

A Christian View of Money

2Corinthians 9:6-15

For as long as there has been civilization, there has been some form of currency in the world.

Money is the means by which people can buy and sell goods in order to live from day to day.

By itself it really can't do much for you.

Just imagine being stranded on a desert island and needing to survive for a few years.

Would you rather have a bunch of suitcases with millions of dollars or have enough food and supplies to live on the island?

Most people would probably choose the food and supplies.

If you stop and think about it the importance of money is not the money itself but what you can convert it into that is important.

For that reason money is both useful and dangerous to people.

It's useful because we can use it for food, shelter, transportation, and recreation.

It's dangerous because it can produce greed, envy, selfishness, corruption, and alike.

It can be used to tempt people into sin and used as a means of power and control.

Even though it can be extremely dangerous on account of the evil in the human heart, it is something that is necessary to life in this present world.

Because that is true, it is an unavoidable reality for us as individuals and for the church as a whole.

If we could go back and trace the entire history of the church I am quite sure we would find many example where money caused serious and lasting problems.

I also know that Christians have used their wealth for the glory and God and the eternal good of His people.

It was no small task to copy and preserve the Bible in the early church and it cost an enormous sum of money to do it.

Because of that investment we can hold the Scriptures in our hands this morning with a great deal of confidence that we have what was originally written.

Through the centuries there have been widows, orphans, and sick people cared for because Christians gave their support for the glory of Christ and the gospel.

Missionaries were sent, building were established so people could gather together like we are this morning, and seminaries were built.

So we can see the usefulness and the danger of money.

[Because it is both useful and dangerous, it is important to have a proper view of money. Our text in **2 Corinthians 9:6-15** has some important lessons for us on that subject. In these verses

the apostle Paul concludes his appeal to the Corinthian believers regarding their donations to help the church in Jerusalem which had fallen on hard times and what he has to say in these verses gives us some valuable instructions about how believers should view money. The first lesson has to do with giving money godly ministries. The lesson is that...]

Point #1 – Giving money to God’s work must be free from regret and guilt. (Verses 6-7)

The Lord is far more concerned with our motivations than He is with our resources.

Verse 6 begins with a farming illustration. (Verse 6)

Commentators point out that similar statements can be found in the book of Proverbs and suggest that the apostle is applying that kind of wisdom to this situation.

If we were to only look at this verse by itself we might think that the Bible is teaching us that more money we give the more money we get back.

That would miss the point entirely because it assumes that the sowing and reaping is money.

As we will see later in this text it means something different.

His point here is simply to say how much you put in effects what you get out, he has not yet said what you are putting in and what you are getting out.

If you have a field and plant 25% of that field you will not see a crop grow up in 100% of the field.

If you want a chance at the whole field growing crops you have to plant the whole field.

This proverb says nothing about weather or soil conditions and anyone familiar with farming will tell you that you don’t always get out what you put in, but the point here is to say that what you get out is strongly related to what you put in.

That fact raises a question, “How much should we put in?”

That question is answered in **verse 7**.

When it comes to giving to the work of God a believer must decide for himself or herself what they are going to give and he or she must do so with the right motivations.

The word ‘reluctantly’ here has the sense of grief or regret.

Reluctance can come from fear. If I give this then I might not have enough to live on.

It can come from uncertainty. I’m not really sure I want to support this ministry, or I’m not really sure I can trust the people in charge of it.

Compulsion is feeling like someone is forcing you to do something you don’t want to do.

Trying to make someone feel guilty is a worldly tool used to compel people to give money.

People who feel guilty aren’t giving because they want to they are giving because they feel they have to.

A person's perceived power or authority also might cause a person to feel compelled to give.

The leader in the church told me I have to so I guess I have no choice.

Those things have no place in the church.

Why? Because "God loves a cheerful giver."

God cares more about our attitude than He does about the amount of money we give to a ministry.

Using our resources for the glory of God is supposed to be a joy, we are supposed to do it with a happy heart.

Why? Because a happy heart speaks volumes about what we value.

[Some of you may have heard that the super bowl is being played today. I looked up the average cost of a ticket, it is \$8600US. To me that is insane. If I had to spend that kind of money on a football game it would make me sick. Why would people pay that? Because they want to be there, in fact I would guess most if not all the people are happy to be there.]

That is how the LORD wants us to feel about giving to His work.

He wants us to have eyes to see and hearts to understand that He is at work in the world.

He want us to see it and He wants us to treasure what He is doing for the sake of His glory.

[The LORD neither needs nor wants us to employ worldly means to try and make people feel bad or compel them to give to His work. He wants His people to give to His work free from regret and guilt. Something that can help a great deal with that is understanding where our resources come from. That is critical to having a Christian view of money and it is the lesson that is taught in the next few verses. The lesson is that...]

