

“Hearts Overflowing with Gratitude”—2 Corinthians 9:10-15

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Hearts Overflowing with Gratitude”, is 2 Corinthians 9:10-15 → *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. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 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, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Why do you give? There are an abundance of dynamics which move people to give to others. Generally people feel moved to give when a

need is placed before them, either in the midst of disaster, tragedy and suffering or in connection with the completion of a project or goal. The giving also happens in many various ways, usually expressed in the categories of time, talents and treasures because giving involves the whole person.

No matter what the motivation is for giving, one factor must be present in all giving situations: **an awareness of a need**. When you become aware that someone is hurting, you may be moved to reach out to him/her, taking the time to visit and offer words of comfort or even some kind of other help. When a tragedy hits, you may be moved to give of your resources to help those affected by the tragedy to navigate their way through it. When disaster strikes, you may be moved to help people put their life back together again with your time, serving with your strength, energy and abilities. Or you may offer of your financial resources to help out. All such outpouring of help flows from the heart when there is **an awareness of a need**.

Paul's exhortation to the Christian congregation in Corinth, Greece, in our text flowed from such an awareness of a need given by the Holy Spirit through the prophet Agabus about fourteen years prior to this letter. Acts 11:28-30 says *Agabus . . . foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius)*. Do you think being made aware of an impending disaster

would make a person sensitive to the needs which it will create? It goes on to say: *So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.* Not only did the Holy Spirit reveal the need He moved their hearts to provide for it!

It appears that not only did Paul continue to collect offerings to help fellow Christians in need throughout the years of his ministry, but Christians, such as those in the area of Macedonia, begged *earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:4). Paul pointed out that the Corinthian congregation had *not only . . . started . . . to do this work . . . a year prior to writing this letter but also had the **desire to do it***. The Holy Spirit places such a desire in the heart to serve when there is **an awareness of a need**. In this letter Paul was exhorting them to bring that desire to completion (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:10-11).

This exhortation was also reinforced by Titus, Paul's *partner and fellow worker* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:23), whom he sent to oversee their bringing their desire to completion. Titus was not just doing a task on Paul's behalf or on behalf of the other churches (2 Corinthians 8:19). It was from a heart overflowing with gratitude. In 2 Corinthians 8:16-17 Paul says: *Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. For he not only accepted our appeal, but **being himself very earnest** he is going to you **of his own accord***. The Holy Spirit

places in the Christian heart such an earnest desire to give when there is an awareness of need.

The response to an awareness of need described in our text is not simply because of a need placed before you in the midst of physical suffering (e.g. hunger, sickness, loss of possessions, etc.). Human care happens by people with people all the time simply because a need needs to be addressed. Thus, an awareness of need is made → a gift is given in some form → and “life goes on” until the next awareness of need is made. That’s the world’s concept of human care.

Giving of time, talents and treasures by the Christian happens because of a different awareness of need: that all people are lost, enslaved to the power of sin and devil, destined for hell and in need of a Savior. Romans 3:23-25 says: *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, **to be received by faith**.* Recognizing that the greatest need of all people has been met by Jesus Christ, and trusting in His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, moves you to give with a heart overflowing with gratitude in faith.

It also puts a whole different perspective on your giving according to our text. In verse 10-11 of our text Paul reassures us that God, *Who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food* (i.e. gives “daily bread”)

*will supply and multiply your seed, and you will be enriched in every way. For what purpose? Only for consumption and personal gain or pleasure? No, it says that He will supply and multiply your seed for **more sowing**. As you give with your time, talents and treasures because of your spiritual need being met in Jesus it will *increase the harvest of your righteousness*. In other words, the Holy Spirit will use your giving to Christians missions to open up people to their need in sin (even as you give to care for their physical needs) so they too can repent of their sins, trust in the atoning work of Jesus for them and be declared righteous before God! This also why being *enriched in every way* moves the Christian *to be generous in every way*.*

Not only that, but such overflowing of your heart in gratitude for Christ's atoning work for you *will produce thanksgiving to God*. Verse 12 of our text goes on to say: *For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints (i.e. the physical needs of fellow Christians) **but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God***. Because your giving is sanctified by the Holy Spirit He will produce much more than simply a gift given to meet some need and then "life goes on" until the next awareness of need is made. Through the Gospel shared in the use of that gift the Holy Spirit produces faith in Jesus, which produces hearts overflowing with gratitude, which produces more sanctified giving, and more hearts overflowing with gratitude, and so

forth. You can not know the far reaching affects and results of such sanctified giving until you get to heaven. As 1 Corinthians 13:12 promises: *Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

Besides, the results don't belong to you. They belong to God. Verses 12-13 of our text reveal this: *For the ministry of this service is . . . overflowing in **many thanksgivings to God**. 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.* The focus in such hearts overflowing with gratitude is *the surpassing grace of God upon you* (verse 14). This is why the Christian's giving is referred to as an *act of grace* (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:6-7,19) instead of a "donation" throughout Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. It is motivated by God's grace—His undeserved love in the Person & Work of Jesus for sinners.

So . . . why do **you** give? Because advertisements, commercials and various organizations make you aware of a need and seek a donation? No doubt, such information needs to be presented if one expects to get givers. However, with hearts filled with *the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. Romans 8:39), we give because He gave His life to meet our greatest need for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In the words of 1 John 4:19 → *We love because He first loved us.* Amen.

Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift! Amen.

(2 Corinthians 9:15)

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