



## 2 Corinthians 9 Give Cheerfully

Summary: God loves a cheerful giver who shares what they have received from Him.

This morning we finish up a three-week stretch of sermons on giving, but I want to remind you, that's not because the church needs money, it's because Scripture talks about it. And we've come to a section that talks about it *a lot*.

Here in 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9, we find the apostle Paul speaking at length, challenging Christians in the city of Corinth to give generously, personally, and cheerfully to meet the needs of fellow Christians down in Jerusalem enduring famine conditions. This was above and beyond their giving to their local church. It's a level of generosity that may seem strange, impossible, or inconceivable to you, but it's actually presented as natural, typical, baseline, Christian behavior.

And as we have gone through the Scriptures, I have tried to emphasize – when it is genuine, it is motivated and characterized by *joy*. In other words, when our hearts are properly calibrated, giving is not a burden or a drag.

Giving only becomes a disappointment when we feel like we're losing something – some freedom, opportunity, cash, time, or resource.

When we see giving as an opportunity to join in the work that God is doing, to play a part in what He's unfolding, to show up and make a difference in a situation for His sake, giving feels like a privilege not a penalty, a reward not a requirement, a delight not a duty.

So read with me and notice what God wants us to know about giving and our motivations for it.

**2 Corinthians 9:1** Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia [that's the region where the city of Corinth was located] was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.

Paul says, I know I don't need to tell you about the opportunity that exists in Jerusalem, because I already shared that last time. And you said back then that you wanted to help out – so I told the churches up north, in the region of Macedonia, what you said you were going to do, and when they heard, they wanted in on it too.

**3** 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; **4** lest if *some* Macedonians come with me

and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.

He says, I told them what you said, so I hope you really meant it, and you still want to do it, because they actually followed through, and now they're coming with us to pick up your check.

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.

There are two main points I want to draw our attention to from this part of the passage.

The first is just to help introduce what we'll see even more clearly very soon – Paul wants to ensure their giving is *a matter of generosity and not ... a grudging obligation*. I shared in an earlier sermon that if you're only giving because you feel like you have to, God doesn't want what you're giving. There's this invisible chain between your heart and your wallet, and the only way God wants what's in your wallet is if it comes from what's in your heart.

We'll talk more about that soon. But first, we need to look at our second point - the reality that it is not unusual to drift away from the good intentions we once had, and there might be no place where this holds more truth, than in how we spend our time and money.

So maybe, like the Corinthians, there was this one time when we had a lofty, noble ambition – we were going to do something good for spiritual reasons. We had a good desire. A noble desire. A God-pleasing desire. And then, we got distracted. We were confronted with our weakness. We didn't do the thing we said we wanted to.

Christian, that is not an unusual experience. It is not at all unusual to come to church, hear an inspiring sermon and say, I'm going to do that, I'm going to be like that! And two weeks later, nothing has changed. And it's not even because you were so busy out there sinning. You just get distracted. You fall into old patterns and habits. You slip back into your normal rhythms, routines, and priorities.

So sometimes you need to be reminded of what you said you wanted to do. Change, growth, making and keeping commitments – these things are rarely easy or automatic. They're cultivated over time, especially if they're the kind that last. I want you to know that.

They're not things you generate by making yourself feel guilty, or telling yourself how much you suck, or even by figuring out how you're going to muscle way through it with grit and determination. If you really want to change, if you really want to do that good thing that once was in your heart, the key is to emphasize the right motivation: do it for the *joy* of what it will bring. Remind yourself *why* you wanted to do the thing, *why* you wanted to make the change or give. Rekindle the desire for the joy you will experience when you do.

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

Paul now introduces an important spiritual principle: we reap what we sow. Paul makes an agricultural analogy to drive home an important point – the more you invest, the greater your return. In other words, when you give your time, your skills, your money as an investment into others *for the sake of God*, you will reap a tremendous harvest.

Now, that does not mean if you give \$10 to some ministry that God will give you \$100. Or that if you give your time to some ministry that God will send someone to wash your laundry and make dinner for your family. God does not always return to us in the same form that we give, you may spend financially and reap spiritually, but the principle holds true – when you give to God you will always get something greater in return.

Over the past several weeks, I've tried to emphasize, when it comes to giving, attitude is more important than amount and I think that's something this verse helps us see. There's no such thing as a stingy, successful, farmer. To the contrary, most farmers want to get as much seed into the soil as they can – they always wish they had a little more land, or a little more seed, or both because they believe in this exact principle – the more you sow, the more you reap.

Perhaps you've done some gardening and if you've ever planted with seeds you're familiar with the concept of thinning – you put seeds in the ground, let them grow, and then when the plants are small, you actually come back along and pull some of the smaller ones out of the ground in order to make room for the biggest, best, and healthiest plants. You sow bountifully in order to set the conditions for the best possible harvest.

Now, that has to be balanced – there's a certain amount of time, energy, and money you need to designate for taking care of your basic needs and those of your family – not for luxuries, not for extras, not for niceties, but just for life. And then you can look at what's left over and decide: where will you make your additional investments?

