

“A Cheerful Giver” 2 Corinthians 9

Shall we open our bibles to 2 Corinthians, chapter 9. Well tonight I thought we would have communion, and there is only fifteen verses in Chapter 9. And usually on Sunday night we go through the bible a couple of chapters and even though they're long chapters we want to move on. We started in Genesis, we're up to 2 Corinthians and we want to get down to Revelations and then start all over again. But tonight, we're going to take just this one chapter. It really ties in with chapter 8 because chapter 8 and 9 is Paul the Apostle speaking to the church of Corinth about one of the most important areas of their life.

Though they were a gifted church and though they had tremendous spiritual insights and had the gift of knowledge and prophesy as we saw according to 1 Corinthians 13, **“though you an speak in tongues and have the revelations and all the things that go with it and have not loved you are nothing”**.

And so in Chapter 12 and Chapter 14 in 1 Corinthians, it mentions all the different gifts, the gift of helps and the gift of discernment, all the different gifts. But even though this was a dynamic church in the realm of the Spirit, it was also one of the most carnal churches around. They would not deal with sin and therefore, you remember they allowed that one man to be living with a stepmother and they would not deal with it, in fact they were puffed up because they were ignorant of the things of God. Paul said, your “puffed up”, you need to deal with this issue don't let sin within the camp.

And then they had schisms, you remember in chapter 3 there in 1 Corinthians, some say I'm of Paul, some say I am of Apollos and there was schisms going on

within the body of Christ. And all the way through they had difficult times in the realm of just real maturity. Well they made a commitment to Paul. It was a commitment here in chapters 8 and 9 that a year previous that they would give. And they made a certain commitment to Paul and they set the example for all the other brethren to follow.

It says they were "forward". In other words, they came up with the idea to give money to the church in Jerusalem that was under tremendous persecution. And Paul had waited. He had gathered money from all the different churches. And so he writes now concerning their commitment, and he kind of really puts it to them. He says, you made a commitment and I boasted about what you did and I was thrilled to death, but after a year I'm beginning to lose patience. You need to begin to live what you said. And so I told you this morning that if you came back I was going to teach you a little bit on the importance of giving. Not that you have to give tonight nor am I trying to get anything, but I do believe that if you're going to be successful in business, or you're going to be successful in your marriage or in your single life, and be able to have things in your life, you need to understand the principles of God.

If you rob God, then you're going to find that the money just simply has holes in the pocket. It's going to go right through you. But if you learn to invest into the Kingdom of God, not only your time, your talent, your finances and everything, and take God at His word then I believe that He'll do things in your life far beyond what you could ever do for yourself. Now do I understand it? Not at all. It doesn't make sense when you give away, you're going to get more. But the bible says if you seek to hang on to it, you are going to lose it. If you seek to lose it, you get to keep it.

And so we look at the value of our life, and God is saying there is a whole other Kingdom. There is a whole other value system. And God is looking for the development of your faith to stretch you far beyond your human capacity. And one of the problems in the realm of the Spirit, in the gifts of the Spirit is because you don't understand how that gift of tongues works. You have to kind of say that it is not for today. But every gift is for today. God desires that we would be able to enjoy all the gifts, and some of them are just totally by faith. The gift of faith is that ability to believe that God can do the impossible. The gift of administration is being able to run a church without everyone killing you. I mean there are tremendous gifts that are in the realm of the Spirit. And when you get into your finances, into the stewardship of your life, believe it or not, the bible spends one quarter of the bible speaking about stewardship. And the reason why is when you go in debt, and when you become burdened financially your Christian walk and the joy of your heart is overwhelmed. And God desires that you would be free; that you would be able to live and move and have a wonderful time and have a light touch upon this world so God could lead you, and God could guide you, not that you would be so tackled down that you now for the rest of your life are in bondage.

