

# Stewardship and the Joy of Giving

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[0:00] I'd like you to open your Bibles this morning to 2 Corinthians chapter 9.! We are going to look in particular at verse 7.! But before we do that, I must talk about that which is always very important to me, and that is your prayer for the preaching of the Word of God.

2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 1 and 2, the apostle says this, pray for us that the Word of God would have free course.

And I trust that God never brings me to the point, or allows it, I should say, where I become careless and indifferent to the role that your prayer has in the effectiveness of the Word of God.

Yesterday, it was my privilege to preach at Connie Barger's, that is Tim Jones' mother's funeral. And I must tell you that I always view funerals as wonderful, absolutely wonderful gospel opportunities.

There's a reason for that. Because the setting is such that no one present can miss the reality of death. And I always get to preach on the very verge of eternity.

[1:31] Providentially, the family had asked that I use Ecclesiastes chapter 3 as one of the passages that I reflect on, and also Psalm 23, neither of which were a problem for me at all, getting from there to the gospel.

You know what Ecclesiastes chapter 3 says? If I started singing the tune, you'd probably know. It says, To everything there is a season, a time to be born, and a time to die.

That's the way I started. And I have to tell you that as we got into the clear presentation of the gospel message, that Christ came to die to save sinners.

One of the things you always watch for is, are people identifying with what you're saying, and are they affirming and encouraging? Yes, go, pastor!

Tell them! I didn't see anybody out there at all doing that. You know, it's like, everybody's looking. How many of you know? It's like, the Paul falls across the face. It's like, there is this kind of...

[2:37] And I was sensing a gospel opportunity. And I want you to know that as I was preaching, I reminded myself, there were some of you here that were praying for me when I was doing it.

And I'm thankful for that. And so I would plead with you that you never stop praying for whoever inhabits this pulpit, that when a man stands up here in his frailty to speak the Word of God...

Now, you want to hear that always. Do you follow that? But in companion with that, that you as God's people will pray for that man, that he speak with the enabling of the Spirit of God to make the things of God clear.

And so let's take a minute and come to the Lord and ask Him to work in us, that we might hear the Word and be affected by it. Precious Father, we ask that you would open our hearts, that we might behold wondrous truths out of your law.

The Scriptures are given to us that we, as your people, might have all that we need for life and godliness, that the man of God can be completely furnished, adequately equipped for every facet and every phase of life.

[4:06] But more than that, the Word is there also to help us know you and love you and glory in you. We are so easily inclined to be self-focused, profoundly false in our worship, subtle in the games that we play with spirituality, but so about ourselves.

And I ask that your Spirit would work in us to give us that which we cannot produce ourselves, an affection for the Lord Jesus, and a genuine desire to see Him exalted in our life by our walk, by our

holiness, by our affections.

We ask this in your precious name. Amen. Amen. I actually had somebody come up to me last Sunday in the lobby and said that while they were driving to church, they'd been listening to David Jeremiah.

How many of you have ever heard David Jeremiah? Turning point, I think it is. And the person kind of chuckled and said, and by the way, guess what he was preaching on? I said, duh. I know what David Jeremiah preaches on at the beginning of the year.

He preaches on the same thing that I do. In fact, if you really want to know the secret of this whole thing, years and years ago, when Judith and I were living in Fort Wayne, Indiana, we were in the town where David Jeremiah was pastoring.

[5:39] He was at Black Hawk Baptist Church at that time. And Randy Patton was our pastor. And we ended up being deeply affected by both Pastor Randy Patton and also David Jeremiah.

And one of the things that early on in the ministry, Randy Patton drove into my heart was he said, listen, Tim, it is important for you to teach regularly on fundamental truths that people need to know about.

He said, some people don't hear it the first time. Some people forget it. And over the course of time, it is always beneficial to have certain things that you come back and touch on fundamentally.

And so if you were to kind of track my ministry, you will notice that it is not an accident that at the beginning of the year, you know what Pastor Knoyer is going to preach on, which is he's going to preach on stewardship.

And so here we are on this matter. And I remember also early in ministry in the first congregation that God gave me the privilege of serving in, I remember kind of laboring with the subject.

[6:38] It was one thing to hear Randy Patton say, you need to teach on this. It was another thing to begin studying to do it. And as I began to open up the Word and study, I was really struck by the fact that the Bible has a lot to say about the matter of stewardship.

