

## **The Church, part 20**

(Romans 13:1-7; 2 Corinthians 8-9)

(preached Pine Grove 11/12/17; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

A millionaire lay on his death bed surrounded by his wife and her sister...

The man had made much money in his life and had been very stingy with it, and as he lay dying he still had his money on his mind..

So he leaned over to his wife and told her, “Darling, I have but one favor to ask you and I want you and your sister to promise me that you will do it.”

The wife said, “I will do anything you ask.”

So the man said, “Once I die, take all my money and bury it in the casket with me.”

And then he quickly passed away..

The day for the funeral came, and as the funeral home prepared to close the casket for the last time, the woman stepped forward with a shoebox and put it in the casket as the men closed it.”

Her sister was shocked, and ran to ask the sister how she could have done something so foolish as burying her all that money with her husband...

The wife responded, "Well, I promised him I would do it and a promise is a promise."

The sister's face grew pale and she asked, "So that shoebox contained all his money?"

"It sure did," replied the wife...

"It contained every penny he ever made..."

I just simply wrote him a check."

For some people, the love of money controls their hearts in life and even in death...

For the past few weeks, we have been talking about how a Christian should view money...

And clearly, we know that we can't love money because the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil...

So, we have set out to get a biblical view of money..

And we boiled down a Christian's view of money to 4 very important questions..

1. How are we to view money?
2. How are we to acquire money?
3. How are we to spend our money?
4. How are we give our money?

And so far, we have answered 3 of the 4 questions...

The simple answer to question 1 is that we must view money as part of the world that God has created...

It is a good thing in that money feeds our families, builds churches, sends out preachers and teachers and evangelists....

However, we can't view money as something we love or put our trust in more than God..

Question 2 is best answered by saying that we can get money through gifts or inheritance or long term investing, or more commonly, through work...

Question 3 is best answered by saying that we should spend our money to support our families, to pay our debts and to help others in need...

And that brought us to question 4, where we have camped upon for a few weeks now...

So, what have we discovered about how we are to give our money as NT Christians?

Well, we discovered that God's model of giving has never changed...

The people of God gave two ways in the OT..

They gave freewill or voluntary offerings to God that were not commanded or based upon a percentage...

These offerings simply came out of the joy in their hearts that results from a love of the Lord...

They also gave commanded offerings in the form of national taxes that went to support the priests, the national festivals, and the poor in Israel..

These same models for giving carry forward to NT Christians as well...

Though we aren't Israel, we give in the form of taxes to whatever government we live under...

WE saw that command last week in the book of Romans and from the mouth of Jesus...

This type of commanded giving is based on a percentage established by the government...

And the other way we are to give as NT believers is also in the form of freewill offerings....

This kind of giving is not driven by a percentage but driven by a love of God in our hearts....

And so far, we have looked at 5 principles of freewill giving in 2 Corinthians 8...

- A. Giving is Sacrificial
- B. Giving is Proportional
- C. Giving is Personal
- D. Giving is Volitional
- E. Giving is Reciprocal

Now remember, 2 Cor. 8-9 is a portion of Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth to rejoice in their repentance over past sins, but also to encourage them to get back to work..

And one of the priorities for a church getting back on track is through their giving...

In times of trouble, in times of turmoil and sin, churches often spiritually but also financially...

And the reason is simple, people who are walking with the Lord as they should aren't giving to the Lord as they should...

But once they get back on track, they should get back to giving rightly..

And the church at Corinth was now out dark days and it was time to get back to giving to Lord as they should...

So Paul wrote them about their giving, and the main purpose of his instruction was to get them to continue to take up a collection of the church at Jerusalem...

You see the church at Jerusalem was poor and needy, and Paul often encouraged the churches he visited to take up a collection for them...

And this came to be a model for freewill giving in the NT...

Money was collected for local church needs, but money was also collected for needs in other places in the world...

So Paul is writing in these 2 chapters of 2 Cor. and he is encouraging giving, so we benefit from his instruction to the Corinthians by learning how to give ourselves...

As we mentioned first of all that giving is **sacrificial**...

Much of the money given in the early church was a sacrifice for those giving it...

Offerings in the early church were often the poor giving to the very poor...

You see in verse 3 that Paul commended the giving of some as beyond their ability, which suggests that giving at times is sacrificial...

But it is also fine to see giving as **proportional**, since some gave according to their ability...

And we talked about at times, we give what we can afford and sometimes we give beyond what we can afford...

The third principle we also discussed was that giving is **personal**...

Again in verse 3, we read that people are to give of their own accord...

In other words, they gave as they proposed in their heart..

No one told them an amount to give or a percentage to give..

They gave an amount that God put on their heart...

Then we saw a 4th principle that giving is **volitional**...

This goes right along with personal...

In other words, freewill offerings are to just that, they are a result of a person's own free will...

