

# Faithful Stewardship

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[0:00] Well, we've been making our way through a series called 21st Century Disciple. And basically what it is, it's helping us think of a modern day follower of Jesus.

Children, you are dismissed to your classes. Go learn what it means to be a 21st Century Disciple. It all starts with Jesus.

Jesus says, hey, if you would come after me, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. It all starts there. All starts with him. And he calls us to walk according to his word.

He calls us to walk praying to him in community together, walking by his spirit. And this morning what I want to draw your attention to is that a 21st Century Disciple of Jesus is generous.

He's a faithful steward. And so we're going to look at a dimension of our discipleship called stewardship. Stewardship is the wise and generous managing of the resources God entrusts to you.

[1:10] And he entrusts us a variety of different resources. And so we are to be wise and generous with our time. It's a resource God gives us. We're to be wise and generous with the talents that he has given us.

And this morning I want to help you see what God's word has to say about being wise and generous with the treasure he has given you. Specifically with your income.

Now, don't worry. At the end of the service we're not going to pass the plate again. So we're not going to have quote unquote immediate application that way. What I'm most interested in is letting God's word do its work in your heart.

So today, next week, in the years to come, you are going to experience the joy of being generous. Because you've been motivated by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you would turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9. We're going to be in these two chapters today.

[2:11] And obviously, we don't have the time for me to walk through and give this thoroughgoing exposition of all the nooks and crannies in these two chapters. But what I do want to do is draw out five motivational principles that are designed to be like butter that kind of melt into the nooks and crannies of your heart.

And give you gospel flavor. That results in generosity. The gospel generates generosity.

And those who Jesus calls his own. You're going to hear me repeat something throughout this morning's sermon.

It's this. When you get what God has given, you will want to give from what you got. When you get what God has given Jesus, you will want to give from what you got.

Let me give you a little background on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul is writing to a bunch of Gentile Christians in this town called Corinth.

[3:26] And it's within miles of Rome. So it's in this region called Achaia. And at the same time that this letter was written, there's a bunch of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem in the region of Judea.

And they are experiencing a hardship. The Jerusalem church had grown dramatically over the last 20 years upon the writing of this letter. And the church of Jerusalem had an unusual amount of people in abject poverty.

And what happens at this time in history is that in Judea, there was this really intense famine that hit. And it had effect upon the Jerusalem church and its ability to care for all these members who were experiencing hardship.

The apostle Paul was aware of the famine in Jerusalem and the unique situation that was putting that church in. The church had actually set up this daily distribution of help for people in need. You see it in Acts chapter 6. Well, Paul, who was aware of this Jerusalem church in need, he goes to all these Gentile churches that he had been a part in planting.

[4:38] All around the northern rim of the Mediterranean Sea. And so he starts going to each of them, sending letters and having conversations. And he says to them, hey, you guys, would you rally in on top of your normal giving to the local churches?

Would you give to the needs of the poor in Jerusalem? And so what we see happening, what's behind the scenes here, is that the apostle Paul is motivating this particular Gentile church in Corinth to follow through on their commitment to give financial help to the Christians in Jerusalem. And so for us, it's really helpful. Because we see how the apostle motivates Christians to be generous. And that has tremendous application for life today in our own seeking to be generous. The gospel generates generosity. And when you get what God has graciously given, you will want to give generously from what you got. So five principles from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 that are designed to motivate generosity in our giving.

The first is this. Give yourself first to the Lord. Give yourself first to the Lord. In chapter 8, verses 1 and 2, Paul starts to motivate the Corinthian Christians by pointing to some Macedonian Christians.

[6:13] See that? We want you to know, brothers in Corinth, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. Macedonia was a region just north of Achaia where Corinth was.

And that region contained churches like Berea, those Bereans, Acts 16, maybe 17. Somewhere in there, church of Philippi, the church of Thessalonica.

And what we know about all of those churches is that the gospel was preached there and there was dramatic reorientation of people's lives to follow Jesus. And so Paul starts to motivate these Corinthians by saying, Hey, you know your brothers up north in Macedonia?

They were suffering a severe test of affliction, verse 2. They were being persecuted. And in the midst of that severe persecution, we see in 8-2, they had an abundance of joy.

So they were suffering for being followers of Jesus and yet they were still full of joy. You know what does that? The gospel does that. And then we continue reading.

[7:24] We read this. And their extreme poverty, in their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. So not only are they being persecuted, but they're also extremely poor.

They don't have any money. They don't have extra stuff to give. But because of what the gospel had been doing in them, they find a way to give an overwhelming amount of generosity.

