

LESSON 17
2nd CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

1) **2 Corinthians 9:6-15** ⁶ But this *I say*, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ *Let* each man *do* according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: ⁹ as it is written, He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor; His righteousness abideth for ever. ¹⁰ And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ¹¹ ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God; ¹³ seeing that through the proving *of you* by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of *your* contribution unto them and unto all; ¹⁴ while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

- i) This passage gives an outline of the principle of generous and loving giving.
 - (a) Paul insists that no man was ever the loser because he was generous.
 - (b) The New Testament is a very practical book and one of its great features is that it is never afraid of the reward motive.
 - (i) It never says that goodness is all to no purpose.
 - (ii) It never forgets that something new and wonderful enters into the life of the man who accepts God's commands as his law.
 - (c) But the rewards that the New Testament envisages are never material.
 - (i) It does not promise the wealth of things; it offers wealth of the heart and of the spirit.
 - (ii) What then can a generous man expect?
- ii) The blessings of generous and loving giving.
 - (1) He will be rich in love.
 - (2) He will be rich in friends. (The great preacher Horace W. Busby used to say that he was a millionaire because he had a million friends and he could borrow a dollar from each one of them.)
 - (a) An unfriendly man can never expect to have friends. Prov. 18:24.
 - (b) The man whose heart runs out to others will always find that the hearts of others run out to him.
 - (3) He will be rich in help.
 - (a) The day always come when we need the help that others can give, and, if we have been sparing in our help to them, the likelihood is that they will be sparing in their help to us.
 - (b) The measure we have used to others will determine the measure that is given to us. Matt. 7:2.
 - (4) He will be rich toward God.

- (a) Jesus taught that what we do to others we do for God, and the day will come when every time we opened our heart and hand to others will be to our favor. Matt. 6:20-21.
 - (b) Every time that we closed our heart and hands to those in need will witness against us.
- iii) With all of that said, let us look at the particular verses.
- (1) **V. 6** – Paul’s point is plain (“But this I say,” or “The point is this”).
- (a) The miserly sower will reap in the same measure.
 - (i) No farmer ever got rich scrimping on seed.
 - (ii) Paul is teaching the Corinthians that to give is to sow.
 - (iii) To give is not to lose because the gift, like the seed, possesses the potency of life and increase.
 - (b) The secret is in the quality, not the quantity of the gift.
 - (c) The source of giving is not the purse, but the heart.
 - (i) The poor widow who gave two common mites, the least of all gifts in quantity, but because she gave her whole living gave more than all the others combined who, out of their superfluity, gave silver and gold at no cost to themselves (Mark 12:41ff.).
 - (ii) It was she who sowed bountifully, not they.
 - (iii) The sphere of giving, then, presents no exception to the rule, valid in the moral no less than in the agricultural realm, that a man reaps according to the manner of his sowing (Gal. 6:7ff.).
 - (iv) The teaching of Christ confirms what Paul here teaches.
 - 1. So slight a deed as the giving of a cup of cold water to “one of these little ones” will not remain unrewarded (Matt. 10:42; cf. Lk. 6:38).
 - 2. Matt. 25:34ff.
 - (d) Nowhere, however, does the Scripture propose the gaining of rewards as a motive for goodness.
 - (i) Giving for the sake of gain ceases to be goodness flowing from a simple and unselfish heart; it is then that very form of giving which Paul here condemns – giving that is governed by covetousness.
 - (ii) But the man who gives ungrudgingly for the blessing of others may rejoice in the knowledge that in so doing he is sowing seed that will produce a harvest of blessing to himself.
- (2) **V. 7** – While the true measure of a gift is not its external magnitude but the internal state of the giver’s heart, there must be real freedom in Christian giving, each individual making the decision in his own heart how much he ought to give.
- (a) Paul is not establishing a quota scheme or a means test; to give for a charitable purpose and then to grieve over its loss is not to give but to grudge.
 - (b) Likewise, to give because of superior authority or public opinion is not Christian giving..
 - (i) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) gave for such reasons, got favorable public opinion, but lied to God in holding back part for themselves.

