

Cheerful Givers

2 Corinthians 8-9

By David Feddes

2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is one of the greatest Bible passages about generosity with the resources God has given in order to bless others. The background of this is that Paul was arranging a collection from a whole variety of churches, mostly Gentiles. There were Jewish people in them, but they were churches scattered around the Mediterranean world.

The offering was being taken for the people in Jerusalem and its vicinity because there was a great deal of economic hardship there. There had been a famine, and the persecutions at this particular point in history were rougher around the area of Jerusalem than elsewhere. Christians there sometimes weren't able to get jobs as easily, and they faced other challenges.

The church in Jerusalem was in need, and the apostle Paul wanted the churches that he had planted to help them out. He wrote to the church in Rome. His epistle to the Romans is known as a great doctrinal epistle, but it's actually a fundraising letter with tremendous doctrine for 15 chapters before he gets to the fundraising part of it. You'll find in many of Paul's letters something about this offering for the needy people in Jerusalem, who were mostly Jewish people. The people receiving his letters were mostly Gentiles.

We're going to focus on what Paul wrote to Corinth about this offering. He wrote at a very particular point in time and focused on a very particular matter, and yet it has tremendous application for us throughout the rest of this age until Jesus comes again. There's no better passage in the Bible to learn what it means to be cheerful givers.

Grace and giving

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia" (8:1). Macedonia is a province to the north of Greece. Corinth is a city Achaia, a province is in the southern part of Greece. Paul is writing to Corinth, but he's talking about other churches now.

"For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part" (8:2). Somehow the churches of Macedonia combine extreme poverty with abundant joy. They're so full of joy that even though they really don't have much to give, they give a lot anyway.

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (8:3-5). They were begging, "Please let us give. Please, please, please may we give to help our fellow believers in Jerusalem?" Why are they so eager? They aren't just giving money; they're giving *themselves* to the Lord, they're giving *themselves* and their hearts to the apostle Paul and his colleagues. In giving themselves, they're also generous in giving their money.

"Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace" (8:6). There's a book of the Bible addressed to this man Titus. He's one of Paul's right-hand men, along with Timothy a few others who were always working with the apostle.

"But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also... For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich... For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness" (8:7-14). If you don't have much money in your account, you can't write a very big check. But it's acceptable according to how much you're able to give. If you have more than others, you can give extra. There may come a time when you're in need and others will have the opportunity to help you.

Finance team (2 Corinthians 8:16-34)

- **Titus:** "my partner and fellow worker"
- **Brother #1:** "famous among all the churches... appointed by the churches"
- **Brother #2:** "whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters"

Paul goes on to talk about the finance team. He talks about Titus, "my partner and co-worker among you" (8:23). He's trustworthy. Paul also talks about two brothers that he doesn't name, but everybody in Corinth knew who he was talking about.

One of them is described as "famous among all the churches for his service to the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us" (8:19).

He says the other brother is one "whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters" (8:22). He's not a rookie. He's been around the block. We've seen how he acts, and we know he can be relied on.

Whenever somebody wants to take an offering, make sure that it's being administered wisely and well by trustworthy people. That's why Paul goes into detail about the people who are going to be his advance men in gathering the collection.

"We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man... So give proof before the churches of your love... So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction" (8:20-24; 9:5).

Cheerful Givers

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 9:5-15)

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). What does it take to be cheerful when you give? I want to highlight four things from this passage that indicate what goes into making someone a cheerful and generous giver.

First of all is the fact that you've been **gifted by grace**. You have received enormous gifts from God. As Jesus once put it, "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

Another reason for being glad in giving is that you are **linked by love** to other people. So if you can help fellow believers, you're happy about that. If you can help people who don't yet know Jesus to hear the gospel, you're delighted about that because you love other people and you want to make a difference. You are happy and excited to help people you love.

When you're a cheerful giver, you **walk by wisdom**. You make sure of the wisdom and integrity of those to whom you're giving and the causes for which you're giving, and you yourself follow wise practices when you plan and organize your giving. That might sound boring and administrative. But if you give a pile of money to some rip-off artist, you're not going to be cheerful when you find out. Part of happy, cheerful giving is doing the homework and walking in wisdom.

A fourth reason for cheerful giving is that you **reap rewards** from God that he promises to givers.