So we're learning a lot about these churches in Macedonia. Persecuted but joyful. Poor yet generous. They're giving according to their means, verse 3. And some are giving beyond their means.

They're giving sacrificially. And in verse 4 of chapter 8, we learn that these poor Christians in Macedonia are begging Paul.

Look at verse 4. Begging us earnestly. They're not begging for money. You know what they're begging? Paul, let us be a part of the relief effort in Jerusalem.

[8:30] Let us give. Let us be a part of this. We want to help in any way we can. We'll write checks. We'll go ourselves. We'll knit all sorts of whatever you need to be knit. We'll do any kind of things you need us to do.

We want in. Would you just let us be a part of it? They're begging to be a part of it. So let me ask you. What compels a bunch of Christians to do things like that?

Now you start to know the reason why Paul is pointing to them for the Corinthians. Something's at work in them. Look at verse 5. And this, not as we expected.

That's the apostolic way of saying it floored us. We were really surprised to see all this stuff. We're shocked that these people who were being persecuted were joyful. We were amazed that they were in their poverty, giving so much, begging to be a part of this.

And then he points to something very interesting in verse 5. But they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

[9:37] He's giving an explanation for what they're doing. Why they're doing what they're doing. They're being so generous and so sacrificial because they've given themselves fully to the Lord.

This unique work has got something to do with their posture towards the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul wants them to see that they're seeking to live for Jesus.

These really interesting ways of being, of being so generous when you've got nothing. It reveals that they have given themselves fully and first to the Lord.

What does that mean? They had decisively rejected living for themselves. And they were intentionally living for Jesus.

That's what that means. Jesus first. Jesus fully. They gave themselves to the Lord. And by giving themselves to the Lord, God was then able to use them to fulfill his will of then giving to the apostle who would then give to this need in Jerusalem.

[10:56] So you know what all this means? When we talk about Christian stewardship. When we talk about giving. Before we give some of what we've got coming in.

We first need to give all of who we are to Jesus. That's where giving starts. It starts with giving of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And not just part of us. All of us. So when we talk about Christian generosity. We don't start by talking about budgets. We start by talking about how glorious and wonderful our Lord Jesus Christ is.

And so it's not a call to a financial class. It's a call to a spiritual devotion. To live for Christ. Giving yourself to him.

Financial giving. Faithful, generous giving. Starts with Jesus. There's another question we've got to ask here.

[11:56] Why would anybody do that? Why would anybody give themselves first to the Lord? Why would someone in 2018 give themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Why would you do anything like that? Well we're given the answer in verse 9 of chapter 8. So here's where we've been so far. Principle number one to being a generous giver.

Is give yourself first to the Lord Jesus Christ. Principle number two is you give yourself to Jesus because he has given himself for you. We see that in verse 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.

All throughout this. These two chapters. The apostle Paul talks about giving as an act of grace. Look at verse 6. Accordingly we started.

[13:08] We urge Titus that as he started. So he should complete among you this act of grace. Look at the end of verse 7. See that you excel in this act of grace.

Chapter 9 verse 19. No excuse me. 8 verse 19. 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. Giving is an act of grace. What is grace? Grace is God's undeserved favor.

Or unmerited kindness. It's who he is. In addition to being holy and just.

He is gracious. Kind and good. He is a loving holy God. And he shows sinners kindness. Not because we sinners deserve it.

[14:05] Quite the contrary. He shows sinners his goodness. Because he's good. Even to the undeserving. Giving. So this act of grace that we're talking about here.

Of Christian giving. Of generosity. Is ultimately. God's grace. At work. In God's people. We give to others because.

God has given so richly. And his grace to us. God's grace. And the greatest of all. Of God's gifts. Is Jesus.

And in verse 9. We have a gospel sighting. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though he was rich. Yet for his. For your sake. He became poor.

So that you by his poverty. Might become rich. Oh there's so much. Theological depth here. That though he was rich.

[15:08] Before Jesus took on human flesh. He lived in pre. Existent glory. With the triune Godhead. He was being worshiped and praised.

For eternity past. He was rich. And then he became poor. He took on human flesh. The incarnation. Merry Christmas.

It's when Jesus. Became poor. And walked among us. By taking on human flesh. And setting aside his glory. And then for our sake.

He became. His poverty. Of giving himself. Dying on the cross. It's through his poverty. That we are made rich. Not.

Jingle rich. Salvation rich. God has given us. Everything we need. He saved us. From our greatest problem. And so when we talk about here.

[16:07] When Paul talks about. In verse nine. He's very interesting. Way of talking about. Though he was rich. For your sake. He became poor. So that you. By his poverty.