The answer to that question will often give a very clear diagnosis of the desires that reign in your heart. As we have said before the way you spend your time, your money, your skills, the ways you use your resources, is often a very clear indicator of the motives and condition of your soul.

We tend to spend more of our time and money on the things we want more of, so when you look at your bank account and your calendar – what do they show about you? Where are you sowing, and are you happy with what you're reaping? Because God's goal is to see you both cheerfully enjoying what you have *and* what you give.

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

I'm going to be super clear on this: God wants your time and your money, *but only because He actually wants your heart*. And if He has your heart, your time and your money will follow. There should never be a question of, how much do I *have to* give, or how much do I *need to* give? The goal is to come to the place where we say, 'everything I have and am is Yours, Lord. Where do You want to spend it?'

This means you should never, ever, be guilty, pressured, squeezed or emotionally manipulated into giving or serving. If that's the only way to accomplish whatever they're trying to do, it's a pretty good bet, God's not in it. He wants you to give, but He wants you to do it **cheerfully**, and note this (vs 7): He **loves** it when you do.

Christian, I need you to hear that. Those of you serving on the worship team – giving your time to come to practice, showing up early to get ready, staying for two services on Sunday. You need to know: God **loves** your cheerful service.

Those of you serving in Children's ministry, preparing your lessons at home in the evening instead of watching Netflix, wondering how in the world you're going to get little Tommy's attention this week, praying for your class and their walk with Jesus, God **loves** you more than you love those kids.

And to those of you who wrote a check to support the ministry of the church, to make it possible to keep this place running, to fund its ministries and outreach, and did so joyfully, enthusiastically, God **loves** you.

Not *because* you gave, but He does love the fact that you gave. When a child does something helpful around the home, their parents don't love for what they did, but they do love and appreciate the fact that they have done it. Well, Christian, when you give your time, your money, and your skills it's noticed by God and appreciated by God. When service flows out of your heart, He **loves** it, because He sees Himself reflected in it. He gives cheerfully to us.

And look, to the skeptic, to the cynic, to the outsider listening in, it can seem almost comical for me, someone who receives a paycheck from the church, someone supported by your generosity, to say all this – *but I'm reading to you from Scripture*.

And I'm telling you this is true: **God loves a cheerful giver**. And my friends that's speaking about some of you directly. Again, He doesn't love you *because* you give, you're not buying His affection or approval. But He sees the way you sacrifice and serve, and He **loves** it. In fact, He's actually making it all possible as we see next.

**8 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.**

If I could summarize this for you, I'd put it this way: God gives you what you need in order to give to others. He stocks your life with time and money and materials and skills *in order that* you might be a divine distribution hub delivering to others in His name.

And would you look at the comprehensive nature of spiritual supply chain here. [God is able to make all grace abound to you. All grace, abound.](#) This is what is possible in your life! But what's the purpose of it all? [That you always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.](#) Let me put that in super clear terms: Christian, God is giving you enough to give away.

Think through this with me. God wants you to take part in His Kingdom work, so He gives you what you need to give to others, and when you do, you experience the joy of having an impact, it makes you cheerful, and on top of that, God loves what you're doing - this is the Christian life! This is what it is supposed to be.

9 As it is written:

*"He has dispersed abroad,  
He has given to the poor;  
His righteousness endures forever."*

You might think that's talking about God. It's not. It's talking about someone who looks a lot like Him, it's talking about the cheerful giver. This is talking about you, and again, it's all made possible by God who gives you everything you give away in the first place:

10 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, 11 while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

Church, you have to get this! It says God gives you the seed AND is able to increase the yield of that seed as it grows. God wants you to be generous, wants you to be liberal in giving your time and money, your life as one protracted act of worship to Him that is useful to others. And when you do, it causes others to thank Him. If we are willing participants in the process, there is almost no end to the good that God can accomplish through us.

But we have to be alert, we have to be aware of the temptation to get greedy with the things God allows into our lives. We may try to hold onto things for too long, or hold on to more than God knows we need, and with all the best excuses in the world we can clog up the flow that God designed with disastrous consequences.

We find an example of this in one of the minor prophets – those are the smaller books toward the end of the Old Testament in your Bible. One of them is called Haggai, and in it the prophet is sent by God to deliver a message to the people of Israel. They had been in captivity in Babylon, but some of them have been allowed to return home, begin to rebuild the nation and most importantly, the Temple for worship.

But, they got distracted. They started to turn inward. They focused on building better lives for themselves and neglected the Temple. They used their time and money for their own purposes, and now God sends Haggai calling them to get back on track. Turn in your Bibles

to this with me, because I want you to see it's there. Find the gospel of Matthew, then go back a page into Malachi, a few more pages through Zechariah and you will find Haggai.

**Haggai 1:3** Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?*" 5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little;  
You eat, but do not have enough;  
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;  
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;  
And he who earns wages,  
Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes."

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. 9 "*You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?*" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that *is in ruins*, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your hands*."

