

Text: II Corinthians 8:1; 9:6-11

Title: “More on How a Poor Church did a Rich Thing” Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

Video presentation

Now let's turn to II Corinthians 9:6-11.

CONTEXT: The Apostle Paul was raising money to send to impoverished believers in Jerusalem. A severe famine occurred there along with persecution that resulted in great need. In his missionary endeavors Paul was challenging churches to take an offering to assist with the need. Corinth seemed to be having a hard time getting their act together. They apparently had promised to do something generous for the relief effort, but they were dragging their feet ... they hadn't completed the task. So to fire them up, Paul uses the example of how the believers in Macedonia handled the same appeal. And II Corinthians 8-9 tell “How a Poor Church did a Rich Thing.” Remember, the churches in Macedonia, and most of the believers who made up those churches, were dirt poor. And yet Paul writes in Ch.8...

2 Corinthians 8:1 (NIV) - And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

They gave an unbelievable sum of money for this offering. How was a poor church able to do such a rich thing? Paul says it was due to the fact that God's grace had been given to them.

And here in II Corinthians 9:6-11 we see how, practically speaking, this actually works in our lives. Let's read vv.6-11.

Now let's go back and unpack these verses to see what we can learn about this kind of outrageous generosity.

1. THE PRINCIPLE

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV) - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Now this is a basic principle that comes from the agricultural world. Before there's a harvest, you have a planting. Your harvest can never be greater than the amount of seed you plant. If you sow a lot of seed, then there'll be more plants come up and the grain that comes from those plants will be greater.

So as we think about managing our money, the principle is that if we give generously, there's a generous harvest. If we give sparingly, we'll harvest sparingly.

Note: There is no reference here to the size of the gift (or seed). The terms are relative ... “generously” versus “sparingly.” So this principle applies to people of all income levels.

ILLUSTRATION – There are thousands of stories of wealthy people who have given far and away above the tenth of their income and have found themselves unable to out-give God. A few weeks ago in the stewardship toolkit you received a copy of a book entitled “The Treasure Principle.” I encourage you to read it if you haven’t already. Randy Alcorn tells the story of a successful businessman by the name of R.G. LeTourneau learned that you can’t outgive God. He manufactured earthmoving equipment, and made enormous sums of money. But he made a commitment to give away 90% of his income. But the money kept coming in faster than he could give it away. LeTourneau said, “I shovel it out and God shovels it back – but God has the bigger shovel.”

Now the thing about this principle is that there’s always a span of time between the planting and the harvesting.

ILLUSTRATION – Our next door neighbors, Butch and Sandra Gautier, always have some beautiful plants that grow in their flowerbeds all summer. And Nan is always telling me she would like to have some of those. The problem is that to have that kind of beauty in the summer months you have to plant the bulbs months before. I don’t plan ahead, and we miss the beauty.

So the time to plant the seed is now. The time to be generous is now.

Caution: The principle here in v.6 does not mean that if you give to God you will get rich. Remember we saw in II Corinthians 8 that the Macedonians are the model, and it was their poverty that overflowed in rich generosity. But more about that in a moment.

Next you need to see ...

2. THE PLAN

How should we go about giving to God’s work? Well it tells us in ...

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV) - Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Now remember that Paul is talking about a special offering. Personally I believe that the standard in the OT and the NT is that God’s people give their tithes on a regular basis to the work of God in their local congregation. Then, of course, there are other needs that arise like the one we see here in II Corinthians that call for us to give beyond the tithe. So how should we do that? What’s the plan?

First, the decision is made in the heart, not just in the head. “Each man should give what he has decided “in his heart” to give. Pray about it and let God move upon your heart.

Second, whatever you give, give it cheerfully.

v.7 - “Not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

ILLUSTRATION – Have you heard the story of the two guys who were shipwrecked and stranded on a remote island? One of the men was just beside himself. There was no food, no water; surely they would die in no time. The other guy was as calm as he could be. He told his companion, “Relax, we’ll be rescued soon.” The other guy complained, “How can you say that? We’re in the middle of nowhere. They’ll never find us.” The other guy said, “Listen, I’m a church member, and I just made a commitment to our church’s building program. Trust me, my pastor will find me.”

Seriously, the plan is to pray about it ... follow God’s leading in your heart ... and give it cheerfully.

3. THE POWER

Now you may be thinking, “I get it. I have the desire to be generous, but I’m looking at my situation, and I don’t see how it can happen.” Well, here’s the power to do something extraordinary...

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV) - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

“God is able...” – Lit. “God has power (*dunamis*)...” You need to know that in your weakness, God is strong. Take that promise to the bank everyday. In our weakness, He is powerful.

But look at this carefully. It’s amazing the words or phrases that are heaped one on top of the other to let you see how great God’s power is.

“All grace ... in all things ... at all times ... having all you need...” Hang on to that friend. That’s the way God works in behalf of his people.

But there’s more. You see the word “abound” twice in this verse. It literally means to exceed, or to be over and above. So here’s what happens: God shows His power toward us through His excelling grace ... not just for us to be a receptacle, but that we would be a channel ... so that we will excel in good works.

That’s the power of the Christian life. That’s the power that is flowing into and should be flowing through the life of every believer and of every church!

Now Paul goes on to talk about ...

4. THE PROVISION

2 Corinthians 9:9 (NIV) - As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

This is a quote from Psalm 112 about the righteousness of a generous person.

2 Corinthians 9:10 (NIV) - Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

What is he saying? He's saying that God promises to supply the seed need to plant. And God has done that, whether you realize it or not. Of all the resources that God has put in your life ... your job, your income ... in all of that God has put the seed that is not for you to consume, but for you to plant.

And as we are faithful to do that, He promises a harvest of "righteousness." What is that? It means that trusting God in this, being a faithful to sow the seed God gives us to sow, that God will enlarge our righteousness ... we become more like Jesus in His righteousness.

Reminder:

Philippians 4:19 (NIV) - And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

We've claimed that promise, haven't we? But do you know what precedes that promise?

Philippians 4:18 (NIV) - I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

God is so good to provide for our needs as we are generous. But there's also ...

5. THE PURPOSE

Here's the purpose God has in mind in this whole process...

2 Corinthians 9:11 (NIV) - You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Note carefully the words, "You will be made rich..." Wow! Sign me up for that. No, read on. You will be made rich in every way so that ... (there's a purpose)

PURPOSE #1 – "So that you can be generous on every occasion..."

PURPOSE #2 – "So that ... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." It's for God's glory!

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION - This is all powerfully illustrated in a story that Chuck Swindoll tells in one of his books:

The day I arrived to visit, I saw a touching scene. This man had a young son, and during his confinement in the hospital, he had made a little wooden truck for his boy. Since the boy was not allowed to go into the ward and visit his father, an orderly had brought the gift down to the

child, who was waiting in front of the hospital with his mother. The father was looking out of a fifth-floor window, watching his son unwrap the gift.

“The little boy opened the package, and his eyes got wide when he saw that wonderful little truck. He hugged it to his chest. Meanwhile, the father was walking back and forth waving his arms behind the windowpane, trying to get his son's attention. The little boy put the truck down and reached up and hugged the orderly and thanked him for the truck. And all the while the frustrated father was going through these dramatic gestures, trying to say, “It's me, son. I made the truck for you. I gave that to you. Look up here!” I could almost read his lips.

Finally the mother and the orderly turned the boy's attention up to that fifth-floor window. It was then the boy cried, “Daddy! Oh, thank you! I miss you, Daddy! Come home, Daddy. Thank you for my truck.” And the father stood in the window with tears pouring down his cheeks.