And so tonight as we look at this Chapter 19, it becomes really a chapter 8 and 9 that has to deal with that area of selfishness. Now if you were here this morning, we spoke on selfishness so we're not going to dwell too much on that. But the best way to overcome a selfish life is to be a giver. When you have a difficult time extending the love of God, the best thing for you to do is to begin to love the body of Christ. It's said, you remember, of Job, that when he prayed for his friends, then God turned the captivity. So God brings you to a point, that you have to come outside of yourself, and here is the key word, "Paul said, we were pressed down beyond measure". And had the sentence of death in ourselves. And here is the key "that we would not trust in our self". So God

uses things in our life to bring us to the end of our self that we would have to trust God with all of our hearts.

So God is going to strengthen your faith. God is going to strengthen your relationships. God is going to try your faith, and God is going to purify your life because He loves you. And whom the Lord loveth, He chastens and one of the areas that God wants to get a hold of, of course, is that area of our life in stewardship. So we find very simply, he speaks about this in just a wonderful way.

Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, as I mentioned, he was going to swing by Corinth and begin to pick up what they said that they were going to do. He had taken an offering from all the other churches and, you remember, the church of Macedonia was just an outstanding church. They said concerning Paul, that they gave themselves first to the Lord then they gave themselves to Paul, and that is really a great key. They gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave themselves to each other. We often give ourselves to each other and then try to find the Lord. If we could just look to the Lord, God would do the rest.

And so Paul now is seeking to establish a set of rules within their life, and they were witnessing and they were to be a witness in a wonderful way. Macedonia, they were single, they could give at any time, said that in their poverty they gave. That's the key about giving. It doesn't make a difference if you have a lot or a little. If God has made you a giver, then God will use you to give in a very powerful way.

My mom was a real blessing. Of all the things she did for me personally, is she taught me how to give. She was always giving things away. It drove us crazy. She would give dinners away. She would give food away. She would give tuna

away, and I mean she was always feeding people. She would take them milk and get it out and give it to somebody else, and I use to get so upset. She would even gave away one time the turkey on a Thanksgiving to a neighbor who didn't have anything. She is even now at 75-years-old taking care of a woman, who has cancer, and taking care of other people and driving them around. She has that giving spirit. I've watched how God has always taken care of her. And I believe that every one of us as a Christian needs to learn to be gracious within our life.

And so the true motive of giving is to be consecrated in that work. And he said in 2 Corinthians 8:9, **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty he might become rich"**. And so that is the key or the pattern that we have to follow. He said once again in 2 Corinthians 8:9, **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor."** So Christ said that we are to be a servant. He said, you remember, He came not to be ministered to, but He came to minister. He also said, according to Paul, **that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.** (Acts 20:35) And so the servant attitude of life; and once again the joy of giving to others.

Just a couple of things before we jump into the passage. In Philippians 2:3, you might want to turn there before we jump into 2 Corinthians. But in Philippians 2:3, I want to just share with you a few moments on what it is to be a servant of the Lord. It says here in Philippians 2:3, **"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory (which means selfishness), but in the lowliness of your mind let each esteem others better than themselves"**. So the criteria of the **grandiose** what we call the **grandiose** of Christ humbling Himself in coming down to earth. The thing that He did was He put away the robe of

righteousness and there He came. He humbled Himself, became obedient unto God. Took on Him the form of a servant was made in the likeness of man, and He learned obedience through those things that He suffered. And so He came down to earth and we find very simply, that He looked upon the things of others. He saw people with withered hands, He saw people that were going through difficult times. He would never let the hungry go away without feeding them. He was compassionate. He was always looking at things of others.

Our society, we look at our bellybuttons. All we can see is ourselves. We look in the mirror, and some of you comb your hair, some of us just kind of look and wish we had hair. But we spend way too much time thinking about ourselves. The bible says we are to meditate upon the Lord, and we are to give our lives one to another. In another translation of Philippians 2:3, **"Don't be selfish, don't live to make a good impression on others, be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't look only after your own affairs but be interested in others too and what they are doing"**. In other words, pay attention. Get down on your hands and knees and look into your child's eyes, see what color they have, see the freckles within them.

And then another translation, **"Don't do anything from selfish motives or from cheap desires to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourself, and look out for one another's interest not just for your own"**.

