

Giving God's Way – Joyfully and Generously; 2 Cor 9:6-15

We're back to our mini-series on Giving God's Way this week

This time looking at it from the perspective of giving joyfully and generously

And one of the passages that speaks to that, is found in 2 Cor 9

I want to start in v6, where Paul, having just reminded the Corinthian church of an offering that he's going to be collecting, says (6-11) . . .

Before we get into the principles to guide our giving, it's important to understand that

Paul is *not* talking about tithing here

He's not talking about our regular, ongoing giving to our local church

Rather, he's talking about a special offering that he was collecting, to relieve the church in Jerusalem of their hardship

A hardship caused by drought, heavy taxation, and persecution at that time

Kind of like the special offering we collected for the church in Haiti after the earthquake

That was his purpose for writing

Which means, you can't use this passage as a proof-text to avoid tithing

You can't take v7 out of context, that *each must give as he has made up his mind*, and

say – "See, I don't have to tithe. It's up to me; I can give whatever I want"

Nothing could be further from the truth

B/c this passage deals not with tithing, but with an offering over and above the tithe

Having said that, there *are* some principles here that apply to *all* of our giving – b/c they deal with our *attitude* in giving, our *heart* in the matter

The first of which, is that . . .

God blesses generous givers (v6, 8-11)

6 – *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

An obvious farming analogy to say that if you *invest* little in the work of ministry, little relative to what you *have*, you'll get little out of it

But if you invest *much*, if you're generous in your giving, you'll be *blessed* much

And after making another point in v7, he comes back to this in v8-9 saying . . .

God is able to make all grace abound to you – i.e. he's able to open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need (Mal 3)

So that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

V9 is a quote from Ps 112 referring to the man who fears the Lord, and therefore gives freely of his money, leaving a lasting legacy of righteousness

And as such, it's meant to support what he just said in v8

That when you give *God's way*, he will supply what you *need* – i.e. his grace will abound to you . . .

So that you can supply what is *needed* – so that you can abound in every good work, including the good work of giving

God will supply what you need, when you supply what is needed

- Better yet, from v10, he *multiplies* what you have, so that as you give it generously, the impact also increases

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food – he continues with the farming analogy . . .

Will supply and multiply your seed for sowing – i.e. your ability/opp to impact lives . . .

And increase the harvest of your righteousness – the effect and fruit of your generous giving, on others

In fact, v11 says – *You will be enriched [blessed] in every way for all your generosity*

So let's get this straight – God supplies and multiplies what you have in the first place . . .

And then, when you generously give it, he increases the kingdom impact . . .

And then, turns around and blesses you for it all the more – for simply giving, what he gave you

If God blesses you financially, give *generously* from all that he generously gives

- But what *is* generous giving? Or bountiful sowing as v6 says?

Is it just a nebulous concept left up to each individual? Is it giving every penny you have and living destitute? I think not

The answer, when you boil it down from the Scriptures, I think is this – it's keeping what you need, and giving the rest away

That's generous giving – keep what you need each week, each month, each year; and give the rest away

But that begs the question – **What do I need?**"

And the answer to that is found in 3 very clear biblical principles; You need . . .

1. Enough to live in the middle of your culture (Prov 30:8b-9)

Prov 30:8b-9 – *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*

The gist of which is, seek the lifestyle God would have for you in the middle of your culture, and having found it, stick with it *****

Don't keep increasing your standard of living just b/c your income increases

Keep it the same and use the excess to give generously

2. Enough to be dependent on no one (1 Thess 4:10-12)

1 Thess 4:10-12 – *We urge you brothers . . . to work with your hands . . . so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.*

Which means you're going to need to plan and save and be disciplined *****

Keep enough to be dependent on no one

3. Enough to provide for your family (1 Tim 5:8)

1 Tim 5:8 – *If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. ******

Giving so much that your family is destitute, is no more giving God's way than keeping it all for yourself

Keep what you need, and give the rest away; That's the generous giving that God blesses

The 2nd principle, from v7, is that . . .