Gifted by grace

Accepting past grace

First of all, people who are cheerful givers know that they have been given a lot. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so

that you by his poverty might become rich" (8:9). Jesus is the greatest giver of all. He gave himself. He was rich. He had all the wealth of heaven, all the splendor and comfort of glory, and he let it all go and made himself poor, so poor that he was born in a manger, that he had no home address to call his own, that he hung on a cross and was mocked and died. He became poor so that you, by his poverty, might become rich, that you might live forever, that you might have all the wealth that God has pleased to give his people, that you might inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5), so that "all things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21).

So he says the first reason why anybody would be a cheerful giver is just realizing and accepting past grace from God, what Jesus has already done. Maybe you know the acronym G-R-A-C-E: "God's riches at Christ's expense." By faith, you receive that and you say, "Thank you, Jesus, for leaving all of that and coming to be one of the lowliest among us and dying that terrible death so that I could be enriched with all of your glory, with all of your eternal life, with the blessings you've given now and the blessings that are awaiting us in the future."

Expressing present grace

Another element of being gifted by grace is that God is at work right now, blessing and pouring out more grace. Sometimes we focus on God's past grace, and we certainly should, but not at the expense of ignoring present and future grace. The Bible doesn't restrict the word *grace* to just that great work that God completed in Jesus Christ. Grace is also God's ongoing blessing and favor that he keeps giving right now.

Paul says: "The grace of God has been given among the churches of Macedonia. Their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part... See that you excel in this act of grace" (2 Corinthians 8:1-2,7). Macedonian Christians are generous because God is pouring out grace in them right now, making them the kind of people who are people of grace. And you too, like them, should excel in this grace that God's pouring out right now.

"They gave ... beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor [$\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ = *charis* = grace] of taking part in the relief of the saints... they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (8:3-5). The Greek word translated as "favor" is actually *charis*, the same word as grace. Grace is a very flexible word. Sometimes it stands for "God's riches at Christ's expense," his free forgiveness and salvation to undeserving sinners. But it can also mean God's favor and ongoing blessing. It can even mean being thankful for something. Sometimes when you read the word translated "thanks" in this passage, it might also be *charis*, grace.

Paul speaks of "the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others... because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:13-15). Everything you are and everything you have that's worthwhile is grace. It is God pouring out. Your health is God's grace. Your energy is God's grace. Your drive and ability to make money is God's grace. Your sense of willingness to share is God's grace. Anything that is worthwhile or noble about you is not first of all something you manufactured. It's the work of

God's grace in you. And when you're doing something for somebody else, you're expressing the ongoing flow of God's grace into your life and through you to other people.

Expecting future grace

There's also future grace: "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" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Does that cover it? *All* grace, *all* sufficiency, for *all* things, at *all* times. God's grace!

A few chapters later, Paul writes about something hard in his life, "a messenger from Satan, a thorn in the flesh," that he prayed to be rid of. But eventually God said, "It's not going away, but my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7–9). The apostle knew that God's grace didn't always mean getting whatever you want or ask for all the time. And yet, even in such circumstances, he experienced grace that was more than enough for all of his needs.

If you're going to be a cheerful giver, you've got to know that anything you give is going to be pretty small compared to what God has already given you and what God is currently giving you and what God intends to give you in the future. And when you know that past, present, and future grace, then you can give cheerfully.

You might say, "But I'm not sure that I can give very generously because you never know what's going to happen in the future. I better make sure that I have an enormous store of treasure before I think about giving." But the apostle says, "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" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Don't let worries about the future make you stingy or make you overly cautious.

This doesn't mean you should be foolish and just give everything away without any thought of how to pay your bills. But it does mean that if you want to be a cheerful giver, you must trust that God will provide for you.

Cheerful givers are people who have received the grace of God by faith. You've received salvation in Jesus by faith. You know that everything you are and have comes from him. And by faith you know that he's going to give more than enough grace for the future.

Linked by love: Generous living

Cheerful givers are linked with others by love. Paul talks about "taking part in the relief of the saints" (8:4), "supplying the needs of the saints... the generosity of your contribution for them and for others, while they long for you and pray for you" (9:12-14). When you're giving for them, they are praying for you.

Oftentimes, I've seen this even with small gifts. You make a meal for somebody. The meal helps them out some—and that's wonderful—but they also are so happy that somebody cared about them. It's the expression of love as much as the actual meal that matters. So there is this link that

develops when people are praying for each other, when they're helping each other out. This link of love is there and brings joy to both sides.

Paul says, "I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness" (8:13–14).

When these bonds of love exist within a congregation, you know that you're not going to be left high and dry. If a need arises and you express it, it's going to be met by God's people. And you know that when you give, you don't have to panic—"Oh no! If I gave a little too much here, I might be left without anything in the future." No. If you give when somebody else is in need, guess what happens when you're in need? Others will help you. There are these links and bonds of love where people are looking out for each other.

