

The Giver That God Loves
2 Corinthians 9:6-7

In **2 Corinthians 2:12-7:1** Paul had been defending his apostolic integrity to the whole of the Corinthian congregation excluding no one.

But beginning in **2 Corinthians 7:2** this all changed as Paul began to address his remarks exclusively to only the repentant in the church, or in other words, only to those, in response to the “severe letter,” who had acknowledged their sin against God in having ignored and even mistreated His apostle.

As Paul began to address the repentant within the church at Corinth he detailed for them certain responsibilities that still remained for them to fulfill.

The first responsibility that he brought to the attention of the repentant within the Corinthian church can be found in **2 Corinthians 7:2-16**. And what was that responsibility? It was their need, once and for all, to separate from his opponents. And why was this so important? It was important because if they were truly repentant, this action of separation would have been the natural outworking of that repentance.

But this was not the only way that Paul believed that their repentance, if it were true and genuine, would be manifested and this brings us to the second responsibility that Paul detailed for the repentant within the Corinthian church.

So, what was this second responsibility? The second responsibility that Paul brought to the attention of the repentant within the Corinthian church can be found in **2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15**. And what was that responsibility? It was their need to complete the collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem, a collection that they had begun over a year earlier but in the midst of their rebellion against God and His apostle had stopped.

So why would the completion of this collection have been so important? It would have been important because, just as with the separation from his

opponents, if the Corinthians were truly repentant, this action of completing the collection would have been the natural outworking of their repentance, since it was in fact their sin that caused them to stop giving to the collection in the first place.

It is this second responsibility spelled out for the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15** that we are now focusing on in our ongoing study of **2 Corinthians**. And the beauty of this particular section of Scripture that covers two full chapters and that details for the Corinthians their responsibility in completing this collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem is this: These chapters, that Paul directed to the repentant within the Corinthian church, provide us with the single largest passage on giving in all of the Scriptures. So where are we now in our study of these two chapters?

Up to this point in our study of these two chapters we have only considered the necessity for the collection, which Paul spelled out for us in **2 Corinthians 8:1-9:5**, but now Paul in **2 Corinthians 9:6-15** will move from the necessity of the collection to the theological ground and purpose for the collection.

This morning we will only be looking at **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**. These two verses will explain to the Corinthians and to us what must characterize our giving if our giving is going to find approval with God.

So let me read these verses for you. **“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (7) Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

So having read these verses I would hope that we could all agree that God does not view all giving the same nor does God view all givers the same. But what is the difference in God’s eyes? Paul, I believe, answers this question in these two verses.

So let us now look at these two verses more carefully and seek to answer the following question: The giver that God approves or loves is characterized by what kind of giving according to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7?

First of all, the giver that God approves or loves is characterized by bountiful giving (2 Corinthians 9:6). Let us read **2 Corinthians 9:6** and see if this is not so. **“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**

Verse 6 is a proverbial statement, variations of which are common in Israel’s wisdom tradition: **“You reap what you sow.”** Here in this context he makes this proverb come alive by referencing something that the people of that day would be very familiar with the “sowing of seed.”

Obviously in light of the proverbial nature of this verse and the theme of the immediate context, which is the completion of the collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem, we can easily conclude he is not talking about the respective degrees of reward associated with the literal sowing of seed, but rather Paul is talking about the respective degrees of reward associated with giving money to others, either sparingly or bountifully, in the time of their need.

In other words, if we give our money sparingly to others we will reap sparingly, but if we give our money “bountifully” to others, God’s promise is this: we will reap bountifully.

Now to some people, this promise of bountiful reaping based on bountiful sowing might appear to be a get rich quick scheme, opening up the door to material riches, taking them from poverty to the middle class, or from the middle class to the upper class, or from the upper class to the upper crust. But this is not what this proverbial statement is necessarily offering.

It is offering a bountiful harvest but not necessarily a bountiful harvest of great material riches! Now why would I say this? I would say this for several reasons.

First of all, let us look at Paul and ask this question. Would Paul have considered himself a bountiful giver? And what is the answer to that question? I think the answer is obvious. Of course he would have considered himself a bountiful giver. How could he not have considered himself a bountiful giver in light of the fact that he knew, in his service to Christ, that he had given up everything in order to serve others and to meet their needs both spiritually and materially.

What did he say in **Philippians 3:7-8**? “**But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.**”

So would Paul have considered himself a bountiful giver? Of course he would have considered himself a bountiful giver. So now let me ask you this question. Did this bountiful giving lead him to a bountiful harvest of great material riches? And what is the answer? The answer is no! It did not.

