

## 2 Corinthians 9 – “The Hilarious Giver”

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Around Thanksgiving a number of years ago, radio commentator Paul Harvey shared a true story of a woman and her frozen Thanksgiving turkey.

The Butterball Turkey Company set up a telephone hotline to answer consumer questions about preparing holiday turkeys. One woman called to inquire about cooking a turkey that had been in the bottom of her freezer for 23 years. That's right—23 years. The Butterball representative told her the turkey would probably be safe to eat if the freezer had been kept below zero for the entire 23 years. But the Butterball representative warned her that even if the turkey was safe to eat, the flavor would probably have deteriorated to such a degree that she would not recommend eating it.

The caller replied, "That's what I thought. I'll give the turkey to my church then."

We're going to continue our message about giving today, and I hope it's no turkey! We're going to look at giving cheerfully – giving not out of obligation, but out of grace. And the context of all this has stemmed from the church at Corinth desiring to give an offering to the church in Jerusalem and to the Christians that were going through some trials there.

We looked at the first 5 verses last week, but we'll read through them again and get a fresh perspective on this as we look at why Paul was discussing giving.

Chapter Outline:

1. The Churches Preparation of Giving
2. God's Principles for Giving
3. Paul's Prayer in Giving

### 1. The Churches Preparation of Giving – 9:1-5

**9:1-4 - *Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous [redundant] for me to write to you; <sup>2</sup> for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. <sup>3</sup> Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; <sup>4</sup> lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.***

Paul didn't want to unnecessarily go through this need to take up the offering. The folks at Corinth knew the need and they saw the need to give. Paul is simply wanting them to carry out what they had already intended to do. They had every intention to give, but now it must be brought to completion.

- You know the saying: 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. We've all been there, where we want to be diligent in a certain work or activity, we fully agree with it, but actually completing it can be another story altogether.
- Their intentions to do this work was not in question. In fact, Paul says their zeal has been the catalyst for others to get involved.
- Isn't that what we should be doing for others? Hebrews 10:24 says to *consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*. This is why it's important to gather together as we do.

But now after boasting of their zeal and desire to give, Paul wants to be sure they're following through and actually carrying out this good work. He doesn't want to have to show up and be embarrassed, or have them ashamed that they've not been diligent to have this offering for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem ready to go.

**9:5 - *Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.***

Paul sends some brethren ahead of time to encourage these Corinthians in this gift and in the preparation of it so that there will be no pressure to give, or a feeling of manipulation when Paul comes.

Paul doesn't want anyone giving out of a sour attitude, or in a resentful way.

- Biblically speaking, the idea of generosity is more linked to the attitude in giving than it is the amount. Paul's not trying to put the squeeze on them to really empty their pockets. It's more about giving with an attitude of gladness and gratefulness.

How about you today? Has your zeal for the things of the Lord continued on? Has it decreased or increased over the last couple of years? May our zeal be more that good intentions, but rather be carried to completion that it may bear fruit both in our lives and in others.

Secondly, has your giving become a grudging affair, or has it been one of gladness and gratefulness. There is a blessing that comes as we minister to one another through our giving.

**Acts 20:35**, *"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

When we come to the end of our lives, we're going to be held to account not on how much we've gotten, but on how much we've given – in every aspect of our lives. Let's be faithful with what God has given us. He's calling us to steward well what He's given us.

## 2. God's Principles for Giving – 9:6-9

**9:6 - *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.***

Now when it comes to giving, there will be times where we can easily justify our lack of giving. It's never an easy thing to give something away, especially when it's our money! But what we are seeing in this passage, and especially in this verse, is that it doesn't profit to hold back. In God's economy sowing equates to reaping.

So Paul uses a great example and analogy of an illustration many in his day would be familiar with – farming. When a farmer wants to bring in a big harvest, they know they need to sow their seed liberally.

I have attempted to grow things over the years. I grow mould really well on things I leave around too long. But one thing I've struggled to grow on some areas of my property is grass. You would think this would be a very easy thing to do, but I'm here to tell you that's a myth. But one thing I do know is that when I'm scattering that grass seed, I don't try to conserve the seed and really get my money's worth by just placing a seed here, and then another one a couple feet over there.

No way! I've got to scatter that seed and know that the more I put down, the greater the results are going to be.

- "We should remember this with regard to agriculture—the farmer does not reap the exact amount of grain he sows, but much more proportionately. So it is in Christian giving: it is not a question of receiving back exactly what one has given but receiving back far out of proportion to the amount of the

gift. Of course, the return is not so much in money as in spiritual blessings.”

