

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 27/09/2020

Mini Series – “God's new community”

Part Four - “The result of grace giving”

2 Corinthians 9:1-15 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. ⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 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.”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. 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!

A waterfall is a beautiful but dangerous part of nature. When you are in a boat, the nearer you get to the waterfall, the harder you have to row to keep yourself from danger. You can't afford to drift, because you always drift towards the danger. The only way to steer clear of danger is to intentionally row hard away from it.

That is also true when it comes to our Christian lives. If we allow ourselves to drift in life, then we will always drift toward sin. **No one drifts toward holiness.** To make progress in the Christian life requires intentional effort to move away from sin and toward Christ.

When we are born again, the Spirit will be at work in us to give us the will and the strength to live a holy life.

In **Phil 2:12b -13**, Paul tells us to ...'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure'. There is an intentional working out of our salvation, rather than just drifting along on the current of our own sinful inclinations and our culture's godlessness. That working out is motivated and empowered by the Spirit of God in us, and is particularly needed when it comes to our use of money and possessions. Living as we do in the materialistic 21st century, our culture tells us:

- The more you have, the happier you will be.
- You've worked hard, you deserve life's luxuries.
- Pay increases and abundant wealth are to be used to have a more comfortable life and yet more luxuries

We need to be intentional in our use of money and possessions to avoid plunging over the waterfall of selfish, godless indulgence that will lead us away from fellowship with God.

Jesus said "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money". (**Matt 6:24**). We need to think through what the Bible says about the right use of wealth and determine to use our wealth for the Lord.

There is a danger that you will assume that I (as Pastor) am after your money - the building project needs money and this is a gift day, after all. **Broadstone Baptist Church is NOT seeking your money.** Our confidence is in the Lord to provide, as he has done all the way through – the provision of the remaining funds does not depend on how good the sermon is, or even on how much you give. As a church, we have

been coming before the Lord in prayer (as we were asked to again last week) to ask the One who owns all things to provide what he knows we need.

Rather than thinking it's all about the money, we need to look at what Paul was actually after when he wrote to the Corinthians. The Gentile believers had made a commitment to send a financial gift. That commitment, about which Paul had spoken to the Macedonians, had stirred others up to give too, but the Corinthians had not fulfilled it.

- Paul was putting them under pressure, not because of the money, but because he was seeking their obedience to the commitment they had made. **(2 Cor 8:10-11)**

God is a God who keeps his promises, and he expects his people to do the same
We are not justified by good works but through faith in Jesus Christ as the one who takes away our sin and provides the righteousness we need to commend us to God. The evidence that we are truly saved is seen when, by the power of the Spirit, and in obedience to the word of God, we start to live changed lives so that we:

- keep our word to others and to God
- keep our lives free from the love of money
- store up treasure in heaven by using our wealth for the kingdom
- use our wealth to meet the needs of those in poverty

As a church, we must seek to be obedient to God in every area of our lives. However, the subject of wealth and giving is particularly relevant today, because it is a gift day and it is obviously the context of today's reading. It is a topic that Western believers struggle with and where we often allow the world to dictate our standards.

God commands us to hold lightly our money and possessions, using them for the kingdom. Ultimately, obedience to God in every area of our life, including our use of wealth, will be determined by whether we trust God.

There are three main objections people raise with regard to obedience to God in the area of our giving.

1. I don't have enough to give (2 Cor 9:8)

Every good work we do is resourced by the grace of God.

Every good work, including raising our children, working without grumbling, encouraging a fellow believer, preaching a sermon or giving out of our wealth, is resourced by the grace of God, because he never asks us to do something without giving us the resources to do it. When we give, we are only passing on what God has given to us, as **vv8-11** show us. Unless we believe this, we will never give, or obey God in other areas of our lives.

The Macedonian believers gave even though they were in need themselves (**2 Cor 8:2-4**) and this only makes sense when you are trusting God to make up what you lack. **Giving is a faith issue.** When we give, no matter how much it is, we are saying to the Lord – I trust you to give me my daily bread. As we are obedient, so God gives what we need at the time when we need it, whether it be to supply our needs, the right words to pass on the Gospel message or the strength to serve our neighbour. The answer to the objection that I don't have enough to give is **2 Cor 9:8**

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.

2. I don't see the benefit (or what's the point!)

We all have different attitudes to risk, and this is generally controlled by how much we stand to gain or lose. If we can see a gain, then we will take the risk. This particularly applies to money. Whenever we are asked to give, we want to know what the gain is and Paul shows us three ways in which there is gain.

a) We are enriched (vv10-11)

The promise is that, as we give, so God enriches us in return. Sometimes, God gives us back in money what we gave away (or even more), but he does so expecting that we will be generous with it, not spend it on ourselves.

Greater enrichment comes from the **harvest of righteousness** that we reap as we use the resources God has given. As we depend on Christ for the resources we need to live obedient lives, so we grow spiritually, becoming:

- Less obsessed with money and more concerned with God's kingdom
- Free from the love of money and possessions and free to love others with our wealth

As we give, God enriches us so we can be free from the love of money and be generous.

b) God is glorified (vv11-13)

Because God is the one who supplies the resources and the motivation, as we give so he gets the glory. The Jewish believers, on receipt of the gift from the Corinthians, will give thanks to God not just for the gift but also for their obedience. In that thanks, God is glorified as the one who both wills their obedience and also supplies all the resources so they can obey.

When people walk rightly before God, those around them will give thanks to God, and he is glorified in that way.

c) God's people are united (vv13-14)

In Paul's day, there was a sharp division between Jews and Gentiles. When the Gentiles showed their love for the Jewish believers by meeting their needs, the latter were humbled and began to pray for their Gentile brothers and sisters. We can see something similar with our mission partners – we pray for them and support them financially, and in return, they give thanks to God for us, and pray for us and the work here, uniting us all as God's people.

The three great gains of giving are our own spiritual enrichment, the glory of God and the unity of God's people.

3. I don't know how to start (v7)

- If you haven't regularly been giving back to the work of the Lord, and God has been convicting you of this, then come before God in prayer, confessing your failure.
- We are commanded to give, but not told how much, and our hearts can be deceptive in this, so seek God's help in deciding how much to commit to the work of his kingdom. The Old Testament tithe is probably a good starting point, but as New Testament Christians we are called to go beyond the law.
- The most important thing is the **heart attitude** – it is to be a voluntary act, done cheerfully and motivated by love for Christ and his people.

God loves any giving, big or small, that is done willingly and with a cheerful heart.

Having determined before God how much you will give, intentionally review your giving regularly, as you would any other financial matter. Remember that we never drift into obedience and in the same way, we will never drift into giving or into reviewing our giving. We need to be intentional so that we can give with ever greater generosity.

Having determined before the Lord how much you are called to give, fulfil your commitment in obedience to him.

Keep your word, trusting him to:

- **Provide everything you need to give**
- **Enrich you spiritually**
- **Glorify himself through you**
- **Unite his people**