

“Giving My Resources”

Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

Generosity Encouraged

⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ **Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written:

“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.” (Psalm 112:9)

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ **You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.**

¹² **This service that you perform** is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions **of thanks to God.** ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the **surpassing grace God has given you.** ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! ¹

1 *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 2 Co 9:6–15.

Introduction

- Thanks, Karlen for the reading.
- What do you think about this reading?
- How do you react to the admonishment to be generous, to give, and to give happily?
- I can think of a few reactions:
 - Some of this may sound strange.
 - V. 7 “God loves a cheerful giver” – yeah right. Sure, anything you say. It is just code for “You want me to give to the church” for stuff that doesn’t do me any good
 - Perhaps you look at giving as a duty and not something to be happy about.
 - V. 11 – We will be enriched so we can give. That is not a very business practice. If you give it away it is gone.
 - It may sound difficult: Giving you stuff away is hard. I have to part with it.
 - From a business perspective, what is the payback for just giving away money?
 - From a personal perspective, I will less enjoyment if I give stuff away.
- This morning, I want to share with you how you can look at this passage as “Yes! this is what I believe – and do. “
- There are many ways of speaking of what God does for us and about the relationship between God and us. We can speak of love, or obedience, or faith. Today I’m going to frame the discussion in terms of God’s grace and our reaction to it.
- When I say grace, I mean:

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Grace: the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings.

Oxford Living Dictionary

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We need an attitude of gratitude for God’s grace.

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Premise 1 – We should give to God’s purposes

- One of the basic premises of the passage is “we should give away what we have for God’s purposes”
- You may have heard “Give **my** stuff away” or even “Give my money away” that is not what is meant.
- The first point is that the passage is not just talking about money but about all the resources that you have.
 - Your time – helping others, helping worship, cooking for the Refuge
 - The results of your work – cookies that you bake,
 - Things you own – canned food, opening your home to a Bible study
 - And of course, your money.
- All of these things are our resources.
- We may think of these things as being ‘ours’, but they are really God’s. These things were given to us by the grace of God for our use and, as the passage says, so that we can give them away.
- First let’s look at how what we have is really God’s.

God our creator

- Everything we have, everything around us, everything in the world is God’s because God is creator of everything. In this way, God owns everything.
- By God’s grace, He has given some of His creation to each of us. We are more like stewards of what we have.
 - It is like your job is to hand out the cake at a friend’s birthday party. What you are handing out isn’t yours but a gift from someone else.
- If God owns everything, then why through His grace, does He share His creation with us?
- In Acts 17:24–28 - Paul answers that question:
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²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth ... ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps **reach out for him and find him**, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’

Acts 17:24–28
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- When I say that we owe God everything, it means that we owe him
 - our bodies,
 - all of our time,
 - all of our money, and
 - all of our trust.

This is what we have been talking about in the sermons the last few months and in the Believe class after the service.

- It is important to note that God does not want us to give so much that we hurt ourselves. Some of what we have is for our needs.
 - We shouldn't give so much that we thwart God's provision for our needs,
 - but neither does he want us to hold back out of greed or selfishness.
- **This is why We need an attitude of gratitude for God's grace.**
- Do our thoughts and actions convey that gratitude? Not always.
- When we share our resources, it be hard. Why?
- Perhaps we try to give our resources out *of force of will*.
 - If you give out *of force of will* it will be hard to give.
 - If you give *through accepting God's grace*,
 - with an attitude of gratitude for God's grace, giving will be easy
 - you will be a cheerful giver.
- Let us look at an example of someone who knew that they owed God everything and was a cheerful giver.
- It is the example of Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel.

Hannah Example

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Hannah, mother of Samuel

1 Samuel 1:1-28

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- The story of Hannah is in the first chapter of the first book of Samuel in the Old Testament.
- Hannah was married to Elkanah (*el KAY nuh*) and she had a problem. Actually, she had two problems.
 - First she was barren – she did not have any children. At the time children was looked upon as a blessing of God. Children were the people who took care of you when you grew old. Not having any children was looked upon as being without God's blessing
 - Secondly, Elkanah (*el KAY nuh*) and two wives. The other wife was named Peninnah (*pih NIN uh*) and she had children.
 - Because she had children and Hannah didn't, Peninnah (*pih NIN uh*) teased Hannah about it until Hannah would cry and could not eat.
- Poor Hannah. She must have felt as if she were nothing
- One time when the entire clan went to Shiloh to worship, Hannah made a promise. In 1 Sam 1:9:

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⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life."

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- This is quite a vow. It shows faith.
 - What will Hannah get out of this promise? All the risk of childbirth, work of weaning, just to give the child up?
 - She would get a satisfaction of knowing that God heard her and of giving her precious resource, her son, to God's service.
- God did hear Hannah and gave her a son whom she named Samuel.
 - Hannah kept her part of the promise. She brought the boy to the priest after he was weened and said to the priest:

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²⁶ "Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. ²⁷ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. ²⁸ So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD."

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- Wow. She gave him up!
 - Why? Because she knew that her son was a gift from God, He fulfilled her request and so she honored her promise. She knew that she was just a steward of the boy who already belonged to God.
- Hannah knew that we owe God everything. She knew that everything we do should be for His glory and honor in thanksgiving for God's grace.

