

**FAITH and DROUGHT**  
**Poverty, Pennies, and Paradoxes**  
**2 Corinthians 8 – 9**

Some of you may have wondered why I am doing a series like this on money. That one is easy for me. You see, at CHC we are blessed to have seen many people come to Christ over the past several years. And many, if not most of these people have come from an upbringing where they were not taught financial principles from a biblical perspective. They were not taught that their finances are a key indicator of their spiritual life, and that their finances have a tremendous impact on their walk with God and on the expansion of the Kingdom itself. Therefore, as a pastor I have the privilege and the responsibility of teaching what it means, and how it is possible, to honor God in the area of finances. And then I get the joy of seeing that take root in their lives. This means that I must take it slow and start at the very beginning.

**[Talk about RIGHT NOW MEDIA – SHOW SLIDES.] [Financial Peace Classes]**

**(Hold up a penny)** My dad and I had an interesting conversation years ago. He told me that he REGRETS how many pennies he felt he has NEGLECTED throughout his lifetime. I asked him what in the world he meant. His answer was convicting. He said that pennies were little choices; simple decisions that COULD have been made that – over time – COULD have made a huge difference. There were neglected pennies in the area of his health, in relationships, and in finances; pennies that could have added up and become a real blessing and help. But these potential resources were neglected or ignored or simply thrown away. Pennies are funny like that. Today, if you see one on the street you may not even bend over and pick it up. But for most of us, what is a penny worth anyway? I mean, who cares about a little piece of copper that is only 1-100<sup>th</sup> of a dollar? According to my dad, wise people do! Wise people see the value not just of ones and tens and hundreds, but of pennies and nickels and dimes as well. **The truth is, we overestimate what we think we can do with DOLLARS in a single YEAR, but we drastically underestimate what we think we can do with PENNIES over a lifetime! [\$25,000 millionaires]** In this series, I have challenged you to SAVE the pennies that God gives you as an act of financial wisdom. I hope that you are applying those truths to your life. But there is an even more important truth about our pennies that we need to know. You see, we deeply underestimate the VALUE that God puts on the hard earned pennies that we GIVE AWAY over a lifetime. **[By the way, I am NOT saying that you should give away pennies and keep dollars!] In God's economy, saving our pennies is not nearly as rewarding as giving them away; thus giving is a higher priority than saving.** The proper order of a life of faith: GIVE . . . SAVE . . . then LIVE.

**STORY OF THE POOR WIDOW – Luke 21:1-4 NLT**

1 While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. 2 Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. 4 For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has."

Pennies CAN represent how LITTLE we GIVE AWAY compared to what we KEEP.  
Or, they can represent how MUCH we give away compared to what we HAVE LEFT.

-Can you imagine GIVING away MORE than you KEEP? I cannot!

\*Jesus HONORED this woman's offering as a worthy EXAMPLE for all of us! Here is what her amazing example teaches us.

**LIVING by faith means GIVING by faith.**

**Jesus KNEW what these pennies meant to this widow!**

\*He realized that it was her LAST 2 CENTS!

\*He pays attention to what others may miss in your giving. It is TO and FOR him!

\*He made sure that the disciples NOTICED her as well. **(Teachable moments!)**

-We only tend to notice BIG GIFTS, but God sees our gifts in light of the level of the SACRIFICE that they represent! **[Money from Guatemala]**

**Jesus ALLOWED her to give them!**

\*He did not rush in and convince her to keep that money for herself!

-Those 2 Cents mattered to her! **[Would you counsel her to give it or keep it?]**

\*Do YOU think that God REQUIRES you to GIVE even when you are facing some kind of DROUGHT in your own life? Is that even FAIR?

-This vividly shows what it means to PUT GOD FIRST: **Matthew 6:31-33 NLT**

31 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God **above all else**, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

\*Those who give by faith give as a FIRST PRIORITY! **[We tend to put God LAST!]**

-You are not giving by faith if you are giving LEFTOVERS.

\*Giving first gives God room to demonstrate his faithfulness and love.

-NOTE: He does not tell us how he REWARDED her offering! We have to TRUST.