So Jesus Christ was extremely concerned about that attitude. And then you remember, in Philippians 2:5, he goes right into **"Let his mind be in you**, what mind? The mind that Christ had of being a servant. He said in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5:15, **"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for their sins"**.

So no matter where you go in the bible, it talks about you being a giver; that you give your life, that you give your substance, and that you are looking to take care of each other. And the important thing is that if you see your brother have a need and shut up your bowels of compassion how dwelleth the love of God in you. So Paul is seeking to bring us together as a family. And really a true servant is one who gives, one who forgives, and one who forgets.

Enough of that, now let's dive in and see what we have in chapter 8, the Grace of Giving, and chapter 9, Christian Giving. So he mentions giving will provoke others in verses 1-5. **"For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is no need for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many"**.

Now Achaia is south of Greece and it included that area of Athens and Corinth, and then Macedonia would be north of Greece and that would deal with Philippi and Macedonia. Philippi was one of the favorite churches of Paul. They were a giving church, and there in Macedonia, they really gave out of their necessity. In other words they gave to the very nth degree. It says in 2 Corinthians 8:2, **"How that in a great trial of affliction the Macedonians, abundant of their joy and their deep poverty, abounded in the riches of their liberality"**. In other words, even when they were poor they were willing to give. (2 Corinthians, 8:2). Then in 2 Corinthians 8:5, **"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God"**. So Paul is now saying, "Guys, I want you to remember what the Macedonians did". Even when they were broke, they kept their commitment. Even when they were going through difficult times and we begged them not to give us anything, they said, "Listen, Paul, you need to take this because we have the ability to give something". And Paul was looking for the responsibility of the

believer's life. That when I make a commitment that I'm faithful to follow through with it. And here Paul is declaring very simply that God desires to do that work. And so he says in verse 2, **"Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready"**. In other words, get ready I'm coming, and I like this because he was saying don't do anything out of the last moment of your life. In other words, don't live by the impulse of your life. There are certain things that you want to be responsible, put together, think through and this is what he's saying.

When Elijah built the altar, it said he laid the sticks in order. The word "order" in the Hebrew means methodically to think things through to lay things out. And so in verse 3, get ready. **"Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting"**. So all he's saying in the Kings James way is you made a commitment, we're going to be coming down with the brothers from Macedonia, and if we come down and you have not gathered together the money, you're going to be embarrassed. So we don't want to embarrass you, so get organized, be prepared and get your life together.

Now that is a good word for our lives. Strong, but good. Christians we ought to be together. We ought to be prepared. The word "prudence" means to think ahead, plan things together. And it talks about when you give the first day of the week, to think it through, have it ready, don't be fumbling around and doing things at the very last minute. So he says, **"Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared"**. And then in verse 5, **"Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, (there in Corinth) that they would go before you, and make up beforehand your bounty, (or the offering) whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, (or the generosity) and not as of**

coveting". So we want you to be prepared. We're sending these guys ahead; we want to make the collection. So when we come, we don't have to make an embarrassing thing to you.

And so we find that these Corinthians a year before made a commitment. Because of that commitment, others were inspired to give, but the Corinthians didn't follow through, and the other ones did. So in verses 1-5, sometimes giving can provoke others to be a giver. Then in verse 6-11, we have the giving that will bless people. **"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully"**. Now all it's saying is that if you give a little, you're going to get a little back. If you give a lot, you're going to get a lot back.

And people have said constantly in my life, "well, do I tithe off my gross or do I tithe off the net?" Now that is a very silly question, because the question is, Do you want to be blessed off the net or do you want to be blessed off the gross?" What the real issue is, how much faith do I have to make a step of faith? Well definitely it is much easier off the net, Amen. But there's really no difference when you think about it. If I give ten cents on a dollar, a dollar and ten or ten dollars or a hundred, if I learned the lesson when I get the million, I will be able to give away \$100,000, you know. But if I can't give a penny to the dime or a dollar to the ten, when I get the big stuff, I'll never do it. So there is a principle. That's why I believe that with your children if you would teach them how to be givers that when they give and when they work they set a portion aside, you will never have to lend them money.

