always a little bit short. Scarcity.

While scarcity may seem like a reality, it's not! In fact, it's an absolute lie that comes straight from the devil. Satan tries to get us to believe that if we don't have enough, that can only mean one thing: God hasn't given us enough. What a lie! If you want to see where that started, just go back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were in that perfect place surrounded by everything they could have possibly desired, yet the devil convinced Eve and Adam that they didn't have enough. Satan's lie? "If you eat that fruit that God told you not to eat then you will be like God! You're not quite there yet. You need just a little bit more . . ." Scarcity entered the world with devastating results.

Just think of the results of that mentality." We're never content. We're always frazzled. Always running. Always struggling. Always searching for just a little bit more. And here's

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the worst part: God begins to seem like he demands more than he gives. Do you ever feel that way?

Here's one more result of this scarcity lie: It hurts to give. Generosity has become painful. Giving has lost its joy. In fact, you could use that as a test for how hard you have fallen to the scarcity lie. How hard it is for you to give your money away? If it's hard and painful to give your money away—to anyone—you're living with an attitude of scarcity! How did talking about money become a forbidden subject, especially in church? It's because we think we always need just a little bit more. The devil has convinced us we're always just a little bit short. Scarcity.

But God wants to completely change our scarcity mindset! He does that by using his word to change our minds; to change the way we think. God starts that process by speaking to us about a farm. Through his Apostle Paul, God says, **“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”** (v. 6). Imagine being a farmer: If you don't sow, you won't reap. A farmer must give to receive. In fact, the more seed he gives up and plants, the greater his harvest will be. That takes tremendous trust, but it works! God says it works the same with him. He who gives, receives. He who sows generously, reaps generously.

It all comes down to trusting God. So how do we know we can trust God? Can we count on him? Check out this promise: **“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”** (v. 8). The devil wants to fill you with his “just a little bit more” disease. In contrast, count how many times God says “all” or “every” in verse eight. **“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”** We don't have a God of “just a little bit more.” We have a God of “all.” God is not a God of scarcity. He is a God of abundance.

Paul says, “God is able to make all grace abound to you.” Whenever you hear the word “grace,” I want you to think of Jesus. God's grace is his undeserved love for us in Jesus. How much of that love is there? God describes it like a flood—it's abounding and overflowing. God tells us that **“In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding”** (Ephesians 1:7-8). Jesus sacrificial death on the cross washed away our sins of greed; our sins of that scarcity mentality. God gave up the Son that he loved so that he could give us so much more. The Apostle Paul tells us that **“[God] did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”** (Romans 8:32). How do we get past the “I need a little more” thinking? Grace!

You don't need a little bit more. You have it all! As Paul said, **“You will be made rich in every way”** (v. 11) In the previous chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote, **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich”** (2 Corinthians 8:9).

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Everyone who goes through life thinking they don't have enough is missing the big picture. Jesus died for you. Jesus has forgiven you. Jesus saved you. Jesus loves you. You are rich—rich right now because we have a God of abundance!

You see, being rich isn't about a number. You could have all the money in the world, but still be poor. Being rich is an attitude of contentment. It is the gift of God's grace. You have something that even Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos don't have. Neither of those men believe in Jesus as their Savior, but you have God's peace in your heart. Your worth isn't determined by your bank account. It's determined by Jesus' blood. Your freedom isn't a result of your constant struggling. It's the result of Jesus' forgiveness. You are rich! You will leave church today without a single dollar more in your pocket. You'll leave without a single hour more in your day. But you will not be needing "just a little bit more," because you have what you need the most. You are rich with the overflowing love of God found in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes people talk about different perspectives in life. Is the glass half-full or half-empty? For you it is neither because for you the glass is full! **"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"** (v. 8). Whenever this scarcity nonsense creeps back into your mind, tell yourself, "God is able therefore I am rich!" We don't have a God of scarcity. We have a God of abundance, and he has blessed you with that abundance!

But God's abundance is not meant to stop with you. Our Lord says, **"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion"** (v. 11). God has blessed you with all that you need, because God wants to make you the greatest possible blessing to others. God's blessings are not meant to come to you and stop. He has a much bigger purpose for you than that! Isn't that what we want? We want purpose in our lives. God gives you one: You exist to be a blessing for others. God wants his abundance to flow through you.

Have you ever heard of "seed money"? It's money that used to start something bigger. You might put "seed money" into your child's college account, and hope it grows. You might invest "seed money" in a business and hope it pays dividends. God's blessings are like "seed money." The money and time and possessions and talents that God has given you are seeds to sow generously. He doesn't want us to keep our blessings to ourselves any more than a farmer keeps his seeds to himself. He gives us blessings so that we can plant them, so they can grow and flourish and bless even more people with God's abundance.

So how do we start sowing those seeds? The Apostle Paul gives us a place to start. He says, **"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"** (v. 7). Giving is connected to your heart. It's a decision that reflects your faith in Jesus. This is why the church cannot tell you how much to give! You decide, but as you do ask yourself: Do I have a God of abundance or scarcity? Do I have a God who leaves me a little short or who gives me all?

Jesus encourages our abundance mentality when he says, **"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be**

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**poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”** (Luke 6:38). Have you ever measure brown sugar for a recipe? Normally you are supposed to pack brown sugar when you measure it. You fill the cup full, and then pack it down. Then fill it back to the top and pack it down again. You fill it and pack it right to the top. And then, for good measure, heap some on top and dump it all into the bowl. That’s how God gives. **“A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”** God gives more than we could ever ask or imagine.

What’s amazing is how Jesus reflected that abundance in his life. Jesus accomplished more than anyone in the history of the world. Yet do you know what you don’t ever hear Jesus doing? Running! As far as we know Jesus never ran. Jesus had only 24-hour a day, just like us, but he always had enough time. God has given you exactly the right amount of time to serve him. God has given you exactly the right amount of money to serve him. God has given you exactly the right talents to serve him. Don’t wish you had a little bit more. Rejoice in what he has given you.

Because God has given you an abundance. The mountains of our sins he has washed away in the flood of Jesus’ forgiveness. The depths of our shame God has filled with the overflow of his grace. He has blessed our lives not only with an abundance of things, but an abundance of talents and friends, opportunities and experiences. And on top of it all God holds out to us the priceless gift of a perfect, endless life of bliss with him. With such amazing love shown to us how can our hearts not be moved to give? Even the joy of giving is a gift from our loving God. Joyful generosity is our response to a God of abundance. Amen.