In fact, let me give you a couple things that are interesting. For one, there are some 2,350 verses about finances. Now, that's a lot, isn't it? Now, I'm not saying that 2,350 verses say something directly about the believer's responsibility or privilege of stewardship, but nevertheless, money plays a big thing or a big part in the Scripture.

Secondly, of the 38 parables that you have in the New Testament, stories that were told by Jesus that had a heavenly meaning and a lesson, 12 of them involve money.

One out of every six verses have some kind of connection to the matter of finances. And stewardship is not something that in the teaching of the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ, or for that matter in the Old Testament, was kind of left off to the end when individuals had reached a certain level of maturity that they could handle the heavy issues.

How many of you understand that not everything in the Scriptures is designed to be handled by newborn babes in the faith? You recognize that, right? Interestingly enough, the matter of stewardship is something that both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament was an early part of instruction for new believers.

[8:10] Let me illustrate that by having you turn. You're in 2 Corinthians. Keep your finger there, but go just forward a little bit to Galatians 2.

Galatians 2. You're in 2 Corinthians, so go to the right. And when you hit Galatians 2, we're going to look at verse 10. I'll give you a little bit of a context here so that you understand the setting.

Paul, eventually, later in his ministry, came to Jerusalem where he met with the elders of the Jerusalem church and also with the apostles, and there was a little interview process just to understand where Paul was and what was going on in his ministry.

It's very interesting to notice. Look at verse 10, that as a result of this, in verse 9, they gave him the right hand of fellowship. But in verse 10, only they asked us to remember the poor.

They'd been listening to Paul talk about his ministry, and the only little thing that they bumped Paul on says, By the way, be certain that in your teaching you are dealing with the matter of benevolence and charity.

[9:16] And Paul's response is, Hey, listen, I have been very eager to do this. In fact, the majority of things that you will find in the New

Testament that deal with the subject of stewardship actually come from the writings of the apostle Paul.

Now, I ask you to turn to 2 Corinthians 9, and so let's go back there again as we pick up on one particular part of this two-chapter lesson on the matter of stewardship.

Paul is writing to the church at Corinth. And by the way, was the church at Corinth the ideal place in which to teach fundamental Bible truths? What's the answer?

They were a congregation just like us, all different kind of things going on, some good, some bad. And yet Paul thought it was very important to teach on the matter. He does in 1 Corinthians 16, and then we find in the follow-up letter, he does actually take two whole chapters to discuss the matter of stewardship.

And I want you to look at the last part of it. In fact, if you don't have it underlined in your Bible, I just kind of throw a little challenge out. You may want to do that. You may want to do that. Underline this little part says, for God loves a cheerful giver.

[10:24] Let me say it again. God loves a cheerful giver. He really likes it when your giving is marked by cheerfulness. And I want you to recognize as we begin thinking about what is it that God is looking for, that there is a radical difference between the way the Scriptures encourage us to understand the matter of giving and the way the rest of our culture does.

The Christian is set apart from the rest of the world, set apart from the way our government views the matter of giving or other religions and other systems. Because in other religions and other systems, and particularly our government, there doesn't seem to be much thought given to the subject of whether or not you'd like to do it.

How many of you have the gall or the nerve, or you think you would, of saying when April 15th throws around? What's April 15th all about? Anybody know? Ah, that's when people line up at the post office to be sure that their envelope is stamped with the right date and they're giving their taxes.

How many of you think you could get away with it with just kind of sending in a little note saying, I'd prefer not doing it this year. My heart's really not in it. Well, I want you to understand that the Scriptures put a great deal of emphasis upon the heart attitude that the believer has in the matter of giving.

And there in that passage, it says the Lord loves a cheerful giver. And I want you to take a minute with me and look at the expanded portion of this passage, for it says over there in verse 6, it says, the point is this, whosoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

[12:04] Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

So let's think a little bit about each of these words that are used. That first statement that is made there in verse 7, it says there, not reluctantly, it is stating this fact, that our giving is not to be clouded by reluctance.

By reluctance. The word that Paul uses in the Greek is a word that is speaking about having regret or sorrow. How many of you go through the process of purchasing something with a certain level of anxiety and uncertainty about the wisdom of it?

You're kind of nail-biter. Some of us, you know, say, oh, should I buy that? Maybe not. Is that a good bargain? You know how you do all that work. And then after you've made the purchase, there's something called, what, buyer's, buyer's, we all know that word, buyer's remorse.