Point #2 – God gives us all that we need to accomplish His purposes. (Verses 8-10)

Every single thing we have at our disposal has been given to us by the LORD and He has supplied every believer with all that we require to participate in the glorious work of the gospel.

Listen to what is written here is **verse 8** and give attention to the word "all".

The apostle bases his argument here on the power of God, which is what he means when he says "God is able".

When we talk about the power of God we need to be sure we think about it rightly. God's power does not mean He can do absolutely anything. God cannot do anything that violates His nature.

He does, however, have the power to do all that He pleases.

He is pleased to exercise His power to make “all grace abound to His people.”

That word grace is so important here. It means that God acts for our good even though we don’t deserve it.

By His power according to His grace His people have all sufficiency, in all things, at all times, to abound in every good work.

To say it another way, all of God’s people have exactly what God wants us to have to do His work in every place and at every time we find ourselves.

He explains further in **verses 9-10**.

Again he returns to the farming illustration of sowing and reaping.

Where does the sower get the seed? Answer, from the LORD.

People today might be tempted to scoff at that. We might think with all our technology that science produces the seed.

It is true that we can modify things today unlike any other time in history, but we still can’t make something from nothing we always make something from something.

Where does the original something come from? God.

It is more than that though. It is also the result of the harvest, in this case he calls it bread.

We can control more now than ever before, especially if we grow stuff in a greenhouse, and that might make us think the harvest is certain.

Not at all. A hailstorm, tornado, virus, or any one of a number of factors can wipe everything out.

A seed makes it to harvest because the LORD is gracious.

He applies that to his lesson here.

It says at the end of verse 10 that the LORD will “multiply your seed for sowing” that is He gives us the necessary resources to do His work, and it says He will, “increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

That is the harvest. This is not give money and get money back. This is cheerfully give to the work of the LORD and become more like Christ.

If we really have a good theology of money we will see how fantastic this is. God is the one who gives us everything. So in that sense we are never giving our own money we giving to God what has always belonged to Him.

What do we get out of the deal? We get true riches. Things that last forever, things that are enjoyed forever.

That is an amazing deal and every single Christian gets that deal from God.

[Imagine an extremely wealthy father who has two sons. He knows these boys better than they know themselves. To one son he gives all the money he needs to put him through medical school and become a doctor and the boy does that and as a result helps many people throughout his life. To the other son he only pays tuition and the boy has to work for his books and his room and board. He does this because he knows that if he gives the second son the same as the first he will squander the money and never make it through school. The boy graduates becomes a teacher and helps many children make something of themselves. Did the father treat them the same? No. Did he give them what they needed for their own good? Yes.]

How much better does God know us than our earthly parents?

I think it is safe to say that many people struggle with contentment in life.

I think perhaps many of us think to ourselves, I would do more for God if He gave me more.

What if we had a better perspective? What if we realized that God has already given us what we need to produce a harvest of righteousness?

How much fear and anxiety would be conquered if we could open our eyes to see abundance rather than lack?

Listen, I am all for managing our resources well. I am all for planning for the future. I am all for doing things in a sustainable way, but we also need to be aware that money can very easily grip our hearts more than our desire to live for the LORD.

[How good would it be if we didn't compare ourselves to others, or look upon someone else in judgement when it comes to giving to the work of the LORD? How good would it be if we could see the abundance of grace in our lives that comes by the inexhaustible power of God and seek a harvest of righteousness? If we do that it will lead to something very important. The apostle shows us that in verses 11-12. He shows us that...]

Point #3 – The goal of giving is the praise of God. (Verses 11-12)

Worship is much more than an activity believers do once in a while, it involves every area of our lives and our giving is certainly included in that.

While it seems clear that the apostle is talking specifically about giving financially to the service of the saints in Jerusalem, he also sees the lessons here as applying to all of life. (Verses 11-12).

It is important to point out that “enriched” does not mean “rich”.

If we remember back into chapter eight and the example of the Macedonians you will remember that they were in “extreme poverty” and nothing is said about that changing in their lives.

They likely remained very poor in worldly resources, but they had increased in their love for God and for His people.

Enriched in “every way” means all of life and does not depend on an increasing bank account.

When your life is oriented around giving to God for the good of his people (which is about more than money) it affects every area of your life in a positive way which in turn spills over into the lives of the people around you.

Notice the apostle says when that happens to these Corinthians it, “produces thanksgiving to God”.

He says, in verse twelve that their participation in the ministry is going to help the saints and overflow in “many thanksgivings to God.”

Why is that? Because if everyone involved here, including the Corinthians, is thinking rightly about worldly resources then they will be thanking God for any good that comes from it.

When the team of ministers finally make it to Jerusalem and present the gift what will they say to the believers there?

Likely something along the lines of, “God has moved mightily among the gentile believers and this gift has come from that.”

How will the saints in Jerusalem respond? By saying, “Thank you God for your goodness to us through your people.”

On the other hand when news comes back to Corinth that the gift has been received and has greatly helped the brothers and sisters there what will their response be?