God loves joyful givers (v7)

7 – *Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Remember, he's talking about the special offering he's collecting for the church in Jerusalem

So you can't use the first part of this verse as your pass on tithing

At issue, is the *heart* of the giver

God loves a cheerful, eager, and *willing* giver; Not a grudging or reluctant one

Grudging obedience is not godly obedience – never has been, never will be

It's something Moses made explicit in **Dt 28:47-48** saying to the people – *Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart . . . you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lacking everything.*

They were serving him, they were giving, they were following the letter of the law – but their heart wasn't in it

And God was like, “Uh-uh; That's not what I'm looking for”

“I want your *heart*; I want *joyful* obedience; I want *happy* followers”

Or in this case – *cheerful* givers *****

People who give not b/c they *have* to out of *compulsion*, but b/c they *want* to out of *desire*

People who give eagerly and deliberately, and are *seriously* happy about it

That's who God is looking for; That's the kind of *giver* God loves

Not grudging ones, but joyful ones

- And if you're not sure which one you are, consider that . . .
Joyful givers are always looking for more ways to *give* what they have . . .
While grudging givers are always looking for more ways to *keep* what they have

Like tithing on net instead of gross – that's a grudging giver

Or giving more only when you *feel* like it; Or rejecting the tithe altogether

Grudging givers are always looking for more ways to keep what they have

And in the process, they shoot themselves in the foot

B/c **Prov 11:24** says – *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

So many people fight against the goads on this, and realize far too late in life that it's a losing battle – don't be one of them *****

You can't keep what belongs to the Lord, or even give it away grudgingly – and expect him to love it and bless it; he doesn't

God loves *joyful* givers

So whether it's tithing, or giving sacrificially, or anything in between – make sure your *heart* is in it

Otherwise you could give every dime you have, and still miss the blessing

God uses faithful givers (1 Cor 16:2; v11b-15)

1 Cor 16; Paul is talking here about the same collection he's talking about in 2 Cor 9, just a year or so earlier; And he says in v1-4 . . .

V2 is the focal point of what he's saying – pointing out the need for, and advantages of faithful, disciplined giving

And if his instruction applies to a *special* offering, taken once in a blue moon, then it certainly applies to our regular offering, taken weekly

At the very least, you should be setting aside your tithe each and every pay period, so you can give it the following weekend

That way appeals don't have to be constantly made, or pledges constantly asked for

That's not God's way of giving

And it's one of the reasons we started talking about the build-out back in July

So that you can start setting aside money now, ready to give later

That's the first way God uses faithful givers – the first of 7

1. To prevent constant appeals

2. To encourage others to give

That comes from the *first* part of 2 Cor 9, where Paul says at the end of v2 – *Your zeal has stirred up most of them*

That is, the example of generous giving on the part of the Corinthians to whom he's writing, has motivated the Macedonian Christians to give in the same way

And you can expect the same thing

When you give faithfully and generously and joyfully – you can expect that God will use it to encourage others to do the same

I showed you a testimony to that end a few weeks ago, and here's another

(Video – Krystle Gascoigne)

God's blessing doesn't always happen like that, but when it does, it's worthy of mention

3. To produce thanksgiving to God

2 Cor 9:11-12; Your faithful giving produces a constant overflow of thanks, in those who benefit – both inside these walls, *and* out

Thanks not to you, but to the One who enabled you to give in the first place

Giving credit where credit is due

4. To supply the needs of the saints

That's v12 – *the ministry of this service* [this gift] *is . . . supplying the needs of the saints*

For them, it was physical needs in the form of food and clothing

For us, it's both physical and spiritual

Physical, in the form of things like a building in which to meet

And spiritual, in the form of ministry and discipleship in which to grow; Both, needed

What's more (v13-14) . . .

5. To bring him glory

13 – *By their approval of this service, they will glorify God*

They will exalt him and worship him

And so will thousands of others around *here*, b/c of *your* obedience and generosity

People will glorify God b/c of your *submission* or obedience to give his way, arising out of your belief or *confession* that Jesus *is* the way

That's what he means when he says – *they will glorify God b/c of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ*

6. To knit our hearts together

That's v14, where referring to the Jerusalem believers, he says – they will *long for you*
They will want to be with you; They will want the best for you; They will think affectionately of you

It's an expression of unity, and that same desire for unity is available to us

When we give faithfully and generously, we can expect that God will use it to knit us together even more than we already are

7. To increase prayer

V14 says – *they long for you and pray for you*

They hadn't even received the gift and they were praying for those who would give it

Your giving doesn't *buy* u the prayer of others, but it's certainly a result; And no wonder
With the *ability* to give that we have, and the *impulse* to give from the HS – we should be constantly praying for one another to *faithfully* follow through

To respond to the all-surpassing *grace of God* that is *obviously* upon us here at HBC

God uses faithful givers to increase prayer – prayer for yourself, and prayer for others

- And then, in v15, it's like Paul runs out of words *****

God uses faithful givers so much and in so many ways, all he can do here is throw up his hands, drop to his knees, and say – *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

The gift of his grace, to give in the first place *****

Use it to give generously, and joyfully, and faithfully

And rest assured that God will use it, to increase our harvest