Now listen to me, parents, I taught my children how to give. And every time they work, they put money aside, like it or not, they had to learn this lesson in our home. Now today, I told my son it's time for you to buy me a house, but I

don't have to give him any money. He is blessed. My daughter, she's blessed, so I've not been able to have to give them a penny for about five years. That's a wonderful thing. Some of you have kids 60-years-old still borrowing money from you. So learn the lesson really quick, and teach them how to give because you cannot out give what? God. You can never out give God in your life. So once again, if you are going to sow sparingly, you're going to reap. In other words, if you are going to throw the seed, just a few bits of seed, then you're going to get just a little bit of crop. If you really throw the seed, you're going to get a huge, huge crop.

Now I want to give you a couple, three or four verses that you need to write down and try to remember. These are, I think, the most important of all the things on tithing. And I will read them to you, and you can jot them down. In Proverbs 3:9-10, **"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thy increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."** Now the commandment that God says is to honor the Lord. So we're talking tonight about honoring God with the very thing that He's given to us. So you would say that if you're not giving to God, you're not honoring God. In fact, you're robbing God. And Haggai says you're going to have holes in your pocket. So we need to understand the eternal perspective. God say's, it's His to begin with. He's letting you work and letting you give Him a portion that you might keep the rest. And so He says, **"honor the Lord with thy substance, with the first fruits of thy increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,** in other words you are always going to have; **and thy presses shall burst out with new wine"**. In other words you're going to be bursting at the seams in your life.

In Proverbs 11:24-26, **"There is he that scattereth, and yet increases; and there is that withholdeth more than is met, but it tendeth to poverty"**. Do

you hear that? **“There is he that scattereth, and yet increases; and there is that withholdeth more than is met, but it tendeth to poverty”.** **“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall water also himself”.** **“He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it”.** (Proverbs 11:24)

So he is talking about the importance of giving. And if you don't give, then things are going to fall apart within your life. You are not going to understand, you are going to allow selfishness to begin to dominate your life. And living in selfishness, you make bad decisions in your life. In Proverbs 22:9, **“He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor”.** In other words with a vision to give, God will pour a world through your heart. When you have a heart to give, when you want to help people, then God will pour a whole world through your life to minister.

My heart is to reach the kids, and God is letting us do it through this church. So we're building a sanctuary for our children; 40,000 square feet we want to give to our kids. I know that blesses God. I know that God is thrilled about His kids having a place to go. And I want the children to have what we have. I want the kids to see what we have; I want them to know the God that's able to provide for us is able to provide for them. So it's more than just a building to me. It's our way of saying to these kids that God is alive and He cares about kids.

And so we rally around this thing because of the vision, and with a vision the people will never perish. In Luke 6:38, which is one of the all time favorites, I believe, **“Give, and it shall be given to you: he says, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, run over, shall men give into your bosom.”** Now let me just break that up as a teacher. He says number one: give to the Lord, good measure, He's going to press it down. He is going to shake it, put it in a blender and shake it good. He's going to back over it with a

back hoe and run over it, and he's going to once again shall man give to your bosom, **"For, with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you "**. So if you give a penny, and God takes it and shakes it and multiplies it, He'll give it back to you ten times or a hundred times. Whatever you give God, He is going to give back to you. So it has nothing to do with your money. It has everything to do with the ability of you trusting God in faith.

And then in Malachi (you need to listen; the next two you need to put your seatbelts on because they're going to really hurt) and it's going to answer a lot of questions in your life. In Malachi 3:8-11, **"Will a man rob God?** This is the only place in the bible that God says prove Me. So God is standing saying you prove Me today and this is the challenge He is saying, **"Will a man rob God?** We haven't robbed you. **Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.** So the condition you are in when you rob God, you're going to pay the price. **"Bring ye in the tithes into the storehouse (where you're fed), that there may be meat in mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you a window of heaven, and pour a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."**