In the book of Acts, Christians who had property would sometimes sell it and entrust it to the apostles and then to the deacons, so that those who had a lot could help out those who didn't have enough (Acts 4:34–35).

"So give proof before all the churches of your love" (2 Corinthians 8:24). Love is sometimes expressed with generosity.

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the family of faith" (Galatians 6:10). I love those last three words: "family of faith." That's the name of our church. Sometimes the phrase is translated "household of faith" or "family of believers."

We're talking about financial gifts, but there is more to giving than just finance. Some people who don't have very much financially are able to be very generous in other ways. So I want to think for a moment about these links of love and about generous living. Earlier we read that "they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (2 Corinthians 8:5). Even before they gave any money, they committed themselves to God and to other people.

Money isn't the only way to be generous. It's not the only thing to share. If you've received the good news of the gospel, you want to share the good news with others. If there are people who don't know the Lord, you can be one who shares what God has given you. You can share the love of Jesus. You can share the truth about how to be saved. You can also support missionaries who are carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. You're linked by love with the whole church of Jesus Christ, and with those whom God is planning to add to the church of Jesus Christ but hasn't yet. You love them and you want them to come to Christ, so you give of yourself, and you give of the riches of Christ in spreading the gospel.

Another way to give is simply to offer your own wisdom and life experiences. That doesn't mean going around with your nose in the air saying, "I'm smarter than you. Now let me give you a lecture." But part of genuine giving and being linked by love is that people share with each other what's going on and share some of the things we've learned.

In fact, some of the greatest wisdom you can share is: "I learned this by being really, really stupid and making a bunch of mistakes. I would like to spare you some of those." A lot of the wisdom we should seek to share was not gained just from our reading of the Scriptures and our great decision-making, but from learning through our blunders. So sharing life is sharing our successes but also sharing our failures. It be a tremendous blessing to somebody else to tell them how you blew it. Not just so that they can gain wisdom from that, but also so that they know you're not going around as some sort of superior species that they are totally different from. When people know that others have gone through some of the same challenges and difficulties, there is a sense of strength that comes from togetherness. Just being transparent, to share what's going on, is so valuable, because then people aren't going through life alone.

Besides sharing money or meals, you can share talents. Some people may have less money, but you have a musical talent to share. It is not a great blessing to the rest of the people unless you're actually using it so that others can benefit from it. You may have a talent for teaching. You may have a talent for mercy, in helping others. You may have spiritual gifts in a whole variety of ways. The apostle says in his first letter to the Corinthians, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'... On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (1 Corinthians 12:21–22). The body has a lot of different parts, so nobody should say, "What I'm good at doesn't matter. What I have to offer is useless." If you have it, God gave it to be shared.

Sometimes it's the gift of time. There are very wealthy people who are very devoted to the Lord and very generous in giving money. But some of them are also very busy. They are not going to be as generous with their time as other people are. And a lot of people in our world need someone's time more than they need cash. They need attention. They need to know somebody cares. When you aren't always in a rush, when you're willing to hang out just a little extra time with somebody, when you're willing to pay some attention and listen, you are giving a tremendous gift: the gift of time and attention and empathy and caring.

So as we think about being linked by love, gifts of money are one wonderful way to show love, and a good way to show your devotion to the Lord, because when the Lord gets into your pocketbook, it's usually an indication that some wonderful things are happening. But for some of us, our greatest resources are not so much financial—though we all have some finance—but there's a lot else that each one of us has to give. By generous living, not just sticking to ourselves and our own interests, we can be a blessing to others.

Why are givers cheerful? You're gifted by grace and glad for all God has done for you. You're linked by love and enjoy helping other people and being a blessing to them. A third aspect of cheerful giving is to walk by wisdom.

Walk by wisdom

When Paul was arranging a collection of offerings, he spoke of the arrangements he made with a reliable team of three men. Think about that. He's got a team of three people traveling from city to city. That's a lot of travel expenses and bother. Why not send only one person? Isn't it a waste of money to send three? No, there must be honesty and integrity and accountability. Three

trustworthy people would insure accountability and reliability. People being asked for offerings need to know their gifts are in good hands.

“We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us. For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man” (2 Corinthians 8:20–21). It matters what people think. If you're not conducting your financial affairs in a transparent way, people aren't going to trust you. There are going to be rumors circulating. So we need to be very careful about that.

