



January 24th, 2021

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Ever since the early days and years of the church in the book of Acts, God's people have practiced generosity with their material and financial resources.

Generosity has been and still is a mark of someone who's received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ and is anxious that others also accept the free gift of eternal life.

The early followers of Jesus practiced generosity in two general ways:

1. First, they gave to support those who were leading and shepherding the local churches.

The early followers of Jesus wanted to make sure that pastors were freed-up to give of their time and attention to the ministry of their local church. Not every local church pastor could dedicate himself fulltime to pastoring but some could and did.

2. Second, they gave to meet the needs of the poor, especially the poor within their own ranks. The early followers of Christ understood their responsibility to especially care for the needs of the poor in the family of God and they sacrificially gave to do that.

And it was this second practice of generosity that Paul addressed within the church in the city of Corinth – the believers that this letter from Paul – 2 Corinthians – was sent to.

Paul wasn't concerned so much about the poor in the church in Corinth, they weren't the neediest at this time in the first century. The neediest saints were the ones in the church in Jerusalem.

The Christians in Jerusalem had been severely persecuted for their faith. When people turned to Christ for salvation in Jerusalem, they often lost their jobs and they were ostracized by their very own family members. They became outcasts of society and so many became poor.

This was on top of the fact that the Romans taxed them with a heavy taxation. All of Israel under Roman rule experienced economic hardships that burdened many with poverty and it's associated difficulties.

The Apostle Paul recognized the plight of the Jerusalem church, so he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth and in the letter he talked about the believers in that church taking up a love offering for the poor believers in the Jerusalem Church. By the way, that letter is in your Bible, it's called 1 Corinthians.

So when he wrote them a second letter – 2 Corinthians – he taught them God’s principles on giving and challenged them again to send a love offering to the needy, poor Christians in Jerusalem – which they did.

And in this second letter, in chapters 8 & 9, he taught them that generous giving TO God results in receiving generously FROM God, and that’s just one of the many promises in the Bible that God attaches to giving and being generous.

And it’s these promises that provide motivation for us today to be generous in our giving just like those early believers were in Corinth. But many followers of Christ today don’t know or don’t understand these promises.

And that’s why today we’re beginning this study called “Pressing Into the Promises of God”. Over the next 3 Sundays we’re going to examine some of these promises and we’re going to be challenged by God Himself, through His Word...

To PRESS INTO these promises and to trust Him that when he says He wants us to live generously toward Him and others, that He means it and He will always keep His promises to us when we do!

Before we get to our text, let me show you in other parts of the Bible some of the promises attached to generosity...

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*“Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; **then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine.**”*

Proverbs 3:9-10

(Slide)

*“One person gives freely, **yet gains more**; another withholds what is right, only to become poor. A generous person **will be enriched**, and the one who gives a drink of water **will receive water.**”*

Proverbs 11:24-25

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*“Kindness to the poor is a loan to the Lord, **and he will give a reward to the lender.**”*

Proverbs 19:17

(Slide)

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the Lord of Armies. **‘See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.’**”*

Malachi 3:10

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*“Give, **and it will be given to you; a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over – will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**”*

Luke 6:38

The point of these verses is clear: The more you give, the more God gives back in return!

So that brings us to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, which is part of Paul's teaching to the Corinthian believers about how God views generosity and the promises He attaches to living generously.

Let's read our text now and identify the promises God makes to us if when we live a lifestyle of generosity.

READ 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

God's Promises to the Generous:

(Slide) 1. Generous givers will receive generous blessings from God
(9:6 READ)

Paul is using imagery here that we can all understand. Every one of us drives by a corn field or a soybean or hay field on a regular, if not daily, basis. As Iowans we have at least a basic understanding of agriculture.

We know one of the basic rules of farming is that the size of the harvest is in direct proportion to the amount of seed that is planted. Folks, this isn't rocket science. Plant a little seed, harvest a little crop. Plant a lot of seed, harvest a lot of crop.

God is saying to us here that in the spiritual realm, the principle is that...

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Giving to God results in blessing from God.

That's one of those tweetable phrases that everyone ought to give thought to. I'm going to give one of these to you under each promise this morning.

Now the word "generously" here in verse 6 literally means blessing. You should write that beside the word "generous" in your Bible in that verse.

Believers who are generous with their God-given resources will receive blessings from God in-return. And the believers who selfishly hold back of their God-given resources thinking they will be blessed by piling them up, are only going to forfeit that gain and receive little from God.

So here's the million dollar question: If this is really true, and since it's in the Word of God – don't you believe it's true – amen? It is true. So, since this is true, that generous givers receive generous blessings from God, and stingy givers receive little blessing from God...

What Christian in their right mind wouldn't want to live generously – giving of their resources to God and His kingdom-work, and to help needy people, because they know God's is going to bless them in-return?

Why wouldn't ALL of us want to live generously with that kind of guaranteed promise?!! That's a question we should all ponder this morning.

Now, here's the second promise to the generous READ vs. 7.