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Now here's the great thing with this illustration. What we sow is not lost. What we sow bears fruit. It may become something different, but that seed brings about results. And we want to be careful that we're not just dealing with increase financially. That's not what Paul is getting at. We're dealing more with a quality of return than a quantity of return. And you could add that Paul is addressing the quality of our giving rather than the quantity of it.

All through Scripture we see this principle of reaping what we sow. That pertains to many areas of our lives, but here Paul connects that to our giving.

Now it's important to address a popular teaching that is easy to connect to the things we're talking about here: the Prosperity Gospel.

What's the prosperity gospel? It's the teaching that God wants us to be wealthy and healthy and never to be in need. And let me tell you, I love that teaching! The problem however is that it's not biblical. Who wouldn't want to never be sick and never have a shortcoming in your finances? That sounds great to me! But it's not what Jesus taught; it's not what we see in God's Word.

Now proponents of this teaching will use verses like 2 Corinthians 9:6 to say that we will receive back from the Lord when we give; that we just need to sow that seed of our finances and we will reap an abundance. That as true believers in the Lord and people of faith, we should be rolling in the dough.

They will twist Scripture around and say the Parable of the Sower is speaking of your finances. That the seed is your money and when you sow it you will receive 30, 60, a 100 fold in return.

- Now of course, where are these ministries directing you to practice sowing your finances? Right to their ministries. And they drive around in their Rolls Royce's, living it up in their mansions, and flying around the world in their private jets.

The Bible never once says you should be living in abundance. Rather, the Bible makes it clear that *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil* (1 Timothy 6:10).

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<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 1854). Thomas Nelson.

**Hebrews 13:5**, *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.””*

**Luke 12:15**, *“And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.””*

- It’s not wrong to have money, as long as that money doesn’t have a hold on you. If your priority is a pursuit of more money, then you’re missing out on the real abundant life that Jesus has for us.

So, we should see our finances as opportunities to invest in what really matters – eternal things.

**Matthew 6:19–21**, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Listen, God won’t let you sink because you’re a giver. Quite the contrary.

- **Luke 6:38**, *“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.””*
- I know this verse is speaking about the measure of judgment we use, but we see this principle being applied to our lives in our giving. We see similar thoughts elsewhere in Scripture:
- **Proverbs 11:24–25**, *“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. <sup>25</sup> The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.”*
- **Proverbs 22:9**, *“He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.”*

You get the idea – you’ll never lose out because you gave to God. You will be blessed for doing so. Don’t give to get, but give because you got! God has already given you much. He’s given you everything you need – ie. forgiveness of sins, salvation, eternal life. That’s huge. God’s hands have been opened wide to give you all He has.

- **1 Timothy 6:17–19**, *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who*

*gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."*

Everything we have is already the Lords. He gives us what we need and we just get to give back to Him.

We cannot outgive God, He will be a debtor to no one.

**9:7 - *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.***

When it comes to giving, it would be easy to leave it up to those that seem to have the 'gift' of giving. But we read, ***let each one give...***

Giving is something all of us should be active and participating in.

But give as you purpose in your heart. Don't do it legalistically, or religiously, do it because you've purposed in your heart to do so.

Many people will say tithing is Old Testament, it was part of the law and we're no longer under the law. So, tithing has become obsolete or outdated they will say. I wouldn't argue that. But we see the principle of giving all through Scripture.

(Besides, Abraham gave a tithe before the law was even given (Genesis 14:19)).

The point is, we're not under some sort of legalism or a certain percentage of what to give, it's to be done from the heart. Our giving is an act of worship before God. It's not something to be done begrudgingly or out of a sense of obligation.

God wants this to be a joy for us! And it should be when we understand the purpose and outcome of our giving!

I love the idea of being a cheerful giver.

- A mother gave her child a one-dollar bill and a quarter.

"Sweetheart," the mother said, "you can place either one in the offering plate. It's entirely up to you."

As they were driving home, the mother asked the daughter what she had decided to give.

"Well, at first I was going to give the dollar," said the daughter. "But the man behind the pulpit said God loves a cheerful giver, so I felt like I would be much more cheerful if I gave the quarter instead."

- This is not what is meant by being a cheerful giver.

The Greek word used for **cheerful** is *hilaron*, where we get our word hilarious. In other words, when we give it should be such an exciting, joy overflowing, cheer filled act because we're contributing to the Lord's work, and it's His work that pays the greatest dividends.