Might become rich. It's just another way. Of talking about the gospel. That Jesus Christ died. For our sins. And so what we see.

Paul doing here. Is using. The gospel. To motivate. These Christians. In Corinth. And these Christians. In Kenosha. To be generous.

Because Jesus. Gave of himself. Generously. To us. Who are in need. We are to give generously. To others. Who are in need. There's an acronym.

For grace. God's riches. At Christ's. Expense. And the richest. Of all riches. Is our salvation. The gospel.

[17:04] Generates. Generosity. Now. If you're a Christian here. And you came into this room. And you're like thinking. Oh yeah. I get the gospel thing. But man.

I always thought. That the gospel. Is something you proclaim. To non-Christians. Well it is that. But it's more than that. When you become a Christian. You don't take the gospel.

And put it on the shelf. It's not like the gospel. Is kind of like. Christian training wheels. That eventually. You learn to outgrow. And you put the gospel. Training wheels away.

You never outgrow the gospel. In fact. When you look. Throughout the New Testament. The gospel. Is vital. It's essential. It's core. To living out.

The Christian life. And so. Elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul appeals to the. The gospel. To motivate Christians. To live lives. Of sexual purity. We see that. In 1 Corinthians 6.

[18:00] You were brought at a price. You're not your own. So glorify God. With your body. Gospel. Paul uses the gospel. To motivate Christians. To forgive one another. In Ephesians chapter 4. As God.

Forgive one another. As God has forgiven us. In Christ Jesus. Gospel. Paul uses the gospel. To motivate Christians. In Crete.

To live self-controlled. Upright. And holy lives. In this present age. In Galatians chapter 2. We see Paul. Record of it. Rebuke Peter. Because.

He was living in a way. That was out of step. With the truth of the gospel. The gospel. The gospel compels us. To live a certain way. It's essential.

For Christians. So we never graduate. From the essential gospel. Message. In fact. It's foundational. It's vital. It's motivational. And that's why Paul. Is using it here.

[18:54] In 2 Corinthians 8. To motivate. Generosity. He's calling us. God is calling us.

Through his word. To be generous. So. Let me just step back. So you make sure. You see what's happening. So before we give. Financially. Before we give. Of some of what.

We've been entrusted. We give. All of ourselves. To the Lord Jesus. That's principle number one. Give yourself first. To Jesus. But there's a step. Before that. And the step before that.

Is recognizing. That Jesus. Gave himself. For us. Gospel. What essentially.

Happens here. Is a chain reaction. Of grace. The gospel. Is a catalyst. That when. Received by faith. It is. Starts. A chain reaction.

[19:52] Of grace. By which God. Starts to gradually. Transform. Sinners. Into. More and more. The likeness. Of Jesus. Himself. And one of the areas.

That he is seeking. To transform. Is our given. Martin Luther. Has said. About conversion. First. A man's. Mind is converted. Then his heart. Is converted. Then his wallet. Is converted.

That's Martin Luther. For you. This is an act. Of grace. A chain reaction. Of grace.

That was catalyzed. By the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Itself. Here's what this can look like. I'm a little reluctant.

To share this example. But you'll get the point. This year. We got a refund. For our taxes. Woo. And it dropped.

[20:46] Into our checking account. This week. And so this morning. I wrote a check. To Christ the King Church. Giving. As a portion.

Of what we have received. And you know. What was going on in my heart. Writing this check. Oh Lord Jesus. Thank you so much.

For what you've given me. Jesus. Thank you so much. That you who are rich. Became poor. And in your poverty. It's through that. That I can become rich. It is a joy. To write this check.

To Christ the King Church. Do you know. What the gospel does. It transforms. Our giving. Into worship. It transforms. Writing checks.

Into liturgy. It transforms us. From the inside. Out. The result. Is cheerful giving. When you get.

[21:41] What God. Has graciously given. You will joyfully. Generously. Give from what you got. Christians don't give. Because we have to. Christians give. Because we want to.

The gospel of Jesus Christ. Transforms us. So that. We don't gather. Our income. And possessions. In yellow.

Written mine. We recognize. Our income. And our possessions. Are entrustings. Of God. And we say. Yours. Yours. Use it for your glory.

God. Use it to bless. Others. The gospel. Changes. The way we give. It generates. Generosity.

So. We've seen. We must first. Give ourselves. To the Lord. Second. We give. Out of the gospel.

[22:37] We give. Ourselves. Because Christ. Has given himself. For us. Third. We give generously. Paul. Helps us. To see this.

In 2nd Corinthians. 9. 6. The point is this. Whoever sows sparingly. Will also reap sparingly. And whoever sows bountifully. Will also reap bountifully.

