

Grace-Oriented Giving

An Encouragement to Grace-Oriented Giving

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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Scripture

Today is the last in my four-week series of sermons titled, “Guidelines for Grace-Oriented Giving” from 2 Corinthians 8-9.

Today, I want to look at “An Encouragement to Grace-Oriented Giving” from 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Let’s read it:

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

Introduction

In his book titled *Charismatic Chaos* pastor and author John MacArthur tells about one of the most unusual legacies of World War II, which has been the “cargo cults” of the South Pacific. Many aboriginal island peoples ranging from north Australia to Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the Allied armed forces during the war. The American military in particular often used the remote islands that dot that part of the globe as sites for temporary landing strips and supply depots.

White men came bearing cargo; then they left as quickly as they had come. The tribal people had no time to learn the ways of modern civilization. But for a brief time they saw high technology – such as it was in the 1940s – up close. Cargo planes would swoop from the sky, land, leave their payload, and then take off again. Island natives saw cigarette lighters produce fire instantly and believed it to be miraculous. They saw large machinery push aside whole forests to build airstrips. They saw for the first time jeeps, modern weaponry, refrigerators, radios, power tools, and many varieties of food. They were fascinated by all of that and many concluded that the white men must be gods.

When the war was over and the armies were gone, tribesmen built shrines to the cargo gods. Their tabernacles were perfect replicas of cargo planes, control towers, and airplane hangars – all made of bamboo and woven material. These structures all looked exactly like the real thing, but they were nonfunctional except for their use as temples to the cargo gods.

On some of the more remote islands, the cargo cults still thrive today. Some have personified all Americans in one deity they call “Tom Navy.” They pray for holy cargo from every airplane that flies overhead. They venerate religious relics – such as Zippo lighters, cameras, eyeglasses, ballpoint pens, nuts and bolts, and so on. As modern civilization has begun to penetrate some of

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these cultures, their fascination for cargo has not diminished. Missionaries who have been sent to areas where cargo cults have flourished receive a warm reception at first. The cargo cultists are looking for cargo, not the gospel, and missionaries have then found it very difficult to penetrate the materialism that is the very essence of the islanders' religion.

In recent years the charismatic movement has spawned its own variety of cargo cult. The Word Faith movement, also known as the Faith movement – or Word, Faith-Formula, Word of Faith, Hyper-Faith, Positive Confession, Name It and Claim It, or Health, Wealth, and Prosperity teaching – is a subdivision of the charismatic movement and is every bit as superstitious and materialistic as the cargo cults in the South Pacific. The leaders of the Faith movement promise each believer financial prosperity and perfect health. Anything less, they argue, is not God's will.¹

These greed-driven heresies are popular because they promise what virtually every false religion in the world offers, namely, that God gives us what we want, when we want it, and how we want it. Virtually every false religion offers a god who provides us with cargo. And the cargo is provided for our own self-indulgence, personal pleasure, and individual satisfaction.

But our God does not work that way. He is certainly concerned about our material and physical needs. And he has promised to provide them to us.

Review

Before we see how God provides them, let's briefly review what is going on in these two chapters that the apostle Paul wrote.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about various concerns he had about their church. He had planted the church

¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 264-265.

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about 3 or 4 years earlier, and he had received reports about different problems in the church. Second Corinthians is actually his fourth letter to the church. Things had started to improve in the Corinthian Church, and so Paul reminded them about their pledge to support the Jerusalem Church.

The Jerusalem Church was struggling financially because of the massive influx of new Christians from other countries, persecution, and famine. There were tens of thousands of Christians living in Jerusalem at this time.

The Corinthian Church was rather wealthy and they were not experiencing any persecution at this time. So Paul used three approaches to motivate them to give for the relief of the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

First, he used the *example* of the extremely poor Macedonians in the north in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. Then, in 2 Corinthians 8:6-15 Paul *exhorted* the Corinthians to give. And after that, in 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 he *explained* how they should give.