In those days, of course, there was also the added security concern. You don't want one person carrying a whole pile of money. If you have three, they're a lot less likely to get attacked by bandits on their way to the church in Jerusalem. Paul figured: let's make sure it's not just one person who's easily attacked, and let's make sure it's not just one person handling all the money without accountability to others.

Our church has just appointed two more deacons. One of our standards in our church is that nobody counts the money alone. That's not because we don't trust the deacons. They wouldn't be deacons if we didn't trust them. But you never have somebody count the money alone. Trust but verify. You have to have multiple people involved in that whole process so that it's administered in a wise way.

How do we walk by wisdom? You can give a lot more joyfully if you're confident that your money is actually going to a good cause and for the purposes it's supposed to go toward. You want causes with good goals. You want causes that have a real impact. You want causes that have multiple leaders, not just one person who's handling all the money. You want these leaders to be vetted leaders, people with a proven track record.

Do your research into the causes you support, so that you can be confident that your gifts are being handled well. Why give to a cause with iffy goals, or a cause with noble ideals but zero impact? Why give to a cause where the people handling the money are shifty? If you ever see me flying in a private jet in the name of ministry, please stop giving to Family of Faith. When you're giving to ministries where the leaders have private jets, find a different cause to support.

In your cheerful giving, you want to make sure you're doing that wisely. In our own church, we try to be honest and above board. We make budgets available so that people know where the money at the local level is going. We have multiple deacons counting offerings together. Two of our elders also happen to be the chief financial officers of Christian charities, so we're happy that we have people who know how to handle money and are people of integrity.

In giving, walking by wisdom also means: follow a plan, not just an impulse. Sometimes there may be a moment where the Holy Spirit really moves you, and you know right on the spot you need to give. But most of the time, don't go by what you feel in the moment. Follow a plan. It's easy to show a picture of a starving child and have some cause with the word “children” in it and say, “Give lots of money to us.” Your heartstrings are tugged by the picture of a hungry child. But anybody can put out a picture of a hungry child. Anybody can stand on the edge of the street

and say, “Give me money.” Some panhandlers make a pretty good living at it. So you need to do more than just give on impulse.

The Bible gets into the nitty-gritty of planned giving. "Each one should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up" (1 Corinthians 16:2). You give what you decide in your heart to give (2 Corinthians 9:7). You choose the amount. You prioritize: “Here’s where I’m going to start giving, and if I have enough, I’ll move on to the next thing,” and so on. You allocate your limited resources. You decide in advance where you want to give.

We do that as a congregation. There are a lot of good causes we’d love to support, but we’ve chosen ten that we support in a special way with a designated amount from our budget. We also highlight each one as a “mission of the month,” and that month’s mission offerings go to that ministry. As leaders we’ve tried to do our homework on what some of those good causes are, and we choose a kind of diversity of causes, whether it’s prison ministry, ministry to the homeless, spreading the gospel in Africa, theological education in Ukraine. There’s a variety of causes.

In your personal giving, you may have other causes that you know of that our church doesn’t support, and you know they’re a great cause. That can be part of your generous giving.

At any rate, here's the point: prioritize! How much am I going to be able to give this year? You may turn out to be able to give a little more than your original plan. But plan and prioritize how much you intend to give this week or this year.

Paul writes, "Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income" (1 Corinthians 16:1–2). Your giving can be scheduled. "I’ve got this much income this week, and here’s how much I’m giving this Sunday." There’s planning that goes into that.

One word you don't read from Paul is *tithe*. Tithing isn’t bad, but Paul doesn’t mention it. Tithing was a standard of giving in Old Testament law, where you gave ten percent of your income to the Lord. You might say, “Yikes! Ten percent is a lot.” Actually, it's a starting point. As with many things in the law, that’s your baseline. That’s where you start, not where you stop.

But Paul here isn’t talking about tithing. He’s saying you give as you plan and as you determine in your heart to give. For some people with little income, the tithe might be a little too much. For other people, the tithe might be much less than you could cheerfully afford to give.

Evangelist and preacher John Wesley gave two pounds per month to the work of the Lord when he was making 30 pounds a month. If you're a stickler for tithing, you might say, “What a cheapskate! He gave less than 10 percent, because 10 percent of 30 pounds would be three pounds, not two.” But when he was making 50 pounds a month, Wesley was giving 32 pounds and keeping 28. When he was making 100 pounds, then he was giving 72 pounds and keeping 28. Wesley knew he needed 28 pounds to live on. He knew what he needed, and then he was generous beyond what he needed.