So God says, you prove Me, you bring it into the house, and I will open a window and I will pour a blessing upon you that you will not be able to contain. **"And I will rebuke the one who destroys for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; neither shall your vine cast forth her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."** And what He's saying is the moment I begin to give God what is His, all of a sudden the things that are falling apart around me stop falling apart. The very things that I robbed God often times God has to deal in my life. The moment I begin to do

what God tells me to and live by faith then things have a way of working themselves out. **"If ye seek ye first the Kingdom of God, all these things shall be added"**. (Matthew 6:33)

And here he says in Haggai, the last one that you really need to hang on to, in Chapter 1:9, **"Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little;** Doesn't that sound like us? Boy, we want to be millionaires, but you have little. **And when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it, why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because my house that is wasted, ye ran every man unto his own house.** In other words, they were building their own house not worried about the house of God. **Therefore the heaven opened over you is stayed from the rain,** (there's no rain) **and the earth is stayed from the fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labors of their hands"**. And then he goes on to say, **"And I have made holes in your pocket that the money goes through"**. (Haggai 1:9-11)

Now all I am saying, and we are not going to take a offering tonight, so you're cool. All I am saying is that if you're going to be a Christian, you have to be a Christian all the way. So God desires that He would have your mind, your emotion and your will. That you would give God that which He desires. That you would honor God with the very first fruits of the increase. That you would not rob God, so God would be able to open windows and do things in your life.

And I do believe through our ministry, when we gave I think it was a couple three, four or five months ago ten thousand dollars to the Gideon's. The very next day in the offering we got a check for fifty thousand dollars. Every time we,

as a church, have gone out and blessed another community or done something, God has always quadrupled the offering. And so sometimes I say to Wendell, when Wendell says, well how are we going get the building done? Well, give some money away. Because God just is in the business of multiplying and doing the work. Because the moment you grab on to it, you lose it. The moment you hang on to it and say it's mine, God has to blow upon it.

And you were born with your fist clutched when you came out, and it takes a lifetime for you to begin to believe God and trust God. He says in verse 7 **"Every man according as he purpose in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver"**. Here he says here, once again, in 2 Corinthians 8:12, **"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to a man has not, according to that he has"**. In other words, if you're going to give, you have to have a willing mind. In Deuteronomy, he mentions that you have to have a willing heart.

And then again Exodus 35, he says you have to have a willing heart. So here's the criteria: In my heart, I want to give. In my mind I'm convinced I need to give. So I need to sit down, Steve Mays, figure out what I want to do and then I need to be obedient to what God tells me to do. But in my mind if I don't want to give, and in my heart I don't want to give, then don't give. Because if I give with an unwilling heart, and I give with my mind having a major attitude about it, it doesn't go to your account. It's worthless. And God say's unless you can laugh about it, there goes my check, there goes my In and Out, you know, there goes my Starbucks, you know, unless I can do it with that type of a joy, God doesn't want it. Because, you remember, He owns everything and in the streets of heaven the streets are paved with gold and God is not broke.

One of the things I hate about radio is that they are begging as though God was broke and God was in a great need. God isn't broke, but it's the way I give and the attitude I give. So I need to sit down and what I do very simply is right off the top, because I know me, I know that if I wait to the very end, God is going to get left out. Look at your devotional life. God wants the very first thing, when does He get you? Halfway through the day? At night? And then all of a sudden you forget Him. God desires to build a relationship with you and so once again, not grudgingly but cheerfully, and so giving with the free heart, and once again hilariously. **"And God is able to make all grace abound towards you.** (2 Corinthians 9:8) In other words, He's going to give you the grace to do this thing. He's going to have grace abounding towards you.

Always having all sufficiency. In other words, God is going to have the resources to back up what He says. And in all things may abound to every good work. So in this we see the abounding of the work of grace. As it is written: **"He that dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever".**

Notice in verse 9, underline the word righteousness remains forever. **"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower,** now I've never seen this before and this is kind of a real special verse to me tonight, **he that ministereth seed to the sower,** who would that be? The Lord, giving me the ability to send out the seed, **both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your land and righteousness".** So God is able to plant the seed within my heart. God is able to help me to do what is impossible.