If they are thinking rightly it will be, “Praise the Lord for using us to bring relief to the saints.”

When Christians have a right view of worldly resources then acts of generosity are always going to end in thanksgiving to God.

[Has anyone ever seen the movie “Chariots of Fire”? It is the story of Olympian Eric Liddell. He won the gold medal in the 400m and bronze in the 200m in the 1924 Olympics. Liddell was also a devout Christian and went as a missionary to China following the Olympics. There is a line in the movie that really captures how Christians should see what they have in the world. He said, “God made me fast and when I run I feel His pleasure.” Of course he worked hard and trained, but he understood that even that was by grace and so he gave credit to whom it truly belongs.]

Having the praise of God as the goal of our giving can help us in at least two powerful ways.

First, it can help us fight against pride in our lives.

Pride is something we all wrestle with to varying degrees and in varying ways.

Pride is when we make things about ourselves.

Giving money can make us prideful.

We can think to ourselves, “That ministry is happening because of me!”

If we give money to help someone in need we can fall into the trap of holding that over them.

There are many ways to call attention to ourselves when giving money and that is pride.

The best way to fight against it is to give thanks to God because He is the one who puts us where we are.

Another way this can help us it is can keep us from despising small contributions.

We can think to ourselves, I have next to nothing and my few dollars aren’t going to make any difference so why bother.

Anybody remember the boy with five loaves and two fish?

That couldn’t do much to feed thousands of people, but Jesus takes it and feeds everyone until they are satisfied.

How much praising of God do you think happened there?

I’m guessing quite a bit.

[If we are thinking rightly about money the praise of the LORD will be our goal in giving. That brings us to one more lesson in this text. This one is extremely good for our souls. It is good for keeping us humble, it is good for keeping us thankful, and it is good for reminding us that we are all people in need. The lesson is that...]

Point #4 – Christians have received far more than they could ever give. (Verses 13-15)

What the Lord has given us in Christ is beyond measure and so it is foolishness to think of giving to God as some kind of repayment plan. It is instead the result of the overflow of the never ending grace of God.

Verse 13 carries on the thought of this act of service pointing to God and then connects that to something very important.

Paul assumes here that the believers in Jerusalem are going to know that this ministry is from God and for the glory of God.

Further they are going to see that the obedience of the Corinthians in regards to

contributing to this ministry is 'flowing out" of their confession of the gospel of Christ.

That is so important to see. Their good works are coming from or being produced by their faith in the gospel.

This is the same gospel/good news that is being believed by the saints in Jerusalem and those believers understand that this faith in Christ binds all believers together. **(Verse 14)**

They love these Corinthians though they have never met them and they are praying for them because "the surpassing grace of God" is upon them.

He takes that a step further in **verse 15** and describes it like this.

He calls the surpassing grace of God in Christ an "inexpressible gift."

It is impossible to fully appreciate what God has done in the gospel.

The gift from the Corinthians will help to alleviate some financial poverty, but God has overcome in Jesus Christ spiritual poverty that we can't put into words.

If we could somehow get an accurate number of how many offenses we have committed against God that would be enough to make us utterly hopeless.

But our situation is far worse than simply the wrongs we have done, we also cannot imagine the infinite glory of the One we have offended.

You see every wrong doing is more than an act of evil, it is also a rejection of the glory of God.

When that reality begins to dawn on us, it is then that we can truly begin to understand that the magnitude of what Jesus does on the cross is beyond our capacity to measure.

On the cross He pays our debt in full.

What could we give that could possibly compare to that?

If we think that we can give to God's work as some kind of repayment plan, then we have no idea what God has given us in Christ.

[That would be like owing the bank a trillion dollars and giving the bank a penny every now and again and thinking we were making progress. It would be a complete misunderstanding of the situation.]

We could give every dollar, every hour, every ounce of strength that we have to give and it would not even be worth comparing to what the LORD has done for us in Jesus.

That is to say nothing of inheriting the new earth and dwelling in the visible

presence of God forever.

The Christian, the moment he/she believes, has gained riches that far outweigh all the treasures of the earth.

When we have opportunities to give to God's work in the world it is about something far more wonderful than God saying, "I did this for you now you do this for me."

It is about His immeasurable grace in Christ overflowing from our lives into the lives of others.

What an amazing view of money and material things.

It is freedom from giving out of guilt or regret.

It is waking up to the reality that everything comes from the LORD and He has given us everything we need to accomplish His purposes for our lives in this world.

It is giving for the praise of His glorious name which will free us from pride and selfishness.

And it is understanding that the Christian has riches in the gospel that are beyond measure.

There is no shortage of opportunity to give to the glory of God, we've heard about some today, and my hope is that we would all come to view money from a biblical perspective.

That we would all learn the joy of giving. Not despising a few coins and not being proud of enormous contributions, but simply delighting in the gospel.