

***All scripture is NKJV unless noted otherwise.

The Collection for Christians in Jerusalem

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, ² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³ But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 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. (2 Corinthians 9:1-5, ESV).



Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NIV)

Last week Paul was telling the Corinthians how generous the Macedonians were and that they should give in the same way. Humorously, now Paul is doing the opposite thing telling the Corinthians “now don’t let me down. I’m bragging on you to the Macedonians.” It

looks like he is sort of pitting the Corinthians against the Macedonians. Or perhaps, he is just voicing high expectations that he has for both of them. I think people usually rise to the expectations that are put on them. I was talking to Pastor Larry the other day about qualities that my father had that were admirable. One thing my dad always did was to have high expectations for me. It motivated me to meet those expectations and that is in part why I always strove to be the best that I could be in whatever I engaged in in my life. As a side thought, what expectations do you have for your own life? If it is to please God, then giving is part of that walking out of holiness in our lives. Paul says he’ll be bringing some Macedonians along with him, so he has sent people ahead to arrange the gift of the Corinthian church, so it’ll be organized and ready when the group get there. The next two verses are the cornerstone of Christian giving for the New Testament church.

The Cheerful Giver

⁶ *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6, ESV).*

In last week's lesson, Paul honed in on motivation. He said that the size of the gift wasn't the main thing that was important, but rather the motivation behind any gift that is given. Paul isn't talking about what is acceptable but he is saying that the size of the gift is proportional to what you get back from God. This discourse may be a bit offensive to some because you might be thinking, "well, Pastor Faber, I thought we were talking about giving and not getting." Curiously, in God's economy they run hand in hand. There is a **principle of sowing and reaping** that is all throughout the Bible. It's important to think beyond money here as well. Paul is restating this principle by saying that what we harvest in our lives is directly related to what we sow. Many of us in this congregation are farmers, ranchers, or gardeners. We live close to the ground. WE all understand that if we plant one tomato seed, we'll get one plant (we usually hedge our bets and plant three). However, if we plant two tomato seeds, we'll hopefully see two tomato plants come up. That's a good example of the principal of sowing and reaping. What we sow in our lives is exactly what we will reap. Is this offensive to you? Paul is clear in Galatians when he says, ⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (Galatians 6:7 ESV).*

And there are all kinds of things that we can sow into our lives. How about kindness, forgiveness, anger, impatience, etc.? And it works for the positive as well as the negative. What you plant in your garden is what will grow in your garden. What you plant in your heart is what will grow in your heart. People that sow unforgiveness, will neither be able to forgive others nor themselves. People who can forgive others are able to forgive themselves. People who sow discord, bitterness, and conflict will live lives filled with discord, bitterness, and conflict. People that sow forgiveness, kindness, and mercy will have lives that are like gardens filled with forgiveness, kindness, and mercy. These are examples of the principle of sowing and reaping, and the same principle works with regard to our giving of our time, talents, and treasure.

Likewise, every farmer knows that for every seed you plant, there is a possibility of getting many more seeds back. That is a Kingdom principle called the **principle of multiplication**. That means that each tomato plant will produce many new seeds within each tomato fruit. Both of these principles are evident in the realm of giving. Verse 6 is so much clearer in the New Living Translation:

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NLT)

...a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

Proverbs 19:17 (ESV)

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

We then come to the cornerstone verse for Christian giving. You will find this printed on every offering envelope which we hand out for your offerings. I purposely don't use the term "tithe" when I talk about giving. Some have asked me why I don't, and I'll tell you. The tithe was an Old Testament tax on Israelites. It was an obligation. I have heard this overemphasized in churches. I think it is because some pastors think if they don't impose a tithe people will stop giving. What we find in this passage are exhortations about joy and attitudes that go to the heart of our giving. We do this to relieve suffering some might experience in our fellowships, and we do this to support the work of ministry. It is just part of the good stewardship that God expects from each of us. It is part of walking in holiness. It is part of abiding in Him. And these passages tell us that it is rewarded.