Paul is likening. Likening. Giving. To farming. Sowing and reaping. And this is a. A common. Metaphor. Used throughout the Bible. To describe a cause and effect relationship. You do this. This will happen. And so the metaphor here is.

We give. And something happens. But what's interesting about the way that Paul uses this metaphor. Is that not only is he using it. A metaphor to explain a cause and effect relationship.

[23:33] He's using it as a comparison. Two kinds of sowing and reaping. If you sow sparingly. You will also reap sparingly. In other words. If you give a little.

You will reap a little. And we're not told what the reaping is. If you sow bountifully. You will also reap bountifully. If you give much. You will reap much.

But we're not told what the reaping is. Obviously. Paul is urging. One kind of sowing and reaping. Over another kind of sowing and reaping.

He is encouraging generosity. Sow bountifully. Reap bountifully. The sowing corresponds to our giving of our finances.

But he doesn't tell us what the reaping is. We'll see that in a little bit. But here's the point. When you get what God has graciously given in Christ.

[24:29] You will want to give generously of what you've got. He wants us to sow generously. And to reap abundantly. So maybe you're sitting there asking yourself. Well. How do I decide to give how much?

How does that work? What do we. I want to be generous. What do I do? How do I give? Can you help me out a little bit? Well in verse 7. We read this of chapter 9. Each one must give as he's decided in his own heart.

Now. I hope you notice what's not there. There's not a percentage given. Paul said okay.

Give 10%. Give 20%. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart. Now though there are specific tithes outlined in the Old Testament.

Such as giving 10% of the first fruits of your harvest. There really is no mention of tithing in the New Testament. It's really interesting how quiet the New Testament is. About tithing itself.

[25:31] Where the emphasis comes down on the New Testament. Is on generosity. Moving away from a number. And moving on to an attitude. A posture of heart.

Before the Lord. Each of us must decide what to give. Which is to be generous in it. Gospel generosity. Gospel generosity. So.

That 10% figure is helpful as a benchmark. But it's not a command for Christians today. What we're called to do is to be generous. So let's apply what we're learning here.

I can imagine that some of you have come in here. And for whatever reason you have not been given regularly. You need to receive this morning sermon as God's loving exhortation of you as a loving father.

Something to start. Faith in Jesus. In light of what he has done. And so the way to start is to start modest. Be consistent. Be realistic.

[26:34] If 10% is a helpful benchmark to aim at. That's great. But I just want to shoot straight with you. Many of us in this room. When you hear the 10% mark.

Instead of calling you to a generosity. It tempts you to fear and anxiety. Because. Because you're on a fixed income. You have like no wiggle room.

And that's okay. That's just where you are. So let's say that you have \$1,000 coming in every month. 10% would be giving \$100 of that. And if that's too much.

That's okay. Give \$50. Give \$20. Where you want. You just want to start. Start modest. And be consistent. Decide in your own heart before the Lord.

And give with a clear conscience. It's what you're able to do. It rings of 2 Corinthians 8.3. The Macedonians giving what they were able to give.

[27:35] Now let's say that you've been given for decades. And you're feeling pretty good about yourself when you're giving. Well I just want to point you to 2 Corinthians 8.7. But as you excel in everything.

In faith. In speech. In knowledge. In all earnestness. In our love for you. See that you excel in this act of grace also. Keep on keeping on brothers and sisters. Keep on giving generously.

Keep on coming back to the cross. Let that motivate you afresh. Time and again. To be generous. With what God has entrusted to you. Now there's something else I'd like to talk to you about.

Because. It's a reality with where we live today. Let me set it up by saying this. When I was in college. God grabbed my heart. And I had racked up all sorts of credit card debt.

I was enslaved to those who had lent me this money. And so what I realized early on was this. I need to be aggressive in paying down my debt.

[28:37] In order that I can open up income to be giving more and more towards the Lord. Now some of you in here are just underwater because of debt. We're not going to go into why that is.

We don't need to. But we need to go into talking about how to move forward. And the way to move forward is take a long haul approach. Start giving something. However modest it is.

But then start aggressively paying down your debt. So that you eventually open up more funds. Not to spend on things that are passing away. But to invest in eternity.

To give unto the Lord. God does not forbid incurring debt. But he does warn against it. Proverbs 22.7 The borrower is the slave of the lender.

Wisdom says debt should be avoided if possible. Now once again I realize that some of you in this room may when it comes to finances feel very overwhelmed by it.