Tithing isn't an automatic legal requirement of all believers. In this passage, the apostle doesn't mention it. Jesus does say something good about tithing in passing. He says to the Pharisees, "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matthew 23:23). Tithing was a good thing, but it was far more important to have a heart for people.

A big advantage of walking by wisdom—choosing causes that conduct their financial affairs well, and planning your own giving—is that you can enjoy giving what you can, and you don't feel bad about what you can't give. You say, "This is what the Lord laid on my heart. This is what my financial resources allow for. These are some causes worth giving to. I've given to them. I enjoy it. It's a lot of fun. And I'm not going to feel guilty every time I see another appeal about giving or get another mailing or email about some worthy cause. I gave what I could to causes I know are sound and doing the Lord's work. I'm happy I could give, and I'm not going to feel bad about what I couldn't give."

Walk in wisdom, and you're not going to have the regret of paying for some phony's private jet and his four palaces that he lives in. Do your homework, and you can avoid those regrets. Instead, you can rejoice in supporting the Lord's work. "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable **according to what a person has**, not according to what he does not have" (8:12). "Each one must give as he has **decided** in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (9:7). God loves it when people give from the heart and give wisely.

Reap rewards

Cheerful giving is rewarding. This truth is probably more distorted and twisted in some preaching than any other topic. Some of us are very reluctant to preach about giving because some preachers make lavish promises of how rich you're going to get if you give to "my cause." Even so, God does promise rewards for genuine generosity.

"A man who is kind benefits himself... One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:17, 24-25). In general, a generous person seems to get richer, and often a stingy person seems to end up with less.

I remember a couple in a church I served who never had the ability to give anything—in their own minds, at least. They never had extra money, and then when they got their tax refund, it would always go to some big luxury they didn't need. They could splurge on themselves, but they never managed to have anything to give for God's work. Years later, they still had almost nothing. They had a lot of difficulty and strife in their relationship as well.

Some Christians have said to me (half joking, I hope), "Do you know how much money we would save if we didn't tithe? Do you know how much money goes out when we tithe?" I answered, "As far as I know, you still have more than enough money. Are you sure you would have that much if you didn't tithe?" It might sound transactional, but the Bible seems to indicate that often God lavishly blesses generous people.

Unfortunately, unscrupulous preachers turn this into a health-and-wealth gospel and say, “You want to get really rich? Write an even bigger check to me, and then God’s really going increase your wealth.” But if your motive in giving is, “I’m actually at heart a selfish pig, but I know if I write some checks to religious causes, then I’m going to get more and more and more,” then that is the exact opposite of what the apostle is talking about.

Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). “Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in heaven that does not fail” (Luke 12:33). He didn't necessarily mean, “Sell *all* your possessions.” But he clearly did mean, “If you have far more than you need, sell some and give to the needy.” That is, be generous with what you’ve got. Inflation will not devalue treasure stored in heaven. Stock market crashes will not decrease the value of treasures in heaven. “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (Luke 16:9). This is how you invest in the heavenly treasure that Jesus promises.

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully... God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make ^[11]all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, **you may abound in every good work**" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). Why would God give you a lot? So that you can abound even more in your good works. You give in order to get, in order to give even more. You want God’s grace and his gifts to keep increasing so that a greater flow from you can bring even greater blessing to others.

Paul talks about sowing and reaping. Let’s say there was a farmer with a thousand bushels of corn. Suppose he said, "I'm going to sell all thousand bushels so that I can get as much money as I can. Okay, okay, I need some seed for next year, so I'll plant one bushel and sell the other 999." Would that be a brilliant farming decision? He’s got many acres to plant, and he’s going to keep one bushel and sell the other 999? How foolish! If he planted all thousand bushels, he would have a tremendous crop coming. You get according to what you plant.

Last spring our daughter Maria got carried away. She found some plants on sale cheap, and not being one to pass up a good sale, she bought 40 tomato plants. She said, “We’ll put them all in the garden. Some are going to die anyway.” None of them died. We ended up with a jungle of tomato plants. Now we have 100 quarts of tomatoes, 100 quarts of spaghetti sauce, and we’ve got homemade salsa and barbecue sauce running out of our ears. Planting so many tomatoes gave us an overflowing harvest of tomatoes.

If you sow a lot, you're likely to reap a lot. But as I said, the reaping is not just so I can be a selfish pig and pile up my money, but so that I can "abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). **Give → get more → give more.** "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. **You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way**"(9:10-11). That is one of the great rewards that you reap: if you’re generous, you get to be even more generous. That’s what makes someone a cheerful giver: “I love being generous, and I would love to be even more generous if God gave me more resources.”