In **1 Corinthians 4:8-13** he described himself as poorly clothed and homeless. Does this sound like a man who had bountifully harvested great material riches? Of course not! But even in spite of this Paul believed that he in his service to Christ and to others had in fact reaped a bountiful harvest, which we will see clearly later in the text.

Therefore based on the life experience of Paul himself what must we conclude about the proverbial statement made by Paul in **2 Corinthians 9:6**?

Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 9:6 offered a bountiful harvest to the bountiful sower, but based upon his own life experience we should not conclude that the bountiful harvest will necessarily consist of greater material riches (Philippians 3:7-8 cf. 1 Corinthians 4:8-13).

But this is not all. There is another reason why we should not look at **2 Corinthians 9:6** as a get rich quick scheme that will lead us to great material blessings. So, what is that second reason?

The second reason can be found in the way that Paul used the word “**bountiful**” in **2 Corinthians 9:5-6** within the context of **2 Corinthians 8-9**. So now let us take a look at this particular word.

The word translated “bountifully” in 2 Corinthians 9:6 (EULOGIA) is most often translated “**blessing**” and is the word from which we get the English word “eulogy.”

So now with this piece of information let us go back in our text to **2 Corinthians 9:5** where Paul first used the word “EULOGIA” and consider the significance of that word, within that verse, and within it’s boarder context.

So let me now read that verse for you. **“So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you.”** Now who are these brethren that Paul was urging to go on ahead of him to the Corinthians prior to his visit to them? These brethren, that Paul is referring to, they are the three-man delegation that he described in **2 Corinthians 8:16-24** whose positive purpose in coming to the Corinthians will now be stated by Paul as we continue to read the verse.

And what does the verse go on to say? **“So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift [which is the translation of the Greek word EULOGIA, which is typically translated “blessing” but which is translated here “bountiful gift”].”**

So now listen very carefully for this is important. Paul’s choice of the word “blessing” (EULOGIA) in 2 Corinthians 9:5 to describe the collection reflects his earlier argument in 2 Corinthians 8:6-9 that the Corinthians’ giving is to be a response to God’s grace in their lives.

This is what the two chapters, chapters 8-9, are all about. They are all about grace giving, or in other words, giving that flows from God’s grace, grace that has been poured out and continues to be poured out.

And I will begin with a question. Based on what we learned from 2 Corinthians 9:5, how should we understand those who are giving sparingly and those who are sowing bountifully in 2 Corinthians 9:6?

Based on the immediate context, those giving “sparingly” in 2 Corinthians 9:6 are not necessarily giving a little bit of money, rather they are not giving in response to God’s grace or as an expression of God’s grace.

Based on the immediate context, those giving “bountifully” in 2 Corinthians 9:6 are not necessarily giving a whole of money, but what they do give will in fact be flowing from God’s grace. And what can those who are giving in

response to God's grace and as an expression of God's grace expect based on the proverbial statement by Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:6?

Those who give in response to God's grace and as an expression of God's grace can expect to reap a harvest of grace. Hallelujah!

So who is the giver that God loves? The giver that God loves is the bountiful giver, or in other words the giver who in response to His grace and from His grace give to others in the time of their need. And what can this kind of giver expect from God? A harvest of grace!

So let me ask you this question. If we are believers, and not just believers but Spirit filled believers, would this promise be an encouragement for us to give generously and cheerfully? Absolutely! And this leads us to the second characteristic of the giver whom God loves or approves. So, what is this second characteristic?

The giver that God approves or loves is not only characterized by bountiful giving but also by cheerful giving (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 9:7** and see if this is not so. **“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”** These words by Paul are the logical conclusion of what he has shared with us in **2 Corinthians 9:6** about sowing and reaping.

So, are we a bountiful and cheerful giver? If we are, we are in a very special place. It is hard to imagine a more precious promise than to be the personal object of God's love. All the world's acclaim, honor, and rewards given to all philanthropists put together does not come close to this privilege of being loved by God. Yet that is what He promises the cheerful giver. God loves the world in a general sense (John 3:16), but He has a deeper, more wonderful love for His own (John 13:1; 1 John 4:16) and a special love for each one of His who gives cheerfully in response to His grace and from His grace rather than from grudgingly or under compulsion.

May we by the grace of God be bountiful and cheerful givers to the praise of His glory.

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