There's A LOT going on in this verse, so let's break it down. First, verse 7 says, "Each person should do as he has decided in his heart – not reluctantly or out of compulsion...".

Let me start with that line: "...not reluctantly or out of compulsion..." This means whatever giving and generosity you practice to God and others is not to be forced, it's strictly voluntary. No one can require you to give a certain amount or force you to do so.

We shouldn't give based on the demands of others but only on God's standards found in the Bible and His work in our own hearts.

For example, last Sunday we gave you the opportunity to be generous towards two very worthy ministries: Ruth Harbor and Agape Pregnancy Center in Des Moines.

Nobody twisted anyone's arm to give. We simply showed you the need and gave you the opportunity. And those of you who were so moved in your hearts by God to give, gave.

And I want to thank you for your generosity by the way. Giving is still coming in from that offering, but it looks like we're going to be able to bless those ministries with at least \$1,000 each. That's awesome! (applause)

Your generosity is going to be a blessing to those ministries. You sowed the seeds of generosity and not only will those seeds bear fruit through the ministries of Ruth Harbor and Agape Pregnancy Center, but God is going to bless you in return for your generosity.

Next Sunday I'm going to share with you where I believe you should start in giving generously. But the extent of your generosity goes far beyond even just the starting point that I'll show from the Bible next Sunday.

Now just because generosity is voluntary and not from the compulsion of others, it doesn't mean it's haphazard or careless. Look at the first phrase of verse 7 again... "Each person should do as he has decided in his heart..."

The word "decided" carries the idea of predetermination. Our generosity should be something so heartfelt-felt and important to us that we don't just nilly-willy say..

"Yea, I'm gonna be generous this year. Whenever God touches my heart I'm gonna pull out my wallet or my purse and give something to God or to someone in need."

That's nice to say that, but if you stick with that, I guarantee you'll be less generously this year than if you were to sit down and determine a plan for living that is generous. Planned giving is planned living and it's always more fruitful than haphazard giving and haphazard living.

A truly generous person predetermines their giving by creating a systematic plan so that each time God blesses them with increase through a paycheck or a tax refund, or an unexpected check in the mail or a gift received...

They give both in a planned way to their local church, then to a missionary, or to a ministry God has placed on their heart, AND they give spontaneously as the Spirit of God leads them.

So this morning we're still sitting here at the beginning of 2021. We all still have the opportunity to sit down and prayerfully ask God to help us make a plan for generosity in 2021 that stretches us beyond what we gave and were generous with in 2020.

Let me challenge you with that this morning. Make a commitment in your heart right now, that this week or as soon as you're able, you're going to sit down, and if you're married you're going to sit down with your spouse, and make a Generosity Plan for 2021.

Make sure you build in unknown opportunities that allow you to give when God moves in your heart, like last Sunday, and like the Corinthian believers did in the Bible.

I can guarantee that almost everyone who plans to live generously in 2021 will live be more generous than those who leave just it to chance that they'll be generous this year.

Now notice in verse 7 it also says that living and giving generously should not be done with a reluctant attitude, but instead how? Cheerfully. God loves cheerful givers.

To God, it's not just important THAT we live and give generously, but HOW we give and practice generosity. If we give and then have regret that we wish we could have kept our money or possessions instead of blessing others with it, then we're missing the point.

If you give on your app today and then start thinking, "Man, I could have bought that new bow I've been saving up for with that money I just gave. Why did I do that?" Then you might as well have kept your money.

If you stick your offering envelope in the box on the way out this morning, then walk out to your car and look at your bald tires and think to yourself, "It sure would be nice to have that money I just threw in that box so I could buy some new tires this week."

Then, just come back into the office tomorrow and sit down in Pastor Brett's office and tell him you made a mistake, and you need your offering envelope back.

Yes, he's going to look at you a little strange, but he'll give it back to you because it's your money and you can do with it as you please. Then go out and buy those tires this week. It's better to do that than to give it reluctantly and have regret, instead of giving with a cheerful attitude.

By the way, the word “cheerful” here means “hilarious”. God loves hilarious givers who are joyful and happy for the privilege of being generous toward God and others.

So when we receive our offering at the end of message, that time should be for all of us, the more joyful part of the Sunday morning service.

Giving God our tithes and offerings should be for each and every one of us our most favorite part of the service because it truly is fun to give back to God a portion what He’s given to us.

If you’ll give in that way, you will truly find the joy that comes to every person’s heart who lives and gives generously.

And that brings us to the second promise God makes to generous people ... “God loves, a cheerful giver.”

(Slide) 2. Generous givers will receive more of God’s love (9:7)

Can you believe that? Can there be a more precious promise that God could make to you than that? If you’ll live generously with a cheerful heart, He’s lavish on you even MORE of His love for you.

The Bible teaches that in a general sense, God loves everyone in the world (John 3:16). But it also teaches us that God has a deeper, more intimate love, not only for those of us who know Him as Savior, but to all of us who live generously.

If you want more of God's amazing love in your life, there's one sure way you can live to receive that love in a deeper way: stop hoarding what He's giving you and bless others with it and be faithful to Him with it.