Paul says in very 8 that he is commanding the Corinthians to give....

And then we finished up last week with a 5th principle of giving, and that is giving is **reciprocal**..

Verse 9 says that since Christ gave, we give...

Christ was rich but became poor so we could become rich...

WE give generously because God first gave generously to us...

Now tonight, let's add a few more principles to guide our freewill giving to God..

So, let's continue our look at Paul's second letter to Corinthians in verse 10 of 2 Cor. 8....

Verse 10....

***10 I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. 11 But now***



***finish [f]doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability***

What Paul is doing here is encouraging the Corinthians to continue the generosity that they had started..

You see, giving to God can play tricks on our mind like...

I have given plenty over the years...

It is time for someone else to step up and give...

Or it can be discouraging in the sense of "I keep on giving but nothing is happening.."

God would say to you this....

Finish what you start in terms of giving...

In other words, your ***giving must be dependable...***

The issue is not how much you give but how regular you give...

You see, God takes no time off from providing for you...

When you sleep, he provides.

When you eat, he provides.

When you wake up, he provides..

And our giving to him should be just as dependable..

Don't grow weary in your giving to God..

Don't grow bored in your giving to God..

Don't become unpredictable in your giving...

Give to God and give to him regularly..

Finish what you start and don't let the world distract you from being being filled with the joy of giving to God.

Doesn't matter the percentage or the amount, what matters is that your giving is faithful because your God faithfully gives to you..

Let's move to another principle in verse 12....

### ***Giving is Sensible***

Verse 12..

***12 For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.***

The simple principle is this...

You can't and shouldn't give what you don't have....

Ultimately, only you and God know if you have enough to give...

And if you don't have enough to support yourself, there is a call to give what you don't have...

Be sensible in your giving...

Now I say this with a word of caution...

Don't let your sensibility be influenced by your greed or lack of faith in God...

Yet, there are people who can't afford to give...

But guess what?

Some supposed "men of God" don't care...

I heard an TV con man who calls himself a preacher tell people in credit card debt to send him \$1000 and God would wipe out their credit card debt...

And he went on to say... “If you dont have a \$1000 dollars, put it on a credit card and God will wipe it out based upon that act of faith.”

To give on credit is not to give in faith but to give in stupidity...

That makes no sense...

Be sensible at times in your giving..

Dont give what you dont have...

But when you do have, give.

An eighth principle of giving is found in verses 13-15...

***13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality— 14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; 15 as it is written, “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.”***

The simple principle is this...

***Giving is Beneficial***

God blesses some Christians with more wealth so that they can help other Christians who have little...

He that gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack...

Now this is not communism...

This is not stealing from the rich and redistribution that wealth to the poor...

This is simply believers who have much giving so that believers who have little can enjoy their blessings...

Now in the closing verses of chapter 8, Paul simply lays out how he will get the Corinthians offering to the church at Jerusalem..

He is going to take it there along with other men in order to protect himself from accusations if they offering never makes it to Jerusalem...

That brings us to chapter 9, and in the first 5 verses, Paul simply reminds the Corinthians of the importance of giving and then in verse 6 of chapter 9, we arrive at the last few principles but probably the most important verses on giving in the NT...

So, let's look at how Paul encouraged the Corinthians to give...

2 Cor. 9:6..

***6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows [e]bountifully will also reap [f]bountifully.***

In this simple verse, we find a 9th principle of giving...

***Giving Is Comparable..***

In other words, your giving will be comparable to your receiving...

If you give a lot, you get a lot...

If you give a little, you get a little...

This is a principle of the farmer...

Sow fewer seeds, reap less produce...

Sow more seeds, reap more produce..

God established that principle of the field and that principle of the bank account...

Hold on to your money and God holds on to what you may need...

Let go off your money and God lets go of the blessings in your life...

And again, the issue is the heart....

Should you write a big check to get a big payday from God?

No, you should write a big check because you love your God a lot and God will bless greatly the attitude of your heart..

The man who writes a big check to bribe God should have no expectation of return...

Yet, the man who sows his money to God generously from his heart will enjoy a generous harvest from God.

That is plain and simple the word of God...

Let's move on...

Verse 7...

***7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

We have already talked about the idea of giving in terms of what you purpose in your heart, but let me expand on this a bit...

First of all, purposing in your heart is the idea of thinking about what to give before you actually give it...

This can and should happen between a husband and wife as they plan their expenses and determine what they can give...

But other than a spouse's influence, amount and percentages should come from one's own heart through the ministry of the Holy Spirit...

The opposite of giving from the heart is giving grudgingly and under compulsion, which means to give due to pressure...

It may be the pressure of others' expectations...

It may be the pressure of a church's financial situation..

A lot of people like to see the amount of the offering each week printed in the bulletin or hung on a board in the church...