It's like, ooh, should I have really spent that money? I'm not real sure if it was the wisest idea. And Scripture encourages us to recognize that God is not looking for us to give and then end up with some regret or some sorrow attached with it.

[13:23] We've all been pressured to buy things. I remember not too long ago being in one of our grocery stores and walking down the aisle, and as the mother and child were just in front of me a little bit, the child was kind of one of these free-thinking souls that the mother had really not taken control of.

How many of you understand between the lines what I'm talking about? Okay? And I was thinking to myself, hey, I know the solution. But I didn't say anything at that point.

I thought there was wisdom in just observing quietly. And the mother was bribing the child as they were working down the aisle. How many of you understand what I'm saying? If you're a little, good little boy for the next 30 steps, you can have, you know, and he took it anyway.

You know, it wasn't like, am I waiting for 30 steps? I'm taking it. See if you can get it back. And the idea was this, is that he was going to do what he wanted to do, and sometimes our giving may be coerced and pressured.

Salesman comes into your house, and he sells you on a vacuum sweeper, right? Now, the nice thing we have today is we have what? How many know?

[14:33] Three days to change our mind. But more than once, we've bought something, and then later on we think, why did I do that? We have that regret and that sorrow.

And God says this. He says, listen, I don't want your giving to ever be marked by regret or a reluctance. I had to do it. It was an obligation, and I shouldn't have done it, but I did.

Second thing that it says here is that our giving is not to be under compulsion. There's no place in the Scriptures for compelling believers to give.

And to compel is to rely on pressure or manipulation through a variety of ways to end up with a certain outcome. Our government compels us to pay our taxes.

Isn't that right? And sometimes we are compelled to buy things that we really don't have an interest in buying, and we really don't think is worth the issues. How many of you have been approached by children in your neighborhood that are selling a four-ounce candy bar for like \$15?

[15:38] Everybody smile. I'm at the point where I say, no, thank you, but let me give you a donation directly.

I don't need the candy bar as a diabetic, and there's something in me, perverse as I am, I'm thinking, I am not teaching good capital venturism when I am giving a person \$10 for a four-ounce candy bar.

Take the donation. Don't give me the candy bar as a trade-off because it's a miserable compromise. And so, you know, it's this business of, do I give? Yes.

But I don't give out of reluctance, the Scripture says, and I'm not to give out of compulsion. Third, the Bible says here that our giving is to be marked by joy. The Greek word is translated by the word cheerful, and it's actually, in literal Greek, it's the word hilarial.

Now, does that sound familiar to any of you, the word hilarios? Judith and I were watching a show a couple days ago, and I forget which one it was.

[16:45] Oh, it was, yeah, I won't tell you which one it was. It was about Christmas. It was really hokey. And it was, there was a certain part in it that I think we rewound and laughed ourselves to the point we had our sides ached.

How many of you have ever done that? We were just, it was, and that's one of the advantages of being able to rewind something. You know, you watch it. It was as good the third time, except I just couldn't, I had to turn away because I was laughing so hard that my sides hurt.

How many of you understand that? And here's what the Bible says is to characterize our giving. It's the hilarity.

I mean, it's joyful, cheerful, enthusiastic participation that, man, I love doing this. Just imagine the outcome of things.

If our president walked out and passed the executive order and said something to the effect like, I'll tell you what, 2013, we're only going to collect taxes from those who are cheerful.

[17:50] You know, you're giggling, but I am certain there are some that would like taxes collected from other people, and they're cheerful about the prospect of other people giving their taxes.

But really, if it came down to free will offering for taxes, what would happen to our government? Does anybody have an idea? It would go through a gargantuan downsizing.

And God says that the issue of giving in the body of Christ is to be characterized and marked by cheerfulness and not manipulation.

It is to be marked by cheerfulness and not with a hesitancy that is coerced and pushed. Most religions rely upon motivating people to giving by suggesting that somehow or another your giving ends up giving you some credits and some benefits.

And not only is that a standard way of approaching the matter of giving in many places, but along with that, they kind of give you something in place or in the same process.

[19:05] It's a little bit like, all right, we're going to have a raffle for a noble cause. Or we're going to have a bake sale for a noble cause. Or we're going to have a lottery for a noble cause.

What's the idea? We can't get you to give free will and voluntarily, so we're going to kind of dangle a carrot out, and at least one of you is going to end up driving with a new car, driving home with a new car, right?

Is that giving that is marked by joyful, cheerful, unforced giving? No, it is not.