Write this down on your notes:

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God's love flows to the generous.

That's another one of those tweetable phrases that's worth sharing with the world. Why does God's love flow to the generous? Because when we're living generously, we're living just like He does. We're never more like God than when we give.

Now here's a third promise God makes to the generous in these verses...

(Slide) 3. Generous givers will receive God's generosity in return (9:8-11a).

READ vs. 8.

This is an amazing verse. Five times in this verse Paul uses different words to emphasize the fact that when we live generously toward God and others, we receive God's gracious generosity back from God and that grace has no limit. It's inexhaustible.

Let me give you one more tweetable phrase this morning to write down on your notes:

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When I'm generous to others, God is generous to me, and His generosity NEVER runs out.

You've heard the phrase, "You can't outgive God"? This is where that phrase comes from. No one can outgive God.

Notice again verse 8 says, "God is able." This literally means "has power". God has the power to work in your life in such a way that as you give of your resources and your material possessions to His kingdom and to meet the needs of others, as you dish it out, He dishes it right back to you.

You give it out, and He replenishes what you gave out. And why wouldn't He? As long as you are being a blessing to others, isn't that the kind of people He wants to use and bless? Isn't that how God meets the needs of people in the world, by using His people to bless others?

God has blessed you and I, not just so WE can have a roof over our heads and clothes on our back and food in our cupboards, and not so we will build bigger roofs and buy more clothes and stock up more food in our cupboards...

But He's blessed us so that we will take the excess of our needs that He provides and turn around and help meet the needs of others – so they can have a roof over their heads, and clothes on their backs and food in their cupboards.

The world tells us that we need to get rich and we need to do whatever we have to do to get there. It tells us that we're not successful unless we have an overabundance of material things.

It tells us we won't be accepted if we don't live in a way that shows we have money. It tells us we won't fit in with others if we don't live in a certain house on a certain street, wear a certain style of clothes, or drive a certain brand of vehicle.

And the only way to achieve these things is by giving ourselves to working long hours, climbing the corporate ladder and stepping over anyone who's in our way, sleeping our way to the top, hoarding God's blessings, and building bigger barns to store all our stuff.

Those messages are lies. They're the opposite of what is REALLY true. Living and giving generously toward God and His kingdom and to the needs of others, is how God wants us to live our lives.

And when we do, He stands ready to replenish our resources so we can continue living generously. And He has the power to do that and He has the means to do that. His supply of generosity has no bottom, no end, it will never run out.

So, because we believe in God and in His power and in His ability to meet our needs, it saves us from the rat race of overworking ourselves, or hoarding our resources for own personal gain.

Instead, our trust is in the Lord and in His promises. He will NEVER fail us, and His promises will always be kept. Promises like this one...

(Slide)

“And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19

Paul goes on here in these verses to illustrate that this isn't a new program of God. Living generously through the endless supply of God has always been the way God has wanted His people to live.

He says in verses 9 & 10...(READ).

Paul quotes or alludes to several Old Testament examples in these verses. The first one is from Psalm 112:9 where the virtues of those who fear God are listed out. These include in verse 9...

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“He distributes freely to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

Psalm 112:9

“Give to him, and don't have a stingy heart when you give, and because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you. ‘Open your hand willingly to your poor and needy brother in your land.’”

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

And look now at verse 11 (READ).

This is this week's memory verse, let's say it out loud together...

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THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE:

***"You will be enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces
thanksgiving to God through us"***

2 Corinthians 9:11

Let me focus on just the first part of the verse before we close: God says, "You will be enriched in every way for all generosity." Several thoughts come to mind when I read that statement.

First, the word "enriched". Notice it doesn't say "rich". God doesn't promise riches to those who are generous. This isn't some get rich quick scheme or name it/claim it doctrine.

God simply says that to those who live generously, He will ENrich, He will bless. God's blessings to the generous are two-fold: First He'll bless us with eternal rewards. We studied that a few weeks ago. As we live generously now, we're storing up treasures in heaven.

But second, He'll bless us with temporal blessings here in this life. Again, why? Because He wants us to continue living generously towards others and as we do we are literally serving as God's hands and feet and instruments of His love and grace to the world.

Notice it says, “You will be enriched in EVERY way.” I don’t believe it’s just monetary or material blessings God wants to give us. I believe “every” means things like as we dispense grace towards others, we’re given grace in return.

As we dispense love towards others, we’re given love in return. As we give kindness and gentleness and put others needs before our own, God is going to enrich us with these in return. Generosity of this kind brings enrichment from God in return.

Last, this verse tells me that God is a meticulous records-keeper. There’s not a single, seemingly insignificant act of generosity, no matter how small, that God misses or fails to reward.

Look at the words in this verse that emphasize this truth: You WILL be enriched in EVERY way for ALL generosity...”

Fellowship, each of us WILL BE enriched in EVERY way for ALL generosity. God doesn’t miss a single act of generosity. We have God’s promise that generous givers will receive God’s generosity in return.