Lesson

In today's lesson, the fourth and last in this series, Paul motivated the Corinthian Church to give by way of *encouragement*. He showed them the principle underlying all grace-oriented giving, and then presented several benefits of grace-oriented giving.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Principle of Grace-Oriented Giving (9:6)
2. The Benefits of Grace-Oriented Giving (9:7-15)

I. The Principle of Grace-Oriented Giving (9:6)

First, Paul stated the principle of grace-oriented giving in verse 6: **“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap**

bountifully.”

The foundational principle could not be stated any clearer. Paul is saying in effect that you reap what you sow. That is axiomatic, that is a self-evident truth. Paul used an agricultural metaphor. The less you sow, the less you reap; the more you sow, the more you reap.

Now, it is important to note that you reap the same product as the seed that is sown. If you sow corn, you reap corn. If you sow potatoes, you reap potatoes. If you sow strawberries, you reap strawberries. And if you sow financially, you reap financially.

Now, someone may say, “Isn’t this in danger of appealing to our self-indulgence? Isn’t this in danger of appealing to our greed? Isn’t this the wrong motivation for giving?”

And the answer is “No!” The reason that this is not the wrong motivation for giving is because the whole point of giving to the Lord is not to manipulate him to give us more in return so that we can spend it on our own pleasures and greed and desires.

But rather, we give because we delight in God. We are excited about the gospel being preached. We love to see people coming to faith in Jesus. We are thrilled when people mature in Christ. We want to help God’s people who are poor – like the poor in Jerusalem. And as we give to invest in God’s kingdom and to see his name proclaimed and made known, God just gives us more money back so that we can give even more to his kingdom.

So, when we sow a large amount of seed, God returns a large harvest. Many of you remember the story I have told of our daughter Lauren when she was about six years old. She decided that she wanted a bird as a pet. I did not really want a bird (because they are not easy to keep clean), but when we went to the pet store, I learned that a bird with a cage and food and all the accessories would cost several hundred dollars. Lauren only received \$1 per week for her allowance, and so I felt safe believing that it would take several years before she had saved enough money for a bird.

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A few months after she started saving Lauren heard about one of our graduates who was then serving as a missionary in a restricted access country (that means, in a place where Christians are persecuted). She heard that Luke asked for money for Bibles. Lauren was so touched by Luke's request that she sent her entire savings of \$7 to help Luke buy Bibles for his missionary work. She wanted to see God's name proclaimed and people come to faith in Jesus. Obviously, that slowed down her pet purchase. However, a few days later one of the ladies in our church who knew about Lauren's desire for a bird met someone who wanted to give away not one but two birds, a cage, food, and all the accessories!

Friends, Lauren was too young to know how to manipulate God. But God wonderfully blessed her with a bird, and she could still keep saving money to send to Luke and to give to God.

When rightly understood, this principle is utterly opposite to the Prosperity Movement that panders to personal desire and self-indulgence.

So, the principle underlying grace-oriented giving is that you reap what you sow. The less you sow, the less you reap; the more you sow, the more you reap.

II. The Benefits of Grace-Oriented Giving (9:7-15)

Now second, the apostle Paul presents the benefits of grace-oriented giving in verses 7-15.

What happens when we give to God? According to John MacArthur, there are five benefits of grace-oriented giving.

A. *Love from God (9:7)*

The first benefit of grace-oriented giving is love from God.

Paul said in verse 7: **“Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God**

loves a cheerful giver.”

In his first extant letter, Paul told the Corinthian Church how they were to give. He said in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4: “Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.”

Now, he was reminding them that **each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion**. In other words, Paul was saying, “I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting” (9:7, *The Message*).

When you are asked to give to God, you must not give in to manipulation or pressure. God does not require Christians to give a certain percentage of their income to him. There was tithing in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament God calls us to give voluntarily, proportionately, willingly, and yes, sacrificially.

If someone asks, “What percentage of my income should I give to God?” my answer is, “How much blessing do you want to receive from God?” You sow a little, you reap a little; you sow a lot, you reap a lot.

The amazing thing to notice in this passage is that when you give voluntarily, proportionately, willingly, sacrificially, and cheerfully, Paul says that **God loves** you!