And we see that these elements of cheerful giving are clearly illustrated, not only in this command in 2 Corinthians 9, but also in a number of different places in the Scripture.

So I want to illustrate that for you a little bit by having you turn back in your Bible, go back in the Old Testament to Exodus 35, verse 4 through 29. Exodus, way back to the left.

[20:05] We're in the book of Exodus, and here Moses is instructed by God to gather up an offering from God's people for building the tabernacle. I'm not going to read all of the passages, but I want to mark several of them, if I may.

If you'll look at Exodus 35, verse 5, it says this, Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution.

So who all was expected to contribute? What's the answer? Now mark this because it's important. It was only those who wanted to do it. You wanted to participate? Go for it.

You didn't want to? No, you weren't required. Look at verse 21. And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him. Verse 22, all who were of a willing heart. Verse 24, everyone who could make a contribution brought as the Lord's contribution. And then verse 26, all the women whose heart stirred them. Verse 29, those are whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a, what's the next word?

[21:19] Free will offering. What does free will mean? It means that nobody had a gun in your face or was coercing or manipulating you to do it.

There's a reason why. Our approach to giving in this fellowship has been marked by this. It's not because I went off to a seminar somewhere and decided, oh, that's the most effective way of getting God's people to give.

No, it is this. Teach the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to work on the hearts of God's people and let them give as they are inclined and without manipulation.

Let me explain something. If you're sitting here this morning and you do not know Christ, I want to tell you right up front that the issue of your charitable giving is not even on the radar screen at this point.

The Scriptures don't speak about charitable giving as something that everybody has to do in order to get points, in order to get to heaven. Do people get to heaven by their giving?

[22:22] What's the answer? No. They get to heaven because God sent His Son and sent Him to be the sacrifice for our sins. And as the Scripture says, whosoever believes upon the name of the Lord, what?

They'll be saved. I want you to understand this morning as we study the Scriptures about the matter of free will giving. It is something for the believer, and it is something for the believer who wants to do it.

Well, that brings us to a practical question. Why does God care about your attitude? He's not up in heaven kind of wringing His hands hoping, boy, I really hope I can get the people at Maranatha to do a little better job this year.

That's not what He's thinking. I've got to tell you, honestly, you're a charitable congregation. I want to say that carefully and slowly. Our deacons meeting yesterday, we had the annual report of what 2012 was like, and I have to tell you, and I've got several people who give me a nod or a shake if

I'm off, but I think we were \$20,000 over budget.

Is that close? That's amazing! Because that doesn't include helping for a \$42,000 missions trip that you guys willingly took care of, and just one thing after another in addition to that.

[23:43] The charitable giving of this congregation is unbelievable, and it doesn't flow from any program other than the encouragement of the Word of God.

Why does God care about our attitude? Let me rattle off a couple things. For one thing, our giving reflects our grasp of why we have anything.

Do you follow that? Our giving reflects our grasp of why you have it. Oh, I have it because I'm smarter than my neighbor. No. Let's look at 1 Chronicles 29.

1 Chronicles 29, and just pick up on what it says in verse 14 through 17. Why do we have anything to give? 1 Chronicles 29, it says, verse 14, But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly?

Again, that issue of, hey, what's the issue of attitude? It's willingly. Why are we blessed like this? Verse 15, For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were.

[24:50] Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

How much part, how much does God own of your check that you get every week or every other week? What's the Bible answer? He owns all of it. Where did it come from?

It came from God. And here in this prayer, we find a ready acknowledgement of the fact that the reason we have anything at all is because God gave it to us.

And so in our giving, we are reflecting, for one thing, upon the fact that we got it from God.

Secondly, our giving, our continued giving recognizes the fact that He is going to continue providing.

It expresses a confidence in His continued provision. I want you to look at a couple different passages in relationship to that. If you look at 2 Corinthians, if you go back there for a moment, we're going to skip around a little bit, but 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 6 through 8.

[25:59] I'm going to actually take verse 8, focus on that. It says, God provides and continues to provide, and that's the basis upon which you have adequate resources from week to week, from month to month, to continue showing an affectionate heart for God and being generous in your giving.

Now, I said we're going to look at two different passages. Turn back, if you will, to 1 Kings. 1 Kings chapter 17, verse 14. Very interesting passage in which we see Elijah the prophet show up at a widow's house.

He was instructed by God to go to the widow in Zarephath, and when he arrives there, he comes to her, and she finds her, as you look there in verse 10, so he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks, and he called to her and said, bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink.

