THE SCROLLS

Openhanded: Releasing Our Grip On What Grips Us | 2 Cor. 9:6-15

Life Lesson

True generosity is never born of legalistic obligation or fear of losing what we have, but of a profound realization of what we have already received. When we view our resources as seeds graciously supplied by God rather than a limited stockpile we must fiercely protect, giving transforms from a reluctant exaction into a joyful, cheerful act of worship. By surrendering our entire lives to God in response to His indescribable gift of Christ, we are freed from the anxiety of scarcity. We discover that God's abundant grace equips us not for self-centered independence, but to cheerfully abound in every good work that blesses those around us.

Examine Scripture

Read 2 Cor. 9:6-15

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. What does this passage reveal about who God is?

2. How is God calling you to grow or change?

3. What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?

Satisfaction: What Giving Gains

Whenever the topic of financial giving arises, walls often go up. Many people assume the church is merely after their money, or they reduce generosity to a legalistic math equation, asking questions like, "Should we tithe off the gross or the net?" However, this mindset steers us in the wrong direction. It traps us into focusing on the absolute minimum we are required to give instead of the best we can joyfully offer, turning what was designed to be an intimate act of worship into a dry, compulsory religious ritual.

To reclaim a right theology of giving, we must understand the historical backdrop of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Paul writes to encourage the Corinthian church to take up a special offering for impoverished believers in Jerusalem. These Jewish Christians were destitute, enduring a perfect storm of hardships: crippling twofold taxation by both Jewish and Roman authorities, a severe famine during the reign of Emperor Claudius, and the harsh social and economic ostracism that accompanied conversion to Christianity.

To motivate the Corinthians, Paul first points them to the incredible example of the churches in Macedonia. Despite their "extreme poverty" and severe trials, the Macedonians did not hold back; instead, they urgently pleaded with the apostles for the privilege of participating in this service. They gave not only what they could afford but far more than they could. Their deep poverty did not produce apathy but rather a profound empathy that opened their hearts and their purse strings. Giving itself is a gift of God, and the Macedonians' spontaneous generosity was clear evidence of God's grace at work in them.

With this radical example in mind, Paul transitions in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 to a profound exposition on Christian generosity. He challenges us to approach giving from a different perspective, not

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as an exaction or a tax, but as a gateway to experiencing God's true blessing, joy, and grace.

V. 6

Paul presents this passage with a proverb in double chiasm: "The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously" (v. 6). Using this literary technique, Paul emphasizes the middle terms: sparingly and generously. First, Paul warns that those who give sparingly will reap the same. The Greek word is "pheidomenōs" (φειδομένως), which literally means stingily or scantily. It is not merely giving a small amount but having a small heart while doing so. Conversely, the Greek word for "generously" is "epi eulogia" (ἐπ᾽ εὐλογίαις); it is a compound phrase that refers to the motivation behind giving, not just the size of the gift. The word "epi" means "on the basis of," and "eulogia" means "blessing or gift." So, we are to give on the basis of the blessings or gifts of God that we have received. It is not an exact amount but a proportional response to the blessings we have received from God, which are beyond generous.

The apostle Paul grounds his theology of giving in the unavoidable agricultural principle that a person reaps according to how they sow. Giving generously is not a loss of wealth but an investment ultimately in the giver's best interest. However, the heart's posture determines the gift's validity. Paul explicitly rejects wrong attitudes: we must never give out of compulsion, with reluctance, or with a spirit of exaction that selfishly expects something in return.

V. 7

Now, Paul begins to unfold the proper attitude toward giving: "Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver" (v. 7). Each person is to give as they have decided in their heart; in other words, it is about our heart and attitude, not the size of the gift. Paul then provides two examples of the wrong attitude or motive in giving: reluctance and compulsion. A genuine follower of Christ does not have to be forced into generous giving; it naturally overflows from their lives as they continually worship Christ. Someone who has truly experienced the power of the Gospel does not have to have generosity dragged out of them through guilt trips. Nor does a true follower of Christ give with regret or reluctance, for they know that

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any gift, of any size, falls short of the blessings they have received in Christ.

So, how should we give? Cheerfully! But giving must be highly intentional and fiercely joyful. The Greek word for cheerful is "hilaros" (ἱλαρός). It is the root of our word "hilarious." It conveys audacious, unabashed joy. Tim Keller notes that true biblical stewardship sits at the intersection of generosity and joy. In other words, joyful giving produces even joyful living.