- Anytime I see something in the Word where I see clearly that God loves it, it's something I want to take note of and it's something I want to be about!

When we get to partner with the things of God and see eternal value come out of the work of God, this is what should motivate us to give.

And as we've already seen, God takes care of those who give. He loves a cheerful giver. Our motivation should never be to get more money in return, but to simply be a worshipper of God and partner in the work of God.

**9:8-9 - *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. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."***

Now you may still be pondering this topic and looking at your situation and thinking: *'Giving is out of the question for me. You don't know my financial picture, the debt I'm in, or the responsibilities I have.'* And you're right, I don't know all those things, but I do see how the Word of God encourages us in these things saying that ***God is able to make all grace abound toward you...***

Just remind yourself of those three beautiful words – ***God is able!*** God knows your situation and He knows your heart. He's not trying to put you into a financial squeeze and a difficult place. But He does want us to express our trust in Him, and giving is certainly a huge way we do that. The outcome is that we get to see God at work, and we get to see God provide.

- "Our giving is rewarded in many different ways, materially and spiritually. Materially, God may bless our giving by promotions with better pay, unexpected gifts of money, or by making things last so we don't suffer the cost of replacing them. Spiritually, God may bless our giving by freeing our hearts from the tyranny of greed and materialism, or by giving us a sense of blessing and happiness, or by storing up rich reward in heaven. There is no end to the ways we can be blessed when God is able to make all grace abound toward us."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Guzik, David <https://enduringword.com>

In doing this we will ***always have all sufficiency in all things***. This word sufficiency is also translated as contentment (1 Timothy 6:6). Again, you will never outgive God. Giving is to be a joy and when we do so out of a heart to glorify God, we'll be content and blessed.

In fact, Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9 to back this up saying that a person that has dispersed abroad and given to the poor will not lose out. Instead his righteousness will be remembered forever.

- Notice a couple things – he disperses abroad. In other words, he doesn't hold on tightly to what he has. He lets it go and sends it away from him.
- It serves those in need. And this gift doesn't lose its reward. This person's righteousness, more so the results of his righteousness, endures forever. He's laying up treasures in heaven!

Now I want you to catch what was said in vs. 8: that you ***may have an abundance for every good work***. God supplies our needs. He's the giver of all good things. But He doesn't give so that we can have our own wealth for selfish purposes and personal consumption. He makes all grace abound toward us so that we may be able to invest into God's good work.

This is what he goes on to pray for next...

### 3. Paul's Prayer in Giving – 9:10-15

***9:10-11 - Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, <sup>11</sup> while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.***

Again, we're reminded that it is God who supplies to us what we need.

**James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights..."**

Not only does God supply what we need, but He multiplies the supply He's given us when we send it on and give to the work of God. God brings in the harvest. But the harvest cannot be collected until the seed is sown (a farmer can't hold on to the seed and expect a bountiful crop to come in).

- Again, prosperity preachers love to highlight vs. 10 and say that God will multiply the seed you have sown. Your finances will increase as you give. But God does not promise you wealth and full bank accounts. Rather we



read that He supplies seed to the sower and that He will multiply the seed you sow and the fruits of your work.

- Giving to the Lord is the best way to use our finances in a rewarding way. He makes that money, or our resources, go far beyond what we could ever have done with it on our own.
- God wants to enrich you so you can be even more free to give. This produces praise and thanksgiving to God.

**9:12-14 - *For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, <sup>13</sup> while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, <sup>14</sup> and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.***

By people giving to the Lord and to the work of the Lord, it was also bearing much fruit in ways that weren't just experienced personally. This gift had many benefits:

1. It supplied the need of others.
2. It caused people to give thanks to God. Something Paul considered a win.
3. It proved the Corinthians obedience in the gospel.
4. It prompted prayer by the recipients towards the givers. It was evident that God's grace was at work, and it caused them to rejoice and to pray even more so for this work, for the people behind it, and for their ongoing faithful service carried out by God's grace. Another big win.

What do we see in this? As you bless others, you will be blessed!

**9:15 - *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!***

Paul ends with reminding us all that God is the ultimate giver. We need to daily thank Him for the incredible, indescribable gift we have received from Him.

What is this gift? It's the gift of His Son – Jesus who saves us, reconciles us, brings us in as adopted sons and daughters of God, and causes us to be co-heirs with Christ! Paul can't even put it into words it's so amazing!

- **John 3:16**, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
- **Romans 8:32**, *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*