

“GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER”

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

The phrase “cheerful giver” raises the thought of how many different kinds of givers there are. I’m sure you have heard the expression “Indian giver.” That comes from a misunderstanding of Indian culture by the early pioneers and settlers. When an Indian gave another person something, such as a horse, it was only to use it. Then it was expected to be returned. Now, if someone gives you something and then takes it back, they are called an “Indian giver.”

What is a grudging giver? At work, they are taking a collection for someone that you hardly know because she is having a baby or some other reason. Or they may take a dollar out of your pay each time for a Sunshine Fund, but it only seems to benefit certain people. Or the government gives aid to the poor in this country or overseas and pays for it with taxes you are compelled by law to pay.

There are givers who expect to receive something of equal value in return. At Christmas, they compare the value of the gift they gave to the value of the gift they receive from each person.

There are givers who are buying something with their gift. They expect some privilege or some service in return. There are persons who regard their gifts to the church in that way. The gifts we give should be gifts to God. Some people believe that they are giving money to the church so the church will support their opinions, will only serve their kind of people, will hire pastors who please them.

When God gives it is with love for us. His gift of His own Son is an indescribable gift. He gives us life, strength, and our food each day. He gives us many other mercies and blessings.

1.) Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 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. 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; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 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. (2 Corinthians 9:1-5 NKJV)

Paul says that he knows the willingness of the Corinthian church members to minister to the saints and indeed their zeal for this project. He has boasted of this in Macedonia and the zeal of the Corinthians has stirred most of those who heard of it. Now a year has transpired and Paul has heard, maybe from Titus, that the Corinthians still have not collected the amount of funds they had promised for the relief of the Christians in Jerusalem and its vicinity who were suffering in a famine.

I'm sure each of us have had similar experiences in church and school and other community organizations. Someone will suggest a project. There will be hearty enthusiasm and approval. Then comes the next steps of finding volunteers and raising money. All too many of the zealous supporters expected that others would do the work and someone else would donate the money.

If there are Macedonians accompanying Paul on his way to Jerusalem, and stopping at Corinth to collect their promised participation, and if the Corinthians have come up short on what they themselves have promised to give, Paul will be ashamed after his confident boasting. The Corinthians will have even more reason to be ashamed. It was their idea in the first place. Paul urges them to be prepared before he arrives.

2.) But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 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. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." 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, (2 Corinthians 9:6-10 NKJV)

Paul tries to anticipate the reasons some of the Corinthians have been reluctant or sparse in the giving for this special collection. The money would not be used for the support of their own local church and people. That is why Paul refers to it as ministering. The famine in Jerusalem may trigger fear among the Corinthians that the food shortage may spread to their region. Paul expands on an assurance he gave the Philippian Christians when they responded to his needs: Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:18-19 NKJV)

He begins with an illustration from gardening and farming. If you are stingy with the seeds you sow, what you reap will be scarce.

Paul then moves on to the attitude we should have toward charitable giving. Charity is another word for love. Therefore, we should be giving as an act of love and if we give in that manner, we will be happy to give and God will be pleased with us.

God is able to make His blessings so abundant that there will be enough for our own needs and plenty left over for good works. We are God's stewards. When we receive more money than we expected, our first thoughts should not be, "What more can I buy for myself?" but, "I wonder why God sent me this extra money? What needy persons or what mission does he want me to fund in His Name?"

3.) while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 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, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:11-15 NKJV)

For years I wondered why we called that item in the service "The Worship of God with Tithes and Offerings." It seemed to me to be merely the collecting of money to keep the doors open and the preacher housed and fed. In this passage Paul answers this question.

It is supplying the needs of God's children. We are serving Him by answering their prayers to Him "Give us this day our daily bread." It is fulfilling His promises to them to supply their needs.

It produces prayers of thanksgiving to God in response to having received His help in their time of needs. It abounds in much giving of thanks to God.

There are also praises and glory sent to God because people in other lands were obedient to the Gospel command "Repent and believe in Jesus Christ!" and consequently these strangers, now Christians, are liberally sharing their blessings with them and all men.

These Christians who are receiving alms from the Corinthians are offering up to God prayers and supplications on behalf of the unknown Christians who are their benefactors.

The grace of God has turned the cheerful generosity of Christian believers into an act of worship and a reciprocal blessing.