- (ii) They were under no compulsion to give the whole because the money was wholly within their power.
 - (iii) However, their hearts were not intent on bringing a blessing to others but on fabricating a reputation for themselves.
 - (iv) Their object was getting rather than giving.
- (3) **V. 8** – The power of God, of which there is none greater, operates in the sphere of Christian giving, for this too is a sphere of His grace.
- (a) The liberality of the Macedonians is attributed to the grace of God that they had received (8:1).
 - (b) The place given in these two chapters to the all-prevailing sufficiency of divine grace is adequate to show that in their spiritual emphasis they are essentially in harmony with the main theme pervading the epistle.
 - (c) What God did for the Macedonians he can do and has done for the Corinthians.
 - (d) His grace is always abundant and enriching; it always leads to increase even when it involves parting with possessions.
 - (e) The consequence of God's making *all* grace abound to them is that they in *all* things at *all* times have *all* sufficiency to abound in *all* good work.
 - (f) The inexhaustible resources of the grace of God made available in Christ means that this life in which the Christian always abounds in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58) is a practical and joyful reality for the person of faith.
- (4) **V. 9** – This verse corresponds to the Septuagint version of Psalm 112:9, a Psalm that describes the blessedness of the man who fears Jehovah and delights in his commandments.
- (a) The words read like the epitaph of a philanthropist; he scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness abides forever.
 - (b) By his stinginess the miser may accumulate great wealth, but his heart will be shriveled and poverty-stricken; he will be a stranger to joy and blessedness.
 - (c) One who denies himself in order to attend to the needs of others launches himself upon the limitless sea of God's grace and learns that God is indeed able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we are able to ask or think. Eph. 3:20.
 - (d) Chrysostom develops the lesson of disinterested liberality from the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8ff), who, in providing for Elijah in his need, ran the risk "not of poverty only, but even of death and extinction, and not only of herself, but of her son also." She outstripped the hospitality of Abraham, for he had a herd from which to fetch a tender calf (Gen. 18:7), whereas she had but a handful of meal. Her excellence is seen, he said, in that "for the sake of the stranger, she spared not her son even, and that too though she looked not for things to come. "But we," he wrote, "though a heaven exists, though a hell is threatened, though (which is greater than all) God has done such great things for us, and is made glad and rejoices over such

things, sink back supinely. Not so, I beseech you: but let us scatter abroad, let us give to the poor as we ought to give. . . . For it is not possible that lust of wealth and righteousness should dwell together; they have their tents apart.”

- (5) **V. 10** – Paul enlarges the scope of God’s grace; not only is liberality a sign of God’s grace given and a sowing of seed which by God’s grace will produce a harvest, but the seed itself, the wherewithal for sowing, is also supplied by God.
- (a) All is of God and his grace; the Christian has nothing that he has not received (1 Cor. 4:7).
 - (b) What is a fundamental law of the natural realm points to or illustrates an underlying principle of Christian giving.
 - (c) Outwardly the seed may be small and insignificant, but inwardly its potential is immense.
 - (d) The seed that God has supplied must be scattered and to all appearances lost before its potential can be realized and the blessing of harvest enjoyed.
- (6) **Vv. 11-12** – Liberality in accordance with the simile of sowing and reaping is an enriching activity for the giver as well as for the recipient.
- (a) The experience of enrichment precedes and is preparatory to the act of benefaction.
 - (b) Christian giving is the outward expression of a heart already rich in generosity.
 - (c) The enrichment of which Paul speaks is not the “health and wealth” promises of some so-called messengers of God, but spiritual riches.
 - (d) Chrysostom once again construes Paul well: “. . . in things which are necessary he allows them to seek for nothing more than need requires, but in spiritual things, counsels them to get for themselves a large superabundance.”
 - (e) Not the least of the fruits of the harvest that Christian liberality yields is the rendering of thanksgiving to God by those who have benefited from the generosity of their fellow-believers.
 - (f) By saying that the Corinthians’ liberality produces “through us” thanksgiving to God, Paul seems to have in mind his particular function as a kind of middle-man through whom the collection was to be conveyed to Jerusalem.
 - (g) Christian giving, therefore, not only ministers to the physical needs of men, which in itself calls forth the blessing and approval of God, but it causes men to glorify God, which is a result far more wonderful than any material benefit conferred, for when men glorify God they then behave themselves as they were created to behave.
- (7) **V. 13** – The effect of this collection, though it has not yet been brought to fulfillment, is described by Paul as though it had already taken place.
- (a) Not only does he foresee the Christians in Jerusalem rendering thanks to God for sending them help in time of need, but also glorifying God for the proof that this collection will afford of the genuineness of the

