

A Thankful Heart

2 Cor. 9:6-15

Series: "A Thankful Heart"

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Intro. – 2 Cor. 9:6-15

This is without a doubt my most favorite time of the year. My family will tell you...because I repeat it often to them that this time starting with Thanksgiving and going through Christmas – I just LOVE it!

I love the traditions...I love the food...I love the fact that it typically gets a little colder – how about this Houston weather lately! I just love it and I am sure you do as well.

We've already got Christmas up at our house and as you can see, it is up here at the church. *The Potter's Wheel* helps us with our decorations and it is looking awesome!

Speaking of traditions, I want to make sure you come back this evening for what I hope is becoming a tradition for us here at Champion Forest and that is our annual Christmas Tree Lighting on the Lawn. It starts at 6:00 and will be a fun couple of hours with plenty to do and eat for the whole family.

This officially kicks off the Christmas season here and then we are on to Christmas Spectacular and if you have not gotten your tickets, go online and secure them today or to our ticket counter in our commons. We actually added a show this year because of the high demand and I think the most seats available are on the Tuesday night that it starts.

You know as a reminder on the Christmas Spectacular this is an outreach event for us. We put this on because we want to celebrate Christmas of course, but the main reason we do this is to share the true meaning of Christmas and the hope of the gospel with so many who will be here who are not Christians.

They see the story...they hear the story...I have an opportunity at the end to clearly articulate the good news of Christmas and we give people an opportunity to respond right then and there, and we have seen hundreds come to know Christ through the Spectacular every year.

So, don't just come and see it for yourself. Buy a ticket for a friend or co-worker that doesn't know Christ. Pray. We do a couple of the shows in Spanish as well as the dress rehearsal for our special friends' ministry and others – we are asking God to move in a BIG way this year and we are SO thankful for your prayers and support.

And speaking of being thankful that's what the message is about today. We are NOT just going to jump to Christmas and skip Thanksgiving!

I'm calling the sermon today: **A Thankful Heart**

2 Cor. 9:6-15 – “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰ 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 every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”

Now, I mentioned last week the importance of knowing context when you read a passage of scripture. And if there was one word to describe the mood or motivation that was driving Paul to write this to the church in Corinth, it would be the word, thankful.

Allow me to explain. Paul was in debt to the church in Jerusalem. If you recall, this was the church that affirmed God's call on his life! It's the church that sent, supported, and endorsed his missionary goal of taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul loved this “mother church” if you will...it had a soft place in his heart and he ALWAYS wanted to give back to it. Hear this: His thankfulness...his gratitude...ALWAYS led to a giving heart.

I should put that in bold for the screen: **Gratitude leads to giving**

To say it another way, a grateful heart leads to giving hands – it's thanksgiving!

When Paul heard there was a famine coming to Jerusalem (Acts 11) – he was doing what he could do to raise funds and send them back to help this church. Sometimes it was just his Christian commitment to help the poor (1 Cor. 16, Gal. 2) that led to him trying to do everything in his power to help these believers in Jerusalem.

Remember, the early followers of Jesus especially in the city of Jerusalem – that was ground zero for being disowned from your family...following Jesus could cost you your job...your livelihood...

So, because Paul's gratitude was so great toward this church in Jerusalem, look at what he did on his third missionary journey.

He collects an offering from all of the churches he visits to send BACK to Jerusalem. It's a thanksgiving offering that is meant to help meet the needs of the poor in Jerusalem.

He writes about this offering in:

Romans 15:25-27 – “At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia (these are the churches of Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica) and Achaia (Corinthian Church – ALL gentile churches mind you!) have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.”

So, in this passage you see sort of the heart behind why Paul is doing what he is doing! He says, to the Gentile churches – believers in Corinth, “You owe the believers in Jerusalem! They sent me...supported me...I in turn ministered to you...helped lead you to Christ...helped grow you, disciple those who are leading you...IF you are thankful, then give to help meet their needs!”

Gratitude leads to giving

Now, here's what's cool about Paul. He mentions this offering in his first letter to the church in Corinth and listen to HOW he tells them to give.

We see the WHY – it's gratitude...it's THANKS-giving! They are to give because if it wasn't for the church in Jerusalem, Paul might not have ever made it to them with the gospel!

This is where the church was birthed...this is where it all started! Gratitude...a thankful heart is the birthplace of giving.