Many of us believe that we are living a life of faith because we BELIEVE the right things. **How do YOU define a life of faith for yourself?**

-Good DOCTRINE; Church ATTENDANCE; Having MORAL STANDARDS

\*Jesus said: **Don't just call me Lord; DO my will!**

James says: FAITH WITHOUT WORKS . . . is DEAD!

-Faith is ACTION; a GIVING of OUR SELF. [Obedience, Service, Sacrifice, Offering]

-Oftentimes, this will make NO SENSE. **[God's Ways are NOT our ways!]**

Jesus pressed us to accept the PARADOXES that GIVE faith a CONTEXT!

**-Paradox: A statement that seems contradictory, but may be in fact TRUE.**

\*The FIRST will be LAST, and the LAST will be FIRST!

\*If you want to be the LEADER . . . be the SERVANT!

\*If you want to LIVE . . . you have to DIE!

\*If you want to BE RICH . . . GIVE your wealth AWAY!

Some of you are allowing your POVERTY to keep you from GIVING what God has told you to give! **Others are allowing your PROSPERITY to keep you from giving what God has told you to give.** The church at CORINTH had this problem, so Paul CHALLENGED them with the example of the MACEDONIANS in their poverty.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-4 NLT**

1 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but **far more**. And they did it **of their own free will**. 4 They **begged us again and again** for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.

\*These precious Christians were living in drought-like conditions, but it did not stop them from giving. In fact, they were PASSIONATE about giving to the needs of others around them. They did this IN ADDITION to what they were already giving to support the work of God around them. **Philippians 4:15-16 NLT**

15 As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. 16 Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once.

-These believers modeled the truth that sacrifice begins by giving ABOVE a tithe.

-They kept their possessions and their priorities in order by a simple principle:

**2 Corinthians 8:5 NIV**

5 And they exceeded our expectations: They **gave themselves first of all** to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

**The life of faith BEGINS by transferring ownership of your SELF and then your STUFF to God.**

Do you know the JOY of POSSESSING NOTHING? **[My story of this moment]**

-This is something that may be done SEVERAL TIMES in your life!

**-STEWARDSHIP: Giving God my TREASURES, my TALENTS, and my TIME!**

\*What PERCENTAGE of your time, talents, and treasures are you giving?

-SERVING AT CHC: Investing in Kid's ministry; Creating Environments

\*Is this a PRIORITY in your life, or an AFTERTHOUGHT?

Transferring ownership of my self and my stuff to God will allow me to GROW in my GIVING. **I will become a PROGRESSIVE GIVER! 2 Corinthians 9:10-11a NLT**

10 For God is the one who **provides seed** for the farmer **and then bread** to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. 11 Yes, you will be enriched in every way **so that you can always be generous.**

-The SEED PRINCIPLE is an aspect of the LAW of the HARVEST!

\*You REAP in PROPORTION as you SOW. [1 Seed=1Plant; 10 seeds=10 plants]

-Do you see your income as SEED that can produce a HARVEST for GOD, and not just for YOU?

\*Are you willing to ask God to INCREASE your INCOME **so that** you can GIVE MORE?

-This is how we will MOVE forward at CHC. **[New Building; Needs in S'haven]**

-This is also one of the key ways that we GLORIFY GOD and WITNESS to others!

\*Jesus demonstrated this principle and the ULTIMATE PARADOX when he came to this earth and GAVE HIS LIFE: **2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT**

9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

\*Have YOU truly given your whole SELF to God? [TRANSFER of OWNERSHIP]

\***Challenge #1** - Make giving your first priority (Give – Save – then Live).

\***Challenge #2** - Give of your TIME by SERVING CONSISTENTLY in some ministry at CHC and by PRAYING for our VISION and BUILDING NEEDS at CHC as we grow.

\***Challenge #3** - Stretch in your giving this next year by increasing your overall giving by 1%, 2%, or more!

Yes, this will be a great BENEFIT to CHC. But it will be a GREATER BENEFIT to the INDIVIDUALS who step out in faith in these ways, and to the KINGDOM of GOD on this earth. Are you willing to live by faith through giving by faith?

Let's pray.