And though that can be encouraging and even a motivation to give...



Sometimes that can cause us to give more than we can if money is tight...

Or it can cause us to be less generous if the church is doing good...

I had an older man in a former church tell me with a hint of arrogance one time...

If I see the church fall below a certain line, I pitch in a little more to help out...

And though that may sound nice, my question is this..

If you can afford to give more to the Lord, why aren't you doing it all the time and just when you think the church needs your help...

So, we must guard our heart from the pressures of others around us in terms of what we give...

Dont give if it begrudges you...

Dont give if you resent writing the check...

Dont give as a response to others expectations or rules...

Instead, give according to principle #10...

Because giving should be enjoyable...

Look at the end of end of verse 7...

God loves a cheerful giver..

The word for cheerful here is hilaron in the Greek, and that is where we get the word hilarious...

God loves a hilarious giver...

God loves the one who is so filled with joy to give that he can laugh as he gives his money to the Lord...

Now obviously, God loves the world...

He also specifically loves his own in the world...

And then we see that he has a special love for those who give to His work in the world with a cheerful heart...

Now the question is...

How do God express that love for the cheerful giver?

Look at verses 8-11...

***8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written,***

***“He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor,  
His righteousness [g]lendures forever.”***

***10 Now 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 everything for all liberality, which  
through us is producing thanksgiving to God.***

For those who give to God with a cheerful heart, look at how God shows his love for them..

Verse 8 says that cheerful givers always have more than enough to meet their needs...

In other words, givers who are happy to give, God is happy to always give to them..

Verses 9 and 10 assure the cheerful giver that God has more than enough seed to supply to those who sow generously...

And then verse 11 says the more often a person gives with a cheerful heart, the more often they want to give...

In other words, cheerful givers are liberal givers...

I hope you understand the promise here to the cheerful giver...

We often say that you can't out give God, but we need to add this...

If you give cheerfully, you can't out give God...

There are plenty of people who have given much to the Lord but they gave with a heart of trying to buy God's favor or the preacher's favor or to control the church...

And in those cases, they definitely did out give God..

Only the cheerful giver is unable to out give God according to these verses...

So, principle #10....***Giving is Enjoyable...***

There are 3 more principles of giving that we need to see here tonight in these final 4 verses, and I will be brief..

But let's read verse 12...

***12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the [h]saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.***

As Paul begins to wrap up this encouragement to the Corinthians to give to the Jerusalem church, he describes giving as a ministry...

In other words, ***giving is an act of worship*** of God...

We often don't think about our money in the plate as an act of worship, but it very much is...

Yes, listening to preaching is worship...

Singing is worship..

Praying is worship.

But so is giving..

It is a ministry...

It is an act of service in the name of the Lord...

It is the act of blessing the church, the missionaries we support, the people in need around us...

Giving to God is worship of God..

Paul then wraps up his call to give to the church at Corinth in verses 13-15..

***13 Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your [i]contribution to them and to all, 14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the***

***surpassing grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!***

I want us to see 2 final principles of giving in these closing verses...

The 12th principle of NT giving is this..

***Giving is Encouraging..***

Look at what Paul says the Jerusalem church will do in response to the giving of the Corinthians...

They will glorify God for your obedience...

Look, we encourage others by giving to the Lord...

Look, it is good to see others dropping envelopes in the plate and checks and cash...

It is good to hear about people supporting others ministries with their financial resources...

It is good to see people being helped due to the generosity of others...

The Jerusalem church was going to praise the Lord for the generosity of the Corinthian church...

When we give, we are a source of encouragement to other believers...

A final principle of giving is a serious principle but a principle nonetheless...

***Giving is evidence.***

Look at what Paul writes in the beginning of verse 13..

Because of the proof given by this ministry...

What does Paul mean by proof..

What are the Corinthians proving as they give their money to the Lord?

They are proving that their faith is real and genuine...

Look, giving is evidence that a person is truly saved...

We don't give to get saved, but saved always give.

When God changes a heart, he changes the wallet as well..

Your gifts to the Lord either serve as evidence of true salvation or false conversion...

God's people give to him cheerfully and regularly and generously...

You cannot get away from that in the Bible...

The people who are truly saved, truly give.

And if the Corinthians were really a church of born again believers, their giving to the church at Jerusalem would be proof that they truly knew the Lord..



## **Conclusion**

So, there you go...

13 Principle of how Christians are to give voluntarily to God...

And no mention of tithing or 10% or no talk of a command to give...

Just Paul writing to the church at Corinth encouraging them to give to the Lord...

And yet in that simple instruction, we find all we need to know and practice in our giving at Pine grove Baptist Church in 2017....

Next week, we will talk about a few practical questions on giving and then we will be done with principles of generous giving before heading to our last aspect of an effective church in 2 weeks...

Let us pray tonight..

