

2 Corinthians 9:1-9. *Giving Biblically*. Paul is writing the church at Corinth for the third time; Corinth is the Las Vegas of its time—even by Roman standards. Nonetheless, they were generous; Paul writes their generosity was contagious in Macedonia. So, he tells them to get ready for he’s sending some folks to carry their gifts back to the poor, probably in Jerusalem. Be prepared—he doesn’t want to disappoint the Macedonians. So, he gives the church at Corinth some advice about giving...

1. When you plant seeds modestly, the harvest will be modest.
2. But, when you plant blessings, they grow even greater blessings [εὐλογία, 2129; *praise, gift, blessing*].³
3. Give what you’ve determined [προαιρέω, 4255, “prepared in advance”] from your *raison d’être*.
4. Give neither reluctantly, nor compulsively.
5. Remember, the Lord our God loves a cheerful [ἡλαρός, 2431, “joyous, propitiously forgiving/merciful” as from ἡλεως, 2436] giver.

Bottom line—God is able to make all gifts flourish; you will have all that you need, in all things at all times. You will flourish in every good work. Remember the Psalmist said a long time ago:

*God has spread His gifts to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.*

- Q How would you define generosity? When is it not “generosity,” but a merely a bribe for social approval, or leverage with the receiver of said “generosity?”
- Q What have you planted sparingly that did not harvest well?
- Q What blessings have you planted that came back to bless you? [Note: “Blessing” what is “it?”]
- Q How can you determine if your give comes “from the heart;” i.e., from your *raison d’être*?
- Q What’s wrong with giving reluctantly, if you give nonetheless?
- Q What’s wrong with giving compulsively, if you give nonetheless?
- Q Why does the Lord our God love a “cheerful” giver? Why does He want us to give?
- Q What’s in for me with all this “proper” giving; i.e., following Paul’s five points of advice?

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-9

There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. ²For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷**Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written [Psalm 112:9]:

“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

³Very few translations reveal the actual Greek of the second part of this oft-quoted phrase which says nothing about seeds or grain harvests. The Darby Translation does—“But this [is true], he that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows in [the spirit of] blessing shall reap also in blessing.” See http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/9-6.htm

2 Corinthians 9:10-15. Results of giving Biblically.

Paul continues, showing how purposeful giving from a cheerful heart not only pleases the Lord our God, but also has these effects...

1. When you supply seeds to the sower, your storage shed of seeds will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.
2. You'll be made rich in every way.
3. Your generosity will result in thanksgiving to the Lord our God.

Remember, you're not only supplying the needs of God's people, you're also praising the Lord our God with your thanks. People will praise the Lord for your generosity, for the obedience that you profess via your generosity in sharing. When they pray for you, their thoughts will go out to you—because: of the surpassing gift God has given you. And... Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Q How is your "harvest of righteousness" increased by Biblical generosity?

Consider also Luke 6:38—

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 to you.

Q How is this different from the "health & wealth gospel?"

Q What's your best example of God's blessing being well-measured, pressed down even, and running over?

Q What is the purpose of being rich?

Consider also Matthew 6:19-21—

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Q What are your treasures in heaven?

Q How do you know how you're doing when it comes to a heart checkup with the Lord?

Q How is giving an act of praise? How does it lead to worship?

Q How would you begin to characterize this "indescribable gift" of which Paul speaks?

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10-15

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Notus Amicus—

When we try to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" we fail to understand this "indescribable gift." And we get very different answers from Scripture, at times paradoxical (i.e., *apparently inconsistent*; compare Mark 13:13 to John 10:29). But, when we ask a better question, "What did the Lord God do to save me?" then we have asked the right question to get to an answer of just what is this "indescribable gift."

It has been estimated that in Paul's day Corinth had a population of about 250,000 free persons, plus as many as 400,000 slaves. In a number of ways it was the chief city of Greece.⁴

1. *Its commerce.* Located just off the Corinthian isthmus, it was a crossroads for travelers and traders. It had two harbors: (1) Cenchrea, six miles to the east on the Saronic Gulf, and (2) Lechaem, a mile and a half to the west on the Corinthian Gulf. Goods flowed across the isthmus on the Diolkos, a road by which smaller ships could be hauled fully loaded across the isthmus, and by which cargoes of larger ships could be transported by wagons from one side to the other. Goods flowed through the city from Italy and Spain to the west and from Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Egypt to the east.
2. *Its culture.* Although Corinth was not a university town like Athens, it was characterized nevertheless by typical Greek culture. Its people were interested in Greek philosophy and placed a high premium on wisdom.
3. *Its religion.* Corinth contained at least 12 temples. Whether they were all in use during Paul's time is not known for certain. One of the most infamous was the temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, whose worshipers practiced religious prostitution. About a fourth of a mile north of the theater stood the temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, and in the middle of the city the sixth-century B.C. temple of Apollo was located. In addition, the Jews had established a synagogue; the inscribed lintel of it has been found and placed in the museum at old Corinth.
4. *Its immorality.* Like any large commercial city, Corinth was a center for open and unbridled immorality. The worship of Aphrodite fostered prostitution in the name of religion. At one time 1,000 sacred prostitutes served her temple. So widely known did the immorality of Corinth become that the Greek verb "to Corinthianize" came to mean "to practice sexual immorality." In a setting like this it is no wonder that the Corinthian church was plagued with numerous problems.

9:6 Probably a well-known proverb—but not taken from the Scriptures.

9:8 *all things . . . all times . . . all that you need.* Through his abounding grace, God can enable each Christian to abound in generous deeds (see v. 11).

9:12 *not only supplying the needs of God's people.* The effect of generous giving on the part of the Corinthians will extend beyond Jerusalem, the destination of their gift, to the church as a whole, causing widespread prayer and praise to be offered (see vv. 13-14).

9:14 *the surpassing grace God has given you.* Displayed in this unselfish demonstration of their loving concern for fellow believers who are in desperate need.

9:15 *inestimable gift.* His own Son (John 3:16). God is the first giver; He first selflessly gives Himself to us in the person of His Son, and all Biblically-based Christian giving is our response of gratitude for this gift, which is well beyond easy articulation and quick understanding (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9; 1John 4:9-11). Intriguingly, it was not about us, however; Paul makes it quite clear that the atoning sacrifice by the Father of the Son was to demonstrate publicly Father God's righteousness (Romans 3:25-26).

⁴Adapted & corrected by D. Thomas Porter from *Compton's Interactive Bible NIV*. Copyright © 1996.