Vs. 8-9

Paul shows that this generous openhandedness is an investment that will yield divine dividends. For the believer who fears that extreme generosity might lead to personal scarcity, Paul offers reassurance of divine provision. The Greek term for having "everything you need" is "autarkeia" (αὐτάρκεια); it denotes a state of perfect sufficiency in life, where no outward support is needed. In Paul's day, Cynic and Stoic philosophers used this word to describe an arrogant, intrinsic self-sufficiency that made a man entirely independent of external circumstances. Here, Paul radically redefines it, not as self-sufficiency but as sufficiency provided wholly by God's grace. This grace does not make us independent of others but equips us to abound in good works toward them.

To emphasize his point, Paul quotes (Ps. 112:9): "He distributed freely; he gave to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." In other words, such generous, benevolent giving has benefits and impact that extend far beyond meeting others' needs. Generous giving shapes our hearts, allowing our righteousness to show through extravagant good works. Our good works do not produce righteousness but overflow from the righteousness we have received in Christ, which is "every grace overflow to you" (v. 8).

Vs. 10-11

God is the ultimate source who provides givers with the resources to give in the first place. He faithfully increases His blessings toward us for a specific, outward-facing purpose: so that we can continue to bless others. Though Paul emphasized the agricultural truth that we reap what we sow, he goes further to show that, by God's grace, we reap more than we sow. If we give generously, we will reap generously, yet even the generous reaping we experience is only a taste. It is the minimum of the riches of God's blessings we will receive.

Personal Reflection

1. How do I currently view my financial giving? Do I treat it as a reluctant, legalistic requirement or as a joyful, intentional act of worship?

2. Where am I holding back generosity due to a fear of scarcity, and how can I better trust God's promise to supply everything I need so that I can do good works?

3. How does my current spending reflect the biblical truth that God enriches His people so they can be generous on every occasion and supply the needs of others?

4. Since faith is tested not only by affliction but also by seasons of prosperity, what does my generosity currently reveal about the reality and vigor of my obedience to God?

5. Before considering my financial resources, have I followed the Macedonian believers' example by first giving myself fully to the Lord as a living sacrifice in response to His indescribable gift?

Commentaries

ESV Expository Commentary: Romans-Galatians (Volume 10) by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament Edited by Kenneth Barker

2 Corinthians by John MacArthur

Mt. Zion's Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to ***MAKE***, ***MATURE***, *and* ***MULTIPLY*** *disciples of Jesus Christ.*

Generous giving is cyclical. The greater the blessing from God, the greater our resources to give. The greater our giving, the greater the ongoing cycle of blessing, which leads to even more generous giving. True biblical generosity is exponential. The ultimate goal of this cycle is to produce thanksgiving to God. As we receive blessings, we bless others, and God receives glory from both those who give and those who are helped.

Vs. 12-15

Generosity is a deeply spiritual act that lets us participate in something bigger than ourselves, whether that means helping the poor, advancing global missions, or strengthening the local church. Paul calls this giving a service or ministry, using the Greek word "leitourgia" (λειτουργία). Historically, this word described both public service, in which wealthy citizens spent their own money for the common good, and the sacred, priestly ceremonies of the temple. Paul merges these definitions: our financial generosity is both a benevolent act for the common good and a holy, spiritual offering to God.

This service or ministry demonstrates the reality and vitality of our faith. While God often tests believers through affliction, some of the most profound tests of obedience come in times of relative prosperity. Paul concludes the discourse by pointing to the ultimate example: God gave His only Son for us while we were still sinners. He calls this gift "anekdiēgētos" (ἀνεκδιήγητος), meaning it is indescribable; it simply cannot be recounted or explained in mere human words. Because of this unfathomable grace, the best gift we can ever offer is to give ourselves fully to God as a living sacrifice.

Ultimately, the call to radical generosity is not about funding a budget; it is about following the perfect example of the One we worship. God demonstrated His love by giving His only Son for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8), which is why Paul ends his practical discourse on money with an eruption of praise: "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (v. 15).

As Martin Luther noted, true conversion must ultimately reach the purse because when our hearts truly grasp this grace, our hands inevitably open. To become open-handed givers, we must adopt the posture of the Macedonian church: "they gave themselves first to the Lord" (v. 5). Financial generosity is merely a byproduct of complete surrender. The greatest gift you can offer is to present your entire life as a living sacrifice to God. All else will follow!