To the man with the withered hand, you remember, he said I can't do it, and Jesus said, will you will to obey, and the man said, I will to obey and Jesus healed the man. He just had a will. He couldn't do without a will.

David had a desire. God could build a kingdom with the desire. All God is looking for tonight is a willing heart and a willing mind that God can have authority over your life. But if you keep things away from Him, the things that He wants, and if you leave tonight and say, I don't agree with that pastor, that is fine. But the bible declares very simply, that by the way your body is not your own. You've been bought with a price. And if you're going to say, well I'm giving everything to God, then be careful, because Ananias and Sapphira they were snuffed out. They lied to the Holy Spirit. So it would be better to say to God, God I don't agree with you, I don't want to give you a thing. But remember Quaker Oats. He gave 90% of his money was a multi-billionaire. He made a commitment to God, that he would give 90% and live off the 10%. So God really had a work in that guy's life and give him a lot of money because living on 10% wasn't much. But he gave 90% away and he was a millionaire. So, you can never out give God.

The problem tonight is we don't have faith. People come to me all the time, well Steve, I have all these bills that if I start giving now, I don't have no money to give. Well then keep paying those bills. The moment you sacrifice and give to God, then you're going to have the money to pay the bills. I don't understand that, I don't either. But I just know it works. I just know that you can go to anybody who's not in debt and is good with their money and they all give. And I can take you to everybody that's in all these classes, how to get their lives together, they don't give. When you find someone who gives, God gives back 100 times and that's the challenge.

So don't ever say that I don't have it to give it. It is a step of faith that you are believing this bible more than you do your heart or your mind. It is a step of faith. And so that's why we don't talk about money here at Calvary. We don't even collect it. I think about it, I would like to challenge you, but I can't until I come to this passage, I have to wait another two years to get back here again. So I am going to say everything I can right now big time and no one is going to leave until I get done with this one. You had to wait a long time to hear this. But I'm guilty and Pastor Chuck said he's guilty, because of our fear of you misunderstanding. We don't talk about it and then you go broke. So I need to educate you so you have your priorities together, and you put God first in your devotional life. You put God first in every relationship. You put God first in your financial abilities, and God will overflow your life with His goodness and His grace.

So giving in verse 12, **"For the administration of this service not supplies the wants of the saints**, in other words, as you give here we're able to hire more pastors, able to get the building done, able to do things, able to take care of the church, able to do greater things for the glory of God. **"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but it is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God"**. What he is saying, is that we sent \$5000 into India to build a church. For \$5,000 you can build a church in India. We will be getting a picture pretty soon of that church that we built. I think that's exciting that we're going to minister not only to God, but they're going to be praying for us as a church. So people in India are praying for Calvary Chapel South Bay, and we are helping India, and God begins to put the family together.

So once again administration providing the needs of the church there in Jerusalem. And then **"while he experience of this ministration** (verse 13)

they glorify God for your profession subject unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men". Underline very simply they are glorifying God on your behalf. And so those in India, those churches that we have built, those areas that we have helped, they are praying and giving thanks for what God is doing.

And then in verse 14, **"and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you"**. So when you help somebody, when you give to somebody, when you forgive somebody, when you minister to somebody, they come before God and they say, Lord, thanks for John, thanks for Jill, thanks for bringing that person and now you become an instrument in the very hand of God. Sometimes people talk about me. Well, you know, at least my name gets up to heaven and that is what really counts. But this is a good way because they are overwhelmed of the goodness of God and God has used you.

And then he ends up in verse 15, and I want to end up in a very positive way, in verse 15 he goes on to say, **"Thanks be unto God for the unspeakable gift"**. And he ends up with Jesus Christ. And that really is the greatest gift of all. God gave his only begotten Son. He gave the very best. He gave his only Son. And without the giving of his Son, I wouldn't be here today. And so I, as a human being, turn to my Father and I say, God, thank You for sending Jesus Christ. And so I can glorify God. I honor God. I give God my applaud and thank Him with all my heart of the goodness of God, that He took me out of the pit and put me on that rock. That thankful gift that He gave to me. When I look at this whole thing this is how I put it all together in my mind and you can just listen. But there're eight things, and I am just going to read them and we will be done and have communion. Eight reasons why I want to give tonight even more than I am doing now.