Premise 2 – give joyfully

Guilt

- Jerry Dias talked earlier about giving his money. Thinking of giving monetary resources can raise a feeling of guilt.
- It has with me because I felt the pull of wanting to give but also of wanting to keep.
- Does talking about giving money, make you uncomfortable or guilty?
 - Giving an extra \$20 a week means you have to eliminate that daily Starbucks coffee,
 - or Giving an \$50 a week means you'll have to eat out once less a week
 - or Giving an \$500 a month means a less fancy annual vacation?
- God does provide us with some financial guidance
- Traditional ways of looking at it.
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 - Genesis 14:20 - Abraham gives 1/10th of his possessions to God.
 - Jacob too in Gen 28:22 gives 1/10th to God.
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 - We have a target – 10% of our giving.
 - WVPC has this same goal – target 10% to missions – outside of the church.
- Notice that this is a very general goal
 - For many 10% a stretch goal
 - The accountants among us may ask do I give on our gross income, net pay, pre-tax or post-tax or disposable income?
 - Good news for the tax accounts here – the IRS says that donations to the church are tax deductible! Up to 50% of your income! (See Publication 526).
 - How many folks here are in danger or reaching that limit? Should it matter?

- Giving to God, monetary and nonmonetary gifts, shouldn't be motivated by guilt. God doesn't use guilt.
- We humans are good enough using it on ourselves.
 - God just wants us to respond to Him
 - **He wants our giving to be in thanksgiving for what He has given us.** For His grace to us.
 - That is what Paul was talking about when in v. 7 he writes:

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⁷Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

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- What does your heart have to do with giving resources?
- It is from your heart that gratitude flows for all blessing God has given you.
- The Presbyterian The Study Catechism of 1998 has a wonderful statement about why we should obey God. In this case, it is talking about obeying God's law. It says:

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- **Question 91.** Why should you obey this law (the ten commandments)?

Not to win God's love, for God already loves me. Not to earn my salvation, for Christ has earned it for me. Not to avoid being punished, for then I would obey out of fear. **With gladness in my heart I should obey God's law out of gratitude, for God has blessed me by it and given it for my well-being.**

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- God has given you all that you have and more than you need. It is in gratitude that we should give some of this bounty back to God.
- Giving this way is not from guilt but
 - from the peace of knowing what God is leading you to do.
- **We need an attitude of gratitude for God's grace.**

Premise 3 – God’s bounty

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God doesn’t act like He is good at math

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God’s Math

- Have you noticed that God doesn’t act like He is good at math? As I mentioned earlier in V. 11 – We will be enriched so we can give.
 - That is not quite how the rules of finance work – in business we get enriched so we can keep it!

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God doesn’t act like He is good at math

(thank God)

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- Thank God doesn’t act like He is very good at math.
 - Thank God that we do not get what we deserve.
 - But we get more than we need.
 - Thank God that we do not get a fair treatment for our sin
 - But that we get God’s forgiveness
 - Thank God that we do not need to pay the price for our sin.
 - Jesus did that.
 - Thank God that He shares the bounties of His world with us
 - Because we did not earn any of it.
 - Thank God that He does not leave us to our own desires
 - But gives us Grace!

Conclusion

- Hannah trusted God and gave of her only resource.
 - God rewarded her with more than she asked for – see 1 Samuel 2:21.
 - Again, He can't seem to get the math right. Thank God.
 - She trusted God. She was a cheerful giver. God loved her. God loves us.
 - We all need to be cheerful givers. We do not need to worry about giving on gross pay, or net pay. We do not need to worry about anything but listening to what God wants us to give. That is how we should respond.
 - We should not give out of guilt
 - nor out of a strict rule of 1/10th of our income.
 - But out of an expression of our connectedness to God that is only possible through His grace, in Jesus, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Not out of ourself.

- My challenge to you today is to sit down and consider the ownership of everything that you have.
 - Is it yours or is it God's.
 - What do your thoughts and your actions say about what you believe?
 - Consider the giving of your resources. Are you giving out of habit, guilt, or out of thankfulness to God and the leading of the Holy Spirit?
 - Consider God's grace given to you.
 - Adjust your giving if needed out of your response to God's grace given to you.

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Consider ownership of what you have

- Is it yours or is it God's.
- What do your thoughts and your actions say?
- Are you giving out of thankfulness to God?
- Consider God's grace given to you.
- Adjust your giving if needed

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- My wish is that we all might be complete Christians:
 - who are humble about what we possess,
 - who are confident of God's love,
 - who are not burdened by guilt,
 - who respond to God's grace, and
 - who love God.

- The only way that we can respond to God is through His grace. Earlier we acknowledge our sin in our prayer of confession. It is through Jesus Christ that we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.² What an unimaginably bountiful gift of grace this is. Let us come to Lord's table now to remember what Jesus has done for us.

Benediction

- Go out this week with an attitude of gratitude

- Be thankful for a God who gives generously to us
- Be thankful for a God who showers His blessings upon us

- In turn, we are called to
 - Go out and give out of our bounty for God's purposes and
Go in love and peace to serve the LORD.

- Amen