

Giving Generously

By Jim Davis

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 the Apostle Paul instructs believers in the principles of giving. Paul is soliciting funds from the Gentile churches to support impoverished saints in the persecuted church in Israel. He covers the purposes for charitable giving. Also, there is helpful information as to how funds should be collected and other information as well. I would like to consider some of the principles from the passage above and some of the verses that follow that address how we are to give and the benefits of giving.

How to Give

We are to give generously. Using an agricultural figure of speech that can be understood today as well as in New Testament times, we are to be generous with money and possessions. “Sowing bountifully” means in this context giving our money generously to those in need. The word for bountiful is the same word that is usually translated blessing. Like a farmer we sow with the hope of a blessed (full, multiplied) return. It is a reminder of a universal principle. We invest in something that we cannot have immediately in order that we may enjoy a future blessing. Sowing bountifully requires faith. It is an expression of the grace of God to the one to whom the gift is given and it makes the giver dependent upon the grace and character of God while hoping for a return on his investment. The obvious is stated here. In order to reap an abundant harvest you must sow liberally. The seed that is planted reproduces in number and the more you plant the more you will reap in the future. Paul also discusses this principle of sowing and reaping in Galatians 6:7-10.

We are to give an individually determined amount. “Each one...as he purposes in his heart.” It is important to realize that sowing bountifully is a relative term. Jesus taught that a poor widow that gave less money out of her poverty offered more than the rich that gave out of their surplus (Luke 21:1-4). God does not need what we have, He is more concerned with the attitude of our heart when we give. It is an individual’s expression of worship. It is a sacrifice that pleases God. The desire of the heart expresses love for God and for His people. Generosity proclaims that people created in the image of God are more important than the things we possess. It also delivers us from trusting in those temporal things for our security. When we give generously we acknowledge that all things come from God and all things belong to God.

The exercise of reason and a decision of the will must be applied to any opportunity to give. The decision as to the amount is made on a person-to-person basis. It is required that we evaluate our budget and expenses in order to determine what we can give. It would certainly be inappropriate to disobey the contextual balance of Scripture that tells us to work to provide for our own families and pay our own bills. “...work in a quiet fashion and eat your own bread” (2 Thes. 3:11). “But if anyone does not provide for his own household,

he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). It is unrighteous and suspect if a person impulsively gives away what is needed to repay household debt. It is even more irresponsible and even unnatural if someone would give impulsively and let his family go without food or clothing.

We are to give with joyful abandon. The freedom to give flows from the hand of the person whose mind views life from an eternal perspective. It is this person that can give cheerfully. The word that is used here can be translated hilariously. God loves a hilarious giver. A hilarious giver is one who gives with joyful abandon. He is free from fear and insecurity about the future. The hilarious giver is dependent upon Almighty God to provide for his family. He experiences peace when he gives away what he might need and trusts that the Lord is in control of tomorrow. There is joy because of the freedom from concern over any loss. He is not expecting the poor to pay him back. The hilarious giver does not attach strings to his gift. He trusts that the Lord will repay in this life and/or in the life to come. And he has a supernatural desire to lay up treasure in heaven. He longs for eternal reward above temporal pleasure and comfort.

We are not to give under compulsion. It is a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord when we give a generous determined amount with joyful abandon. We are not under the compulsion of any misguided desire to please men or win their approval but free to express our love for the Lord. We acknowledge by faith that we are dependent upon Him and we trust that He will provide for us. The only compulsion is the desire that we have for others to experience His compassionate provision through the bounty of His goodness to us. We have the privilege of becoming His instrument of grace to others.

We are not to give grudgingly. There is a release we experience in cheerful giving that is not under compulsion or necessity. Grudgingly means out of sorrow or grief. We do not give under the grief of necessity but we give a generous determined amount with joyful abandon. We are secure in God’s faithfulness to provide for us and that provides freedom for cheerful giving. We rest in God who is trustworthy. It is with a cheerful attitude that we become free to give as the widow gave. We give out of poverty and not simply out of our surplus. If you have learned to give to the Lord’s work by sacrificing the things you *want* you are doing well. But when your faith grows strong you should ask for opportunity to sacrificially give the things you *need*. That is what the widow did. Jesus said, she put in all that she had to live on. This kind of giving requires faith in God. You have to believe that He is in control and able to provide for you or you can not sacrifice what you need.

Conclusion

How are you at charity? Can you say that I generously give a personally determined amount with joyful abandon? Are you able to give up what you want in order to help others? Are you able to give up what you need in order to help others? These are some principles from Scripture that will be good to meditate upon. Learning how to give is an important thing in our Christian walk. Jesus taught and demonstrated that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Next time we will concentrate upon the benefits of giving.