Illus. Traveling through Hope, AR – see a sign, the “birthplace of President Bill Clinton” – well, gratitude...a thankful heart is the birthplace of giving.

But this offering...listen to how Paul says it should be given...this is really good and may help us as it relates to our giving today.

1 Cor. 16:1-3 – “Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”

Do you see the plan? On the first day of every week, put something aside...store it up...then give it.

In other words, our plan in giving should be to **Give Systematically**.

We should be giving on a regular basis and in a systematic way.

Paul then follows up this first letter to the Corinthians with his second letter and in it, he gives a bit more detail concerning a plan to give.

Look with me at **2 Cor. 9:6** – **“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**

The point is in our plan to give, we need to make sure we: **Give Generously**.

This is known in the scriptures as the “Law of the Harvest”. And the “Law of the Harvest” states three things:

1. You reap what you sow (plant corn, get corn)
2. You reap more than you sow (plant a seed, gather a bushel)
3. You reap after you sow (take time, work, patience)

Illus. c/f – Gal. 6:7-9 – flesh and spirit

As it relates to our giving, Paul says if you sow sparingly...meaning if you give little...if you are tight-fisted...you will reap little. On the other hand, if you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully.

The more gratitude that is in your heart, the greater your giving will be...and I’m not talking about amount...I’m talking about the willingness to give...the desire to give! This leads to the next point.

Not only should we plan to give systematically and generously, but we should also: **Give Willingly**.

2 Cor. 9:5, 7a – **“So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction...Each one must give as he has decided in his heart (willingly part), not reluctantly or under compulsion...”**

So, within our strategy of planning to give...we are to give systematically, generously, willingly...and then finally, we are also to: **Give Cheerfully**.

2 Cor. 9:7b – **“...for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

You might have heard this is where we get our word, “hilarious” from - God loves a hilarious giver. It means he loves in the words of commentator, Warren Wiersbe a “glad giver” – NOT a “sad giver” who gives grudgingly...or a “mad giver” who feels the need to give out of duty.

This offering Paul was giving – it was motivated out of a thankful, grateful heart...and he wanted the people he was taking the offering from to give systematically, generously, willingly, and cheerfully.

Now, I want to stop right here and ask a question and then make a point. Here's the question: Does this describe you?

- Are you giving to meet needs in a systematic way? Do you have a plan or is it just spur of the moment? Is it just when asked? When moved?
- Are you giving in a generous way? Is it like a farmer sowing seed – casting seed as far and as wide as possible or is it just one small seed at a time?
- Are you giving willing? Is this something you want to do or do you just feel a duty to do it? Gotta tip God because if I don't, then he may hold out on me?
- Are you giving in a cheerful way? Like, “let's do this, God – meet needs that I may not even be aware of until eternity. I'm going to stretch here even when it doesn't make sense. God, will provide for me. I'll trust him!

THIS is the type of giving God approves of...and here is the point I want to make: When it comes to giving, notice, NOTHING is said about the amount!

Now, I believe in the principle of the tithe (systematic)...and I could make an argument for it both biblically and historically in the Christian church, and I'll for sure preach a sermon on it sometime...maybe even a little bit today as we close.

But, here is what I want you to notice when it comes to giving. Instead of asking, “How much should I give? What's the percentage? What's the amount?”

As it relates to the context of this passage of scripture today, I'd encourage us to shift from a focus on the amount that we GIVE (which is typically where our mind goes) to a focus on the amount of gratitude we have in our heart.

What Paul is seeming to live out and teach here is that the level of gratitude IN our heart (toward God first and foremost for who he is and what he has done) will be reflected IN the amount we give to help others...to advance the Kingdom.

In other words, little gratitude will lead to little giving. Paul rallied churches to give as much as they could because he had so much gratitude in his heart!

Paul also knew that their level of giving – follow the thought – the level of giving which was directly related to the level of gratitude reflected their spiritual health and maturity.

One who doesn't have an attitude of gratitude...one who doesn't have a thankful heart, is missing it spiritually.

One who can't give in the way Paul commands doesn't truly appreciate or understand (2 Cor. 9:15) – the “inexpressible gift of Christ”.

Gratitude leads to giving

A grateful heart leads to giving hands. A thankful heart leads to thanks-GIVING.

Now, Paul in this passage while motivated by gratitude and thanksgiving share three benefits of our giving. He's going to share with the church in Corinth that their giving does.