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." (2 Corinthians 9:7-9, ESV).*

Let's pull this apart now and examine it closely to see what it is saying. Paul says that our giving is a personal decision. It is not something that I or any other church leader should decide for you. The amount you give should come after a conversation between you and God to determine what your level of giving should be. Likewise, it should come after you've wrestled with Him about what you've purposed in your heart to give. And when it is determined, there should be no reluctance in your giving. It is to be freely determined, freely given and done with a cheerful and grateful heart.

I think it requires a change in our thinking as well. We should never be trying to see how “cheap we can get something done” when we’re doing God’s work. When I first came to the Grove we were in need of a new refrigerator. The congregation was very small and was not accustomed to having resources to make improvements. Suggestions were made about looking for a new refrigerator and the possibilities were discussed of finding something scratched or dented or used for the church. I remember thinking, “Why would we treat our house of worship in any manner different to our own homes?” I said, “Let’s have a practice of providing a quality and a standard for what we do for the Lord that is as high and as nice as we provide for ourselves.” We’ve stuck to that and you can see how lovely, clean, and modernized our facilities are. This happened when people freely gave to God’s work and wanted it to be as it should be. That’s the attitude. That’s the spirit! And we still maintain that standard pretty much in all we do here. Paul continues.

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. (2 Corinthians 9:10-11, ESV).

Paul gives a promise of God in these verses. He says that it is God that provides the seed that we are able to sow in our lives, and the increase (the bread for food) that comes from that seed is all provided by Him. He adds that this provision gives us the opportunity to harvest an increase of righteousness in our hearts and lives. It is a multiplication of our righteousness. And along with that gifting that we do, we are promised to be “enriched in every way to be generous in every way.” This abundance that we experience should provoke us to be most thankful. Let me put it in simple terms.

God gave you your life, your brains, your health, your abilities, and all that you have and all that you are. He gave you breath today. Use it for His glory! Use it for acts of righteousness! Great rewards come with living that kind of life. His blessings come back in ways we’ll never understand, but they come back. My sweet grandmommy McMullen used to say, “Boyfriend, you just can’t outgive the Lord.” And she was right!

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 9:12-15, ESV).

Paul continues in saying that our giving itself is a way of saying “thank you” to God. This kind of giving glorifies God because it shows that we are submitted to the “Confession of the gospel of Christ.” When we invest in this ministry, in other ministries, and in the lives of those less fortunate than us, we are extending the grace of God and giving thanks for His inexpressible gift, the gift of salvation, and the gift of eternity in heaven with Him.

So let’s wrap this up this morning with a few questions:

Q: Who is the supplier of all of your time, talents, and treasures?

Q: How much should you give?

Q: What does this say about tithing?

Q: Does giving have anything to do with righteousness (holiness in living)?

Q: Should we just give to the needs of other believers or should we give to our local church as well?

Q: Does our giving bring glory to God?

The New Testament never gives a percentage of our income that we should give. We are no longer under the law, nor are we under a compulsion to give a 10-percent tithe. But the Bible is full of encouragement to set money aside in proportion to how we have been blessed. We are exhorted to do this “regularly” and “in keeping with our income” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

There are many promises that come to those who give with a generous heart. As we learned last week, God loves a generous spirit. He loves a generous heart. To have such a heart is to get outside of oneself. The promises are here. They are real. *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6b-7).*

When I was young and had great difficulty giving from what was “mine,” I put myself under a tithing system. That means that Sandy and I gave 10 percent of our time, talents, and treasure to God’s work. This got me (more than her) into the habit of giving regularly and I might add “legalistically.” In time, I grew used to it and my giving became joyful. It became “grace giving.” I learned that sometimes I am to give more than 10 percent and sometimes less than 10 percent, BUT WE ARE ALL INSTRUCTED TO GIVE. It will depend on what you have and what you need. Sometimes we need to learn to live on less for ourselves to become generous people. Stingy people are unhappy people. They are not blessed. I don’t say that. The Bible says that.

Each of us should diligently pray and seek God's wisdom and direction in the matter of giving (James 1:5). And however much we feel led to give, it should be given with sweet, pure motives and a cheerful heart. In doing so, we are participating in a deep form of worship. We're sacrificing ourselves and our resources for the needs of the ministry and the needs of others. That puts a smile on God's face!

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.