Now, that's almost a pain-free request. Water? Sure, I can do that. And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.

Oh, by the way, bring me a sandwich too. And she said, as the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar, and a little oil in a jug, and now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.

[27:44] I have not been in most of your homes in the last month. But I'm going to guess that most of you have something in the refrigerator you should have gotten rid of before. Today.

My point is, is you probably have more than you actually need. You're not at the point that this widow was, where when the prophet says, hey, listen, would you fix me a sandwich? She says, hey, stop.

The reason I'm out here is I'm gathering sticks. Now, you know what sticks were for? Because that's the way, they didn't have propane, natural gas, electricity to cook with. They, they used sticks.

They rubbed them together. You know how that goes. And so, okay, enough of that. They used sticks. And she's saying, hey, stop. All I've got left is enough to feed me and my boy.

You know, we're going to have a little bit, and then we're going to starve to death. How many of you have ever gone NPO after midnight? Nothing by mouth after midnight.

[28:44] Yeah, it's amazing where eight o'clock rolls around, and you are thinking that you're starving. It's the furthest thing from the truth. This lady was starving. And she was saving the last, a handful.

a handful for one last little meal before she and her son died. And here's what Elijah says.

Look at verse 13. Elijah said to her, do not fear. Go and do as you have said. But first, hey, how big is this cake? It's little, right?

Handful of flour. How many of you understand what a handful of flour represents? It's probably, I'm going to guess, it depends on how large your hands are, but mine probably would hold about two-thirds of a cup.

You got that? Verse 13, he says, but first make me, first, make me a little cake, bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son.

[29:45] We're talking about dividing a two-third cup of flour into a three-part portion, and who gets to go first? What's the answer? Elijah the prophet.

Now we come to verse 14. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, the jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not go empty until the day that the Lord saves rain upon the earth.

And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days.

Now, let me go back to the point I want you to understand. You see, our giving reflects our confidence that God will continue to provide for us. When you give it away, you are relinquishing your ability to take care of yourself, and in part of what you're doing is saying, and I believe God will continue to take care of me.

And let me say this to you. He is going to take care of you until the day he intends to take you home. I love the passage in the Old Testament where the psalmist says this, I have been young and now I am old, and I have not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed-begging bread.

[31:07] Third, my giving reflects my personal faith and pleasure in him. What we do with our time, our talents, our resources, always reflect the values of our heart.

I have to tell you this, that it's always true that your wallet follows your heart. Isn't that true? Your wallet follows your heart. I have heard on numerous occasions individuals say things like, I can't afford that.

And it's a very common statement there are occasions where it's actually true. But I am always kind of amazed that the person who can't afford A can't afford B.

You know, they think they can't afford this, but they turn right around and I'm wondering, so what in the world are they doing that for because I thought they couldn't afford this. It often is a reflection of, well, just the way in which we value things.

And we all, listen to me so we don't miss this point, we all judge the decisions other people make with their finances through the lens of what we value. Isn't that true? Somebody who is getting paid more than you is always being paid what?

[32:19] A lot. And maybe too much. And someone who's being paid substantially less than you is, well, that's just because they're not smart.

You know, whatever. Anyway, okay. So, here we are. When I give, it reflects my personal faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus.

My affection for Him. I'm a little ashamed to tell you this, but thankfully those are many, many years ago. But I remember when I was in college and I was courting Judith.

She is now my wife of almost 43 years. But back in my early 20s, I was quite smitten with myself, not with her. I don't know why she married me.

It was an act of God. I can tell you that. But I remember that I had learned somewhere that it was appropriate to take girls out for dinner. You know, it was appropriate. And I could think, well, if I have to do this, dinner?

[33:19] Yeah, okay. I'll do that. But I wanted to go to a smorgasbord. Do you understand what I'm saying? She wanted to go to some little fritz Italian place and, you know, I mean, you get a three-ounce salad and pay

\$21 for it.

You know, it was, what am I doing? I want something where I can use two plates to go and two plates to come. Beloved, I want you to understand as the Spirit of God got a hold of my selfish, self-centered heart and began to change my attitude, I began to say, honey, what do you want? And I found pleasure and satisfaction in answering her heart and her affections and her desires. And if your giving does not rise from a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and an affection for Him, you're always going to struggle with doing it.

Furthermore, my giving shows that I've been affected by His heart and His grace. Go back, if you will, to 2 Corinthians 9, verse 13. Let me just touch on this as we come to a close.