1. Our giving blesses God

Giving is an act of worship and as we have seen is an expression of gratitude toward God. It's also an act of trust.

2 Cor. 9:8 – “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

See, at the end of the day, people who are tight-fisted when it comes to giving, can't say this! They can't say, “God is able and sufficient in all things at all times” because they have never trusted God enough in their giving to prove it!

What pleases God about our giving...again, it's NOT the amount!
The amount of our gift is a reflection of the amount of gratitude in our heart!

What pleases the Lord is that we trust him enough to say, “Yes, I'm going to give to meet that need, to help that person, to fund that ministry because God, you have been so incredibly good to me and I'm just so thankful that as a way to express my gratitude I will give and trust you, Lord to meet their needs and my needs!”

This is the kind of giving God desires him and when he sees it, it blesses him! He says, “he loves a cheerful giver”.

And btw – **2 Cor. 9:9 – “As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”**

That's a direct quote from Psalm 112 and the context is of a righteous man who fears the Lord...and a righteous man who fears the Lord – he distributes...i.e. he gives freely!

Giving is a sign that you have trusted the Lord and that you ARE trusting the Lord...and speaking of blessing the Lord. Look at what happens when a person gives.

2 Cor. 9:10-11 – “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. (God WILL take care of you! We’ll outline this more in just a moment)¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”

It's a cycle! God provides and meets our needs (v. 10). We in turn cheerfully give to others and allow God to use us to meet other's needs, generous in every way (v. 11). And God is blessed by it...thanksgiving to God by us and people is a result!

And the cycle should repeat itself! We give and we get the blessing...those that we give to have their needs met...and in return God gets the glory and thanksgiving that is due his name.

So, our giving blesses God. Secondly:

2. Our giving blesses others

2 Cor. 9:12-14 – “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 flowing 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.”

Just look at this! When we give, it's supplying the needs of the saints!

Can I just make a case for you regarding this local church? I kind of feel like Paul today and want to urge you (he was pleading for an offering in Jerusalem) I'm pleading for an offering in Spring!

This local church is the place where you are being spiritually nourished and discipled and invested in. This is the place where you are getting to see God move and lives changed. This is the place that has served your family and perhaps where you are experiencing community. It's a place where your marriage has been strengthened and provided you a spiritual family that has been with you while sick or going through the loss of loved one

I want that generosity to provoke giving and I want you to know that as you give needs are being supplied (some that you aren't even aware of!) and your giving is blessing OTHERS.

- I could talk about the ministry that takes place IN these facilities (all of the programming and ministries) ...
- I could talk about the churches we are planting and the missions' organizations that we support OUTSIDE these facilities...
- I could talk about the dreams and visions we have of reaching MORE people in Northwest Houston through our North Klein campus and prayerfully more campuses to come and MORE people through the avenue of media and technology...

But all that we are doing and all that we want to do? How does it happen? Through your giving! And from this scripture we see our giving blesses God...it blesses others...and then third and finally:

3. Our giving blesses us

2 Cor. 9:6, 8, 10-11 – “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully...And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work...

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.”

When we give, God promises to turn back the blessing on us...this is the law of the harvest! You ALWAYS reap what you sow, MORE than you sow and AFTER you sow!

You see this promise throughout scripture...I could read verse after verse:

Prov. 3:9-10 – “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

Mal. 3:10 – “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”

Luke 6:38 – “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

We can NEVER out-give God. And when we give, God always returns the blessing on us. ALWAYS.

And he will return that blessing and give not just materially speaking. But he will bless you by giving you more opportunities to grow, to leverage your influence for him...he will give you added peace...more joy...and come through in ways you could never ask, think or imagine.

The blessing we get when we give is (2 Cor. 9:14) people pray for us...and more and more thanksgiving (v. 12) overflows to God.

Gratitude leads to giving

? – Do you have a thankful heart?

If you don't you need to find a quiet place this week and reflect on (v. 15) – the inexpressible gift of Christ...because gratitude leads to giving. A grateful heart will lead to giving hands.

We want to help jump start thanksgiving by taking the Lord's Supper. The whole point of taking this supper is to remind ourselves of the price Jesus paid...to remember the sacrifice of Jesus and to be grateful...to be thankful.

And so, here's what we are going to do. (explain supper and pray).

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.