1) Giving will provoke others. We see that in verse 2, **“For I know the forwardness of your mind for which I boast of you to the Macedonia, that are in Achaia was ready a year ago and your zeal has revoked many”**. So by me being faithful, my wife and my children and my grandchildren are going to be givers unto God. And when we’re givers to God, everything is going to be wonderful.

2) Giving to God will bless you in verse 6, **“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”**. In other words, it is going to come back. There are certain things in the laws of God, it’s just going to work.

3) Giving makes grace abound. Giving makes grace abound. Notice in verse 8, **“And God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”**. In other words, you’re going to be happy. You’re going to be graceful. You’re going to see the grace of God. You’re going to see the mercy of God because you’re trusting God. You’re doing what God tells you to do and God is going to honor you.

4) In verse 9, Giving provides strength; giving provides strength, **“As it is written, he has dispersed abroad; he has given to the poor; now check this out, his righteousness remaineth forever”**. In other, words as you are giving, your righteousness is going to get stronger and stronger and stronger. Why? Because you’re giving money? No. Because you’re living by faith. Get away from the money, understand that it has to do with faith. Not what these

guys say on television, but it's faith. As you live by faith, you live according to God's word. God is going to honor you in a wonderful way.

5) Verse 10, Giving produces great fruit. It says in verse 10, **"Now he that ministers seed to the sower both ministers bread for your food, and multiplies your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness"**. You're going to start growing. God is going to increase you.

6) It's going to meet other people's needs. In verse 12, **"For the administration of this service not only supplies the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God"**. In other words, you're going to be taking care of the house of God. Taking care of the people around you. Thanking God for the work He's done in and through your life.

7) Verse 13, Giving always glorifies God. **"Whiles by experience of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men"**. In other words, it will always bring glory to God.

And lastly number 8, Giving brings prayers. I like this. **"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God"**. In other words, you're going to be talked about in heaven. I can't think of any other way to live your life, but to be a giver. You have a choice tonight. It's a very simple choice. Either you're going to be a getter, or you are going to be a giver. Let me put another way, you can either be like the dead sea receiving but you're not going to be able to live, because you need to have an outlet. You need to refresh. You need to restore. You need to rebuild.

So God has given to you a vehicle, your life, your hands, your mind, your heart, your billfold, your talent, your time and God is looking to pour His world through that into a dying world around you. And all you need to do is wake up in the morning and say, God I'm willing to be a blessing to somebody's life. But it means, God, I have got to quit feeling sorry for myself, and quit whining. And I have to grow up and realize that we are running out of time. And Father, forgive me, for my selfish attitude and make me one who is going to make a difference in this world in which we live in. Amen

Closing Prayer: Father, we thank You. We thank You, Lord, for the freedom that Paul had to exhort this church. That they would make a commitment to their life to serve you with all of their hearts. They would not hold back one area of their life. It seems like when we become so selfish that God, that we begin to call the shots in our lives, relationships fall apart. Business falls apart. Everything falls apart, and we don't understand it. But, Lord, we really do. When we dishonor You, when we rob You, when we take that which belongs to You, and we make decisions with it that's not pleasing to You. God, You even gave the analogy that when they went across the Jordan, they were not to touch Jericho, it belonged to God. It was to be that first sacrifice of their life. God, You gave them homes that they did not have to build. Vineyards they did not have to plant. You gave them everything in Canaan for their enjoyment, but Jericho was the first fruit of their victory. And when Achan touched it and he defiled what You said, Lord, he fell into major trouble and lost his family, because he took his own will into his own hands. May we listen to Your word, may we be good stewards of that which You've given to us. Lord, would You teach us how to be simple within our life? Father, as You pour more through our life, may we help those who have less needs. And we will thank You in Jesus name. Amen