2 Corinthians 9, verse 13. It says, For by their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ. That's a very interesting statement, isn't it?

[34:38] What Paul is saying is that as other people had an opportunity to observe the charitable giving of the church at Corinth, people would say, Wow, these are people who get it.

They've been affected by the gospel. Now, we have a weird idea about what the gospel is. And one of the things that I am troubled by is there is a disconnect between gospel preaching and gospel living.

Now, what I mean by that is that people who profess to have come to faith in Christ but don't act like they've ever had a change in their life. Does that make sense? See, it says in the Scriptures, it says, If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a what?

He's something different. Right? And if you're something different, it's not just the way in which you part your hair, it's the way you handle your wallet. And what it says in this passage is that as the Spirit of God, the grace of God, worked in the lives of the believers there in Corinth, other people began to say, Wow, wow, those people have changed.

Those people have changed. Finally, my giving shows that I am growing to be more like my heavenly Father.

[35:56] Let me just recite the passage. But in Matthew 5, verse 16, it says, Your good works end up doing what? They glorify your Father who's in heaven.

As people get to see the lives and the charity of God's people, they begin saying, Wow, why are you acting that way? Well, I'm being like Dad. What'd you get from your Father in heaven?

You got salvation, didn't you? You have all that you need for life and godliness. You have promises for eternity. You are blessed in abundance. Is there anything that He has withheld from you that you need for this life or eternity?

And the answer is, Nothing! And my charitable giving, my free will, generous giving, reflects that I am being affected by my dad.

So let me close with a couple practical questions. First of all, and to you who are believers this morning, here's my practical question. Number one, are you faithful and consistent in the matter of giving?

[36:57] We're going to talk a little bit about that next week. But, hey, Tim Kenoyer does not know what anybody in this congregation gives. Do you know that? I don't know. I never have.

It's probably a reflection of my weakness that I don't pay attention. I don't get involved. If you walk up to me and say, Here, would you take this? And I figure out that it has to do with money. How many of you know what I'm going to do? What am I going to do? Todd, what am I going to do? Find the nearest deacon. I don't touch it. That's the way it is.

I don't have anything to do with that. And so, I can ask you the open question, Are you faithful in your giving? I don't know, but God does, right?

And the question is, Are you consistent? Are you faithful? Second question is this, And do you like doing it? Do you like doing it? Christmas has just passed.

[37:54] And I am a miserable Christmas gift giver to my wife. Not miserable because I don't do it, but I'm miserable because I always enjoy telling her ahead of time what it is.

I don't know, it takes half the fun out of it, but once I've decided, it's like, So, I told my daughter, I said, I'm going to give her an extended list and she's just going to have to buy one off the list and I don't know what it is.

And she said she wouldn't do that for me. That's very disappointing. in 43 years of marriage, I think I've surprised my wife one time. But you know what?

The question is, do you like, do you enjoy the opportunity of being charitable with what God has given to you? Third question is this, do you really honestly look for ways to help and bless other people with an eye of seeing Christ lifted up?

Do you follow that? what can I do that is going to advance the cause and testimony of Christ and lift him up in a world that knows no charity and no kindness apart from that which is manipulated and expected?

[39:11] And finally, as you sit here this morning and the entire sermon has been about the matter of charitable giving, let me understand, let me help you understand, that at the heart of the issue of a Christian's giving is the fact that we have received eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ and we've had complete forgiveness for all of our sins because God sent his son to die for our sins.

Do you know why we're charitable people? it's not because there's a record out there or your pastor shows up on your door and says, by the way, I want you to know you're a little behind.

Your giving is in proportion to your appreciation for the grace that God has lavished on you and your joy is reflective of your love for Christ.

Let's close in prayer. Gracious God, we would ask that this morning as we have studied your scriptures together that your spirit would work to bring conviction to into our hearts that those who are here that know the Lord Jesus Christ would ask themselves those practical questions by the prompting of the spirit.

Is my heart joyful in my giving? Is it generous and consistent? And Lord, I know that there are those here that do not know Christ and my plea to you would be this, that today would be the hour of conversion and salvation, that you would break down the barriers of pride and stubbornness and that you would convict them with the shame and guilt of sin and lead them to see that there is no hope, there is no remedy aside from crying out to the Lord Jesus Christ and saying, save me from my sins.

[40:58] I ask this in your precious name. Amen.