

Being Cheerful Givers

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, whenever and wherever you're watching this online service today. I'm going to be continuing our theme today on generosity.

This past year has seen events that I, and also that of my parents' generation, have never seen in our lifetimes. Being locked in our homes, restrictions on our daily lives and who we can meet. I was speaking with my great-grandmother a few months ago. She's in her 90s and served in the RAF during the Second World War. And she said in her lifetime, she has never seen anything have as big an impact as this pandemic on daily society.

If I was to name a word that I heard being said pretty much every day of 2020, I would say unprecedented. Therefore, I have never known a more important time to be talking about generosity.

When people we know have been bereaved, who have been crippled financially and battling loneliness. And where simple acts such as being a listening ear over the phone or doing shopping for a vulnerable person could have such an enormous impact.

[1 : 1 9] If you are struggling, we will do whatever we can to support you. So please feel free to go to our website to contact us if you need to. Before I delve into today's passage, I want to talk about a verse from the previous chapter of 2 Corinthians.

Chapter 8, verse 12. When it comes to giving, many people, and myself included at times, feel a sense of inadequacy.

That we aren't giving enough. And many others are giving more. And that we should give more. But Paul reminds us in this verse, it is not a question of how much we give that makes our gift acceptable.

It's about sacrificial giving, according to our own personal circumstances. In Mark chapter 12, verses 41 to 44.

When many rich people threw large amounts of money into the temple treasury, which to them would have been a pocket change. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence.

[2 : 3 8] Jesus said to them, This poor widow has put in more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty, putting in everything, all that she had to live on.

Therefore, the acceptability of the gift to God is according to what you have, rather than what you don't have. So don't look at other people and think that they're giving so much more, and what I'm giving is worthless.

No, that is not the case. Digging into today's passage in chapter 9, Paul turns the table slightly, talking about the size of the gift, but not about it being acceptable to God, but a different principle. In verse 6, Paul says, So Paul is talking about size, but the size of the gift will be proportional to what you get back.

So why are we now talking about receiving, when the subject of today is on giving? The reason for this principle is given in Galatians chapter 6, a man reaps what he sows.

[4 : 0 3] The principle behind this verse, when Paul wrote it, was related to sin, where if we go through life doing things our way in a destructive manner, for our personal gain, and thinking that our actions are not going to have an impact on others, we will reap destruction, because we are claiming the privilege of being a child of God, but not living like one.

Although in this context, Paul was talking about sin, this is also true in other contexts, kindness, forgiveness. If you sow them, you can kind of expect to reap those back.

Also, if you sow anger or impatience, you can expect to reap those back too. Therefore, there is an aspect to this, that inputs affect outputs.

What you put into, or what someone else puts into your life, will to some degree dictate an outcome. Therefore, what you plant in your garden, you will inevitably find growing.

In verse 10, though, Paul starts to talk about a multiplier effect, where he who supplies seeds to the sower, and bread for food, will also supply and increase your store of seeds, and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

[5 : 27] You will be enriched in every way, so that you can be generous on every occasion. And through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

So if I plant an apple seed, providing it grows the way it's supposed to, and turns into an apple tree, which bears fruit, you will get exponentially more seeds.

And this is a factor that comes into play with giving. You cannot separate giving, from what you get back from the Lord. I know some may say, it's inappropriate to talk about what you receive when you give, but God talks about it.

But in this passage, Paul says you will be enriched in every way. Generosity brings wealth of a more holistic kind, and this is what it means to be cheerful givers.

It gives us joy to give stuff away. And when generosity unravels quickly, it encourages us, thus inducing this multiplier effect.

[6 : 36] The final point I want to talk about is that God's relentless grace provokes an overpowering generosity in us. But do we really understand grace?

And do we really understand God's love for us, even if we don't deserve it? God is a God who loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us as we are.

And if you think that God's blessing is to do with earning it, you don't understand grace. Grace is the end of earning, but not the end of effort.

Do we need to do enough good things to counteract the bad? No, that's not how grace works. Our sins separate us from God, but there is a way to get back on course, and that is through repentance and faith, and through Jesus Christ who died on the cross for us, and that the burdens of our sins are laid.

Through repentance and saying, God, I turn to you, we are forgiven. It is not about what we do, it is about what God, through Jesus Christ, has done.

[7 : 51] So what does this mean for generosity? If we get grace, and that God would forgive sinners like us, to turn around and be mean-spirited, it just doesn't seem right.

It's not all about being generous with our money either. It's about being generous with our time, and our attitudes. We, as Christians, are called to be cheerful givers.

I want to conclude by asking you this question. What does it mean to you to sow generously? The fact is, is that God has been generous to us, forgiving our sins, and allowing us to enter into a relationship with him.

Since I decided to go both feet in with Jesus, I have experienced more and more what grace means. It is by grace, through faith, we are saved.

And the least we can do, is to sow generously, as God has sow generously into our lives. And not just with our money, but with our time and our attitudes.

[9 : 06] And that generosity should not be fuelled by a sense of compulsion or duty, but through the impact that God's grace has had on us in our lives.

We will have to come back to the power of God's grace time and time again throughout our lives. And when that happens, you may find something that will be unlocked inside you.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for your grace and for your forgiveness, and that you have saved generously into our lives.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross. Help us, Lord, to live up to that generosity, to sow generously, and to be cheerful givers.

For Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And as we go out into the world, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

[10 : 14] Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.