The ultimate reward of giving is to see God glorified. Notice these words: "for the glory of the Lord himself" (8:19), "produce thanksgiving to God... overflowing in many thanksgivings to God... they will glorify God... while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (9:11-14) When you're a miser or a selfish pig, does God get a lot of glory out of that? Do people say, "Thank you, God, that she is a miser and he is selfish"? No, they praise God when they see evidence of God's grace in you.

Cheerful givers

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- Gifted by grace
- Linked by love
- Walk by wisdom
- Reap rewards

I love these two chapters of the Bible, and I love the opportunity to preach on them. I have to preach on giving sometimes, not because the church needs more money, but so that *you* can be blessed, and so that *you* can have joy in giving, and so that *your* joy and cheer may increase.

I don't preach on giving so that I will get my salary, or so that the church budget is met. It's dangerous to say this, but our church budget is already taking in too much. Actually, there's never too much. If we have more than enough for our local church operations, then next year our budget will allocate more for various mission causes.

In all my years in Family of Faith, I have never had to say, "Finances are tough, folks. I hope you'll come through soon." I'm so thankful to God that he has given his people not only the resources but also the heart to give. But I want you to be able to enjoy giving even more.

So think again on God's grace. Think of the ties of love that develop among Christians when you work and bless other churches and bless fellow Christians in your own church. Walk by wisdom; use your head. And you will reap rewards as God gives you more so that you can give more.

Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for the unspeakable gift of Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that though you were rich, yet for our sakes you became poor, that we through your poverty might become rich. Lord, give us the heart of the Savior, that we may have a heart of grace, of generosity, of giving. Give us also the love of the Savior, that we may delight in bringing blessing to others. Give us the wisdom of the Savior, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, so that our giving may be wise and well administered. And Lord, may we bring glory to you in all our giving. May we increase in our ability to make an impact in our church, in our neighborhood, in our community, and in our world. And may we have joy in all of it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Cheerful Givers
2 Corinthians 8-9
By David Feddes
Slide Contents

^{8:1} We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ ... see that you excel in this act of grace... ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich...

¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

Finance team (2 Corinthians 8:16-34)

- **Titus:** “my partner and fellow worker”
- **Brother #1:** “famous among all the churches... appointed by the churches”
- **Brother #2:** “whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters”

²⁰ We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹ for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man... ²⁴ So give proof before the churches of your love.

^{9:5} So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

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!

Cheerful Givers

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (9:7)

- Gifted by grace
- Linked by love
- Walk by wisdom
- Reap rewards

Gifted by grace

- **Accepting past grace**
For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (8:9)
- **Expressing present grace**
The grace of God has been given among the churches of Macedonia... their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part... See that you excel in this act of grace. (8:1-2, 7)
They gave ... beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor [χάρις = grace] of taking part in the relief of the saints... they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. (8:3-5)
... the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others... because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (9:14-15)
- **Expecting future grace**
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. (8:8)

Cheerful Givers

- Gifted by grace
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Linked by love

...taking part in the relief of the saints (8:4) supplying the needs of the saints... the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you (9:12-14)

I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. (8:13-14)

So give proof before the churches of your love. (8:24)

As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the family of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

Linked by love: Generous living

- Devote self to God and others
- Give riches of Christ, eternal life
- Offer wisdom, life experiences
- Share money, meals, talents, time, attention, empathy

Cheerful Givers

- Gifted by grace
- Linked by love
- **Walk by wisdom**
- Reap rewards

Walk by wisdom

We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. (8:20-21)

Walk by wisdom

- Support causes with good goals, real impact, and multiple, vetted leaders.
- Follow a plan, not just an impulse: choose amount, priorities, schedule.
- Enjoy giving what you can; don't feel bad about what you can't give.

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable **according to what a person has**, not according to what he does not have. (8:12) Each one must give as he has **decided** in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (9:7)

Cheerful Givers

- Gifted by grace
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Reap rewards

A man who is kind benefits himself... One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:17, 24-25)

Give, and it will be given to you... For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:38)

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail. (Luke 12:33)

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully... God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make ^[L]_[SEP]all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, **you may abound in every good work.** (9:6-8)

Give → get more → give more

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. **You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.** (9:10-11)

... for the glory of the Lord himself (8:19) produce thanksgiving to God... overflowing in many thanksgivings to God... they will glorify God... while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (9:11-14)

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