Here's what happened – when the people got off track, God diminished their results. When they started to turn inward instead of upward and outward, they kept working hard, but they started bringing home less. God made it impossible for them to get ahead. Why? Because they were trying to use it all for themselves.

Church, we need to hear this warning and hear it well. It is possible for us to work hard and have very little to show for it when we're focused on ourselves. And, it is possible for us to work diligently yet rest well and harvest a bumper crop, when we stay focused on living for God and others.

And remember, it's not about the size of the contribution you make, or which tax bracket you fall into. In Luke chapter 6 we find Jesus at the Temple watching people come to make a financial contribution and He points out to His disciples a widow who put in a single coin. He commends her, not for the amount she gave but for her attitude in giving it.

God is just as concerned with motives today as He was in the days of Haggai and in the days of that widow – where is your heart and what are you doing with what you have?

It's never really about how much or how little you give, it's about why you give, or why you don't. [God loves a cheerful giver.](#)

Turn back with me to 2 Corinthians and look at the effects produced by proper giving.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 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*, 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

We've been emphasizing the importance of Christian community lately and you see it here. God's primary method of meeting the needs of others is not Angelic Amazon, with cherubs making front porch deliveries to the saints in need.

He could do that. Does anyone doubt God's ability to miraculously meet needs? And, like Amazon, He could probably do it with incredible efficiency. But that's not how He usually operates. Instead, God often mobilizes His people to be His hands and His feet. That means, Christian, you are often going to be sent to do something for or with other Christians in need, and they are often going to show up in your life when you're in need.

And that doesn't mean just crises and catastrophes, it means normal life too.

Think of someone who walks into this building on a Sunday morning in desperate need of spiritual refreshing and encouragement. The cup of coffee they pour was prepared by someone. Their kids are in a classroom where they are loving and patiently taught by someone. They hear worship music the team worked to prepare, they sing along because someone made slides for them, and they can hear it all because someone is mixing the sound. People made a financial gift to the Lord through the church to support this ministry and pay the utility bills.

The person who walked in may not see everything and everyone that contributed to make Sunday happen – but they found exactly what their soul needed today, and they thanked God for it. Which means, the people who made it all possible actually helped generate praise and thanksgiving to God – what a wonderful way to spend your life: meeting the needs of others and provoking people to say thank you to God.

That can happen outside these walls too. Those of you who serve as medical professionals, lawyers, accountants, engineers, sometimes you are the answer to someone's prayer. They have a need, perhaps feel helpless, overwhelmed, don't know what to do about their issue, but they show up in your office, and you make a difference. Maybe you were the bureaucrat or administrator who opened a door for someone trapped in the system, obtained a signature, or assisted with a process – you were the answer to someone else's prayer. They thank God for the help they received from you. You provoked worship. You were the catalyst, the spark.

And for that reason, they may thank God for you. They may pray for you. Paul says when the church in Jerusalem receives the financial gift he's been collecting, they're going to be grateful for the people they've never met who heard about their need and made a difference and they're going to pray for them. Being a blessing often earns you a blessing.

It's a beautiful cycle of receiving and reflecting the grace of God. Which is why, after spending two whole chapters talking to people about giving, Paul concludes by saying:

**15 Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!**

Thanks be to Him for what He has brought us into. Church, remember, we only give because we have first received. And we have received much. God found us in desperate need, and sent His Son to rescue and redeem us. He sent His Spirit to comfort and guide us. He draws us into His family where we find our needs met and meet the needs of others.

Go out this morning basking in the grace of God. Go knowing that He see you, He loves you. Go out thanking Him **for His indescribable gift.**

You blew it last week. You're going to blow it again this week. We're all a work in progress. The key is to let that work be directed by Him. He wants to be in your life, He wants to connect you to other Christians who need your help and who can also meet your needs. We belong together. Your life has a purpose, you have an identity, it's been given to you by God and it's meant to be shared – generously, personally, and cheerfully.

Let's pray.





## Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

### 2 Corinthians 9 Give Cheerfully

Summary: God loves a cheerful giver who shares what they have received from Him.

- Which of the three types of giving comes most naturally to you: giving generously, personally, or cheerfully? Which is the most difficult? Why?
- Where have you been challenged about your giving recently? What do you start/stop/keep doing?
- Can you share about a time when you originally felt prompted spiritually to do something but lost steam and had to return to it later?
- Review the following passages of Scripture, what do you learn about giving?
  - Psalm 112, which is quoted here in 2 Corinthians
  - Deuteronomy 15:7-11
    - What do you make of verse 11, especially considering these were instructions for God's chosen people living in the Promised Land?
  - 1 Corinthians 16:1-4
  - Philippians 4:10-20
    - How does this connect with 2 Cor 9:8-11?
  - Proverbs 19:17
  - Malachi 3:8-12
    - What are the two things God promises to do for those give and what might that look like in our modern lives? HINT: One is positive (I will give), one is negative (I will rebuke).
- How do generosity and financial responsibility/planning fit together?
- How is giving contagious (2 Cor 9:1-2)? How have you been inspired by giving/receiving?