- members of the Greek and Macedonian churches as followers with them of the one Lord and Master.
- (b) This collection will be a “work” that will give evidence to the Christians at Jerusalem of the reality of the faith of the Gentile converts.
 - (c) From the first there had been an ingrained reluctance on the part of Jewish converts to accept the genuineness of the response of the Gentiles to the gospel.
 - (i) For the Gentiles to come to the aid of Jewish converts would be tangible and compelling proof to the Jews of the genuineness of the Gentiles’ conversion and an undeniable expression of their true unity in Christ.
 - (ii) It would be the parable of the good Samaritan enacted and extended, for with the Samaritans the Jews had no dealings (John 4:9), but with the Gentiles mere contact meant, according to rabbinical tradition, contamination and the need for ceremonial cleansing (cf. Mk. 7:3ff).
 - (d) It is possible that reports of disorders in worship and doctrine at Corinth had caused Jerusalem Christians to doubt the reality of the profession of the Greek Christians.
 - (i) This collection would help to silence those suspicions and to establish the genuineness and sincerity of fellow-believers.
 - (ii) Hence, Paul speaks here of the Jerusalem saints glorifying God because of this evidence of the Greeks’ obedience to their profession of the gospel of Christ.
- (8) **V. 14** – A further notable effect of the collection is foreseen in the offering of prayer before God by the Jerusalem saints on behalf of those whom they had formerly shunned.
- (a) They now long after them, being drawn towards them by deep affection and fellow-feeling, not just because they had received aid, but above all else because of the superabundant grace of God bestowed on the Corinthians, of which this gift is a pledge.
 - (b) Once again, all is of grace: the liberality of the Corinthians no less than of the Macedonians, and the fruits of that liberality.
 - (c) That Paul’s confidence in the Corinthians was not disappointed is apparent from Rom. 15:25f. where Paul writes of being about to go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints there, since it has been “the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem.”
 - (d) Of interest is the testimony of Clement of Rome who, writing to the church in Corinth before the end of the first century, reminds them that they had formerly been “more glad to give than to receive and content with the provisions which God supplies,” and had “not repented of any good deed, but were ready unto every good work.”
- (9) **V. 15** – Gratitude to God for His wonderful gift that defies all human description brings to an end all debate on the question of giving.

- (a) Some commentators understand this verse to be a reference to the gift of the Corinthians or to the gift of reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, but there can be little doubt that it refers to God's gift of his son.
- (b) Almost instinctively the reader understands this to be Paul's meaning when, with characteristic spontaneity, he exults praise to God for His gift that is unspeakable.
- (c) Paul himself provides the best comment on his meaning here by his rhetorical question in Romans 8:32 written shortly afterwards, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?"
 - (i) The gift of God's son is the supreme gift, infinitely transcending all human giving.
 - (ii) Human language is utterly incapable of expressing or explaining it.
 - (iii) But the human heart can experience it as a glorious, transforming reality, and then, as here with Paul, nothing is more natural than to pour forth praise and thanksgiving to God for it.