John MacArthur says that this is a very special verse. He looked throughout the Bible and he could not find any verse like this where there is a special love from God given to his people because of some behavior. We know that God loves all of his creation. We also know that God loves his children with a special,

perfect love. But, according to this verse, God really, really loves a **cheerful giver**.

B. Generosity from God (9:8-10)

The second benefit of grace-oriented giving is generosity from God.

How does God show his love to you? How does God show his special love for a cheerful giver? How will that love be experienced? The answer is found in verse 8: **“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”** This verse is filled with so much hyperbole that it makes us look at it again. In the original Greek the “alls” go on and on and on. In fact, there are five “alls” in this verse. Let me read it for you again, and notice how extravagant God is: **“And God is able to make *all* grace abound to you, so that having *all* sufficiency in *all* things at *all* times, you may abound in *every* good work.”**

God’s love is going to show itself in generosity to you. And God is able to do it because he is the creator of all things. Indeed, **“he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness”** (9:10).

C. Glory to God (9:11-13)

The third benefit of grace-oriented giving is glory to God.

Paul said in verses 11-13: **“You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission**

flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others.”

Paul said that two good things will result from this ministry of giving – the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. Moreover, as a result of the giving of the Corinthian Church, the saints in Jerusalem will give glory to God.

That’s how giving works. We give and God takes the money to meet the needs of the poor. We give and God takes the money to enable the preaching of the gospel, sometimes in settings like ours or sometimes in supporting missions in other countries. And as God’s people give and people are helped materially and spiritually, God is glorified.

D. Friends from God (9:14)

The fourth benefit of grace-oriented giving is friends from God.

Paul said in verse 14: “. . . **while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.**”

What can a poor person give back to a generous person? What could the Jerusalem saints give back to the Corinthian Church? Paul told the Corinthian Church that the Jerusalem saints **“long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.”** Do you know what Paul was saying here? Paul was saying that the Jerusalem saints recognized that God was at work in the Corinthian Christians and that they longed for fellowship with them and they prayed for them on their behalf.

When we go to a church prayer meeting, and requests are received for prayer, many times prayer is asked for people we know. We ask prayer for Aunt Mabel’s gall bladder, Jimmy’s broken foot, Sally’s broken car, and so on. Well, we pray for the people we love and care about. And Paul was saying that generous

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giving results in people praying for us and loving us; in other words, grace-oriented giving brings us friends from God.

E. Likeness to God (9:15)

And the final benefit of grace-oriented giving is likeness to God.

Paul said in verse 15: **“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”**

You are like God when you give generously. That is what Paul is saying here in his final crescendo. Here is the foundation of all giving.

The **inexpressible gift** is of course Jesus Christ. God gave Jesus Christ. God planted a seed. Jesus said in John 12:24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” God planted the seed, Jesus Christ. He buried the seed and by his resurrection he produced a redeemed elect.

We are like God when we give generously for his glory.

Conclusion

We might ask, “Do we know how the Corinthian Church responded?” And the answer is, “Yes, we do.”

Paul said in Romans 15:25-28 that he was on his way to Jerusalem to bring the contribution for the poor. In fact, at the time of writing to the Romans Paul was in Corinth.

So, let us respond as the Corinthians. Let us pay attention to these guidelines for grace-oriented giving, and give to the glory of God. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
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PRAYER:

Our Father, we thank you for this wonderful passage that is tucked away here in chapters 8 and 9 in the apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. We have often overlooked these chapters and yet they are so powerful in our lives to open the floodgates of blessing.

So many people all over the world are pursuing blessing but they are not pursuing it your way. So many Christians are pursuing blessing from you, pursuing love from you, generosity from you, who want to glorify you, who want to make friends and be like you, but they don't even know this principle. And in this passage you have shown us that we receive all the benefits and the blessing of giving when we learn to sow generously. You have called us to give voluntarily, willingly, generously, sacrificially, and yes, even cheerfully.

And when we give like that so that we may advance your Name and your glory, and we don't give in order to get to spend on our own pleasures, you give us even more.

Oh God, help us to give generously for the sake of your Name and for the cause of Christ.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!