[29:40] You don't know where to start. You don't know who to talk to. You don't know what to do. We've got two deacons at the church. I'm going to call your attention to them. Randy Hudson. Randy would you stand up? And then Billy Johnson over here.

Billy Johnson. I talked to these guys this week. Let them know where the sermon was going. And I asked them guys would you be available to meet with anybody that would want to meet. In order to

help them be faithful stewards of their finances.

And they're both all in. Thank you guys. You can be seated. And so today if you find yourself saying man I need help. I don't know who to talk to. Now you know who to talk to. These are gifted men. They're serving the church. And they will help you and help you well. We are to give generously. And give with what God.

Give out of what God has given to us. Fourth principle. Give groundedly. Here's what I mean by that.

[30:42] Give grounded from your identity in Christ. It's not unusual for people to be very self-conscious about themselves when you start talking about giving.

In fact when we pass the plates. That can be a moment of self-awareness and shame for many people in this room. That moment in our corporate gathering. Some people can be feeling like they're being pushed to the sides. Instead of being brought into our worship of God together. And then on the opposite side of the spectrum. Instead of those feeling isolated and ostracized. It's those people who feel like they're awesome. That they are putting in a sizable check into the offering plate. And they think that they are sizable in God's sight. But let me tell you this. This is called gospel grounding.

[31:42] Your worth in God's sight is not determined by the dollar amount by which you give. Your worth is not determined by that.

Your worth in God's sight is because of what Jesus has done for you. He was rich and for your sake he became poor. So that by his poverty you might become rich.

You are rich in the salvation accomplished by Jesus. And that is what God sees. And that is what God delights in you. That's where you find your value and your worth. When we gather together as a church.

Your worth is not in the dollar amount you give. It's in the Christ who died and was raised for you. And so when we as a church gather and we pass the plates.

Our worth is in Jesus. And we give in light of what he's done for us. So God is not so much concerned about the amount that you give.

[32:40] He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He doesn't need it. But he's going to use it. But he's more concerned with the attitude of your heart with which you give it. He wants you to be cheerful.

And so let's land on that. The last point. The fifth principle is to give cheerfully. Give yourself to the Lord first. Give in light of Christ giving himself for you.

Give generously. Give groundedly. Give from a glad heart. Give cheerfully. Give one. Chapter 9 verse 7.

Each one must give as he decided in his own heart. Not reluctantly or under compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver. I love phrases like that in my Bible.

God loves a cheerful giver. God delights in those who delight in giving. A joyful giver.

[33:43] In order to wrap this sermon up, let me just give you some reasons Paul gives for being cheerful in your giving. The first is this.

It's a work of God's grace. This act of grace. Giving is an outworking of what God has given. It's God's grace in us.

When we give, we're reminded of what Jesus gave for us. He was rich, became poor, so those who are poor can become rich. Every time you give, it's an opportunity to remember of the richness with which Jesus brought for you.

And that he's doing it among us. This act of grace is a corporate grace. God's grace poured out on us in Christ Jesus.

Having its effect in each of us. Growing us in our generosity with each other and those beyond the walls of this church. It's something to be joyful about.

[34:51] It's something to be glad-hearted about. But that's not the only reason. In verse 12, we read this. 9-12. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but it's also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

When we give, God uses our giving to make other people thankful to God. And so we can take joy that when we give, it's going to result in people's thanksgivings to the God of the Bible.

So you write your check, you give your money, and you're like, Oh Lord, would you use that to bless other people that they would be thankful to you and grateful to you.

And I can take great joy in that, and so can you. And there's another reason in verse 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.

Ultimately, our giving glorifies God. It exalts Him. It makes much of Him. It's for our good.

[36:07] It blesses others. It honors and exalts the one true God. These are all different reasons for giving generously, giving cheerfully from a glad heart.

A 21st century disciple of Jesus is someone who's intentionally living every area of their life for Christ, including the way that we steward our finances.

This morning, we've looked at five principles. Give yourself first to the Lord. Second, you give yourself to the Lord because the Lord has given Himself for you. Gospel.

Third, give generously, sow bountifully, and reap bountifully. That bountiful reaping, by the way, is the thanksgiving of other people. Give from gospel groundedness.

It's not how much you give. It's the heart by which you give it and give cheerfully. There's reasons to be glad hearted when we give.

[37:13] When you get what God has given, Jesus, you will give generously from what you got. Let's pray. Let's pray. God in heaven, would you stir in us now?

Use your word. Use the gospel to get done what you want to get done. Help us, Lord Jesus, to live in light of what you've done for us. And that translate, that be the catalyst to a chain reaction of grace with which we are generous with one another.

And when we are generous for people all around the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.