

10. God's way in giving

5/12/2005

Father O'Malley answers the phone:

"Hello, is this Father O'Malley?"

"It is."

"This is the IRS. Can you help us?"

"I can."

"Do you know a Ted Houlihan?"

"I do."

"Is he a member of your congregation?"

"He is."

"Did he donate \$10,000 to the church?"

"He will."

Obviously, Ted Houlihan is not going to donate that \$10,000 to the church with a glad heart. That is not what God wants us to have.

Tonight is a continuing study of giving according to God's way as the Lord Jesus made an example for us.

A. BE READY TO GIVE AS YOU PLAN

2 Corinthians 9:1-5 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 was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. 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. 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.

The word 'superfluous' means "extra, not needed, unnecessary." It is one of those words we use everyday, huh?

Paul had used the zeal of the Corinthians to challenge the Macedonians. But now he was using the Macedonians to challenge the Corinthians. The Macedonians had followed through on their promise, and Paul was afraid that his boasting would be in vain.

While Christians must not compete with each other in their service for Christ, they ought to consider to encourage and provoke one another in love and to good works. When we see what God is doing in and through the lives of others, we ought to strive to serve Him better ourselves. There is a fine line between fleshly imitation and spiritual emulation, and we must be careful in this regard.

Apparently, Paul did not see anything wrong or unspiritual about asking people to promise to give. He did not tell them how much they had to promise, but he did expect them to keep their promise.

Many of us have been in services or Christian gatherings where they do high-pressure offering. The only thing they didn't show was a gun for a stick-up. High-pressure offering appeals do not belong to grace giving, nor in Christianity. It is nothing more

than men's efforts to fulfill their own financial goals that were set by themselves, not by God. If God was in it, they would have their needs met by Him, not by high-pressure gimmicks. Paul was not giving a high-pressure lecture for money.

Notice again that Paul has been "boasting" about them. If you recall from other studies' he had plenty of reasons to complain about them as well! But one of Paul's great qualities was that he apparently never criticized one church to another. When he found something that needed to be addressed and corrected, he dealt only with that person or that church. But when he found something praiseworthy, he affirmed it both privately and publicly. Affirmation makes a profound impact on people.

Paul wants the Corinthians to live up to his boasting so that all of them will maintain their integrity.

Paul was very concerned that giving be a matter of generosity and not a matter of grudging obligation. God Himself never gives out of an attitude of grudging obligation, and neither should we.

When God gives grace, He does not reluctantly handout a pinchful of grace to us. I would tell you today that God's hands are nail-pierced hands and they are wide open. This fountain of grace is always pouring itself out with no limitation on heaven's side at all.

B. SOWING AND REAPING

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

A farmer sowing seed may feel he is losing seed as it falls from his hand to the ground, and we may feel we are losing when we are giving. But just as the sower gives the seed in anticipation of a future harvest, we should give with the same heart.

If a farmer were to sow few seeds because he wanted to "hold on" to as much seed as he could, he would have more seed in his barn after sowing time. But at the harvest, the one who sowed more seed would have much more grain in his barn.

What do we reap when we give? We reap blessings that are both material and spiritual:

1) Materially - We can trust that God will meet the needs of the giving heart.

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

2) Spiritually - We can trust that God will reward the giving heart both now and in eternity.

Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

The Lord can never be in debt to any man, and we should never be afraid of giving God "too much." Spiritually or materially, we can't out-give God.

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Every Christian should be a giver with the right kind of heart. Giving should be motivated by the purposes of our own heart. It should never be coerced or manipulated.

We should give it to God because we want to give, because God has put it in our own heart to give.

If we cannot give joyfully, then we must open our hearts to the Lord and ask Him to grant us His grace. Certainly God can bless a gift that is given out of a sense of duty, but God cannot bless the giver unless his heart is right. Grace giving means that God blesses the giver as well as the gift, and that the giver is a blessing to others.

God wants us to be channels of blessing to others, not reservoirs of blessing just to horde.

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 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. 9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." 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.

The farmer has to wait for his harvest, but the believer who practices grace giving begins to reap the harvest immediately. To be sure, there are long-range benefits from our giving, but there are also immediate blessings. When we give our finance to the Lord, we can know that we are being used by God to bless others.

Many of you remember what I said about Blaga Vest of Shuman Women's Retreat last year after I came back from the pre-mission trip of Bulgaria. I felt that the Lord was leading us to support their Women's Retreat this year. I forwarded Pastor Bobby's e-mail of appreciation for our support in this event to several of you who have e-mail addresses. I was told that the Retreat was a great success and the ladies were ministered by the Holy Spirit.

We could bless those precious Bulgarian sisters in the Lord with the money God allowed us to have. You gave it back to the Lord and He used it to bring the ladies at His feet to teach His Word. Isn't God great or what?

The giving of money is just as spiritual an act as the singing of a worship song or the handing out of a Gospel tract. Money is seed of faith for the givers. If we give it according to the principles of grace, it will multiply to the glory of God and meet many needs. If we use it in ways other than God desires, the harvest will be poor.

It's hard to give when we are struggling financially. But even our most meager gifts unleash the storehouse of God's abundance. Always remember, God doesn't need our money! He owns everything. Giving is about much more than gifts – it offers us the chance participate in God's work and to become unselfish, generous, and others-centered. It provides us with the opportunity to trust in God for our own needs.

1 Timothy 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

With this contentment, we can be the richest people in the world. But if we have this contentment, it really does make us better off than the wealthiest people who don't have it.

The final result is glory to God as others give thanks to Him. Paul was careful to point out that grace giving does not bring credit to us. It brings thanksgiving to God.

C. JOYFUL RESPONSE

2 Corinthians 9:12-14 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.

No amount of evangelistic zeal or worship activity can compensate for lost opportunities in serving others and meeting their practical needs. It is not a matter of choosing one and ignoring the other. There must be a balance of sharing the Gospel and meeting practical needs, if our light is to shine brightly and steadily. It has well been said that it is difficult to preach the Gospel to a hungry man.

Those who give graciously not only meet the real needs of other people, but also bring praise and glory to God. Selfless giving reaches far beyond the immediate needs of the receiver and encourages all of Christ's people who hear of it!

D. AN INDESCRIBABLE GIFT OF GRACE

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Paul closes chapter 9 with a sudden outpouring of gratitude to God for His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ who showed us His own example of grace giving.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) **Become an active participant in God's work.**

Stop studying about giving, start giving! Many people say that they intent to give, but never give. When we hold onto what is supposed to be given to God's work, we are cheating ourselves out of God's blessings.

2) **When we give to God's work, it must come from our joyful heart of being a part of God's work.**

If we don't understand that we are being a part of His work and His master plan with our finance, our giving become nothing more than fulfilling our duty. God doesn't see joy and gratitude in that kind of hearts.

3) **We need to be generous and gracious in giving as our God was generous and gracious to us through Jesus Christ.**

Until we understand the heart of grace giving, we don't understand even a small portion of the grace of God. Because we hold onto the money more than God's principle of grace.