

Stewardship: Giving

2 Corinthians 8,9 09 10 17

This is the last in this series on stewardship, the management of things God has put under our control. These have included time, opportunity, wealth and the role of tithing, influence: today, giving.

- Apart from scripture, the best book I have ever read that analyzes giving is Who Really Cares, by Arthur Brooks. His PhD is from Rand Graduate School in Santa Monica, Ca. Rand, offers the most extensive public policy PhD level study in the nation. Book opens with two perspectives: Alexis de Tocqueville and former president, Jimmy Carter.

2 Corinthians 8,9

1. Case study of the giving of Macedonia churches 8:1-5
 - a. Took place in time of great affliction;
 - b. Churches poor yet filled with joy;
 - c. Even the deep poverty did not lessen their joy or desire to give when they heard of the need of Jerusalem and others;
 - d. They gave according to their ability, but far beyond, Mark12:43,44, widow
 - i. They petitioned to give; apparently were going to be excused, but wanted to have privilege to be part of the solution;
 - ii. This giving was preceded by a dedication of themselves; total, practical, expectant; no other explanation;
2. The case of the church in Corinth, **wealthy, motivated, but not prepared**.
 - a. Titus had begun the finance drive, was sent back to finish the task;
 - i. Paul appeals to their spiritual gifting;
 - ii. Paul appeals to their right motives and desires
 - iii. Paul appeals to bringing to completion what has been started;
 - b. God was pleased with the inclination, but there now needed to be completion up to ability;
 - i. Not to make life easy, but to give others a chance;
 - ii. With the understanding that one day, Corinth would be in need.
 - c. Paul's last appeal of this type is to the danger of incompleteness;
 - i. Others at Achaia have become excited and motivated by your intention; not to carry through would break their faith;
 - ii. 9:5 is a warning of coveting and its ability to help us justify doing less than intended;

3. Paul ends this with a description of why God has given us the power to give and what giving does to us:
 - a. Rules of the harvest: the limit of planting predetermines the limit of receiving; sow sparingly; reap sparingly;
 - b. Attitude is critical: Purpose with a cheerful heart; God loves a cheerful giver;
 - c. V8, God's ability is up to His greatest promises; "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed!"
 - d. V10 is the foundation of chapter 8: He who supplies
 - i. Seed for the sower (tomorrow)
 - ii. Bread for food (today)
 - iii. Will supply and multiply your seed for sowing (notice He is responding to our faith as it grows while we are sowing)
 - iv. And increase the harvest of your righteousness; what is that harvest?
 1. You will have abundance to be able to give (God increases in the middle of our faithfulness)
 2. Your giving is producing thanksgiving to God from Paul;
 3. Your giving is meeting needs, but more, producing an overflowing abundance through many thanksgiving to God; (those in Jerusalem in need were being lifted up by the giving)(
 4. They will glorify God for your obedience in living what you preach, giving
 5. They, persecuted Christians, are praying for you;
4. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!!v15 (the gift of Christ, but also of the spirit of giving that explains John 3:16).

Arthur Brooks on "Who Really Cares," ends his book by saying givers are not only the happiest, healthiest, most effective people in society, somehow, they end up with more than those who do not.

1. You may be on the periphery, afraid not to give, but not really celebrating in your giving; like Corinth, begin today;
2. You may be a giver, wanting to give more; beginning to see the potential of wealth and resource beyond more stuff of your own;
3. You may be down the road, giving generously, even sacrificially; may God especially bless you.