



*“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,” II Corinthians 9:15.*

## **Diligent Service: Financial**

**Aim:** To meditate upon the deeper meaning of giving. For instance, as the Lord’s Supper portrays His death, giving portrays His act—and the Father’s act.

**Covenant:** We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit . . . to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

Text: II Corinthians 9:6-15.

INTRODUCITON—according to Jesus the supreme beatitude is: *“It is more blessed to give than to receive,”* Acts 20:35. Last Sunday’s lesson showed the importance of sustaining the work and truth of the New Testament church. This is why each person who unites with a Baptist church enters into covenant with his brethren “to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.” The most consistent and biblical method of financial stewardship is the giving of tithes and offerings. This seems to be the finest, fairest, and most prosperous method of financial stewardship yet suggested. The Christian should delight to give his tithes and offerings to the Lord through the church because: (1) the Father’s example is to give in expression of love; (2) it demonstrates a selfless Christian spirit; (3) it obeys plain Bible instruction; (4) it is conducive to faithful stewardship in every area of life.

### **I. A Basic Axiom, 9:6.**

Receiving is in proportion to giving. Paul takes an illustration from the

farm to illustrate this spiritual truth. The man who plants five acres of corn will not harvest as much as the man who plants one hundred acres. The man who gives one-twentieth of his income need not expect the blessings of the Lord as does the man who gives one-tenth! The principle is the same. Observe that the Lord does not make the giving of any certain portion of income imperative. He leaves the amount to the choice of the individual. However, he warns that small giving will result in small receiving! Selfless giving will promote the prosperity of the giver, Luke 6:88: Observe: "*There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty,*" Proverbs 11:24. Each person should determine the quality of his stewardship fully aware of the consequences of his choice! God values our giving according to what is left after we have given!

## **II. A Proper Spirit, 9:7.**

Giving is to be based on a heart-deep purpose. Man should "purpose in his heart" concerning the quality of his financial stewardship. Deliberate choice, free from constraint or the impulse of passion, should determine the method and amount of one's offerings. Compulsion ("high pressure offerings") has no place in the support of the Kingdom work. Regrets should never be felt over offerings contributed to promote that ministry. Reluctance spoils the gift. It loses all its fragrance when the free and joyful spirit is lacking. It is not simply the person who gives whom God loves. It is rather the person who gives with a delight — "the cheerful giver." Mere giving means nothing to God. Unless we feel it an honor and joy to give, God does not accept the offering. The "cheerful" giver is one who finds it a delight to share his blessings with the work which God has given him to do. Covetousness is idolatry, Colossians 3:5. God can never bless the gift (however large) which comes from a man with such a heart. Do you find a delight in giving?

## **III. A Promised Reward, 9:8-11.**

1. The good steward enjoys abounding grace, verse 8a. "God is able to make every gift of His loving-kindness to abound to you." This is the promise to each faithful steward. Giving does not lessen our store, but rather increases it! God is able so to multiply His grace upon the giver that the paradox, "he that scattereth, increaseth," is proven true. To believe this is to believe in the promise, power, and providence of God. Even if there was no

material return from our gifts to God, the enlarging of our spiritual life would be sufficient reward for faithful financial stewardship.

2. The good steward experiences all sufficiency! This “competency in every thing” will make up for luxuries never possessed and qualify for battles yet to be fought. The faithful steward is not likely to fail in any project, as his sufficiency rests upon the grace of God, not upon his own ability.

3. The good steward abounds in good works, verse 8c. Giving is not to be simply to get blessings from God. This spirit is so unworthy it is doubtful if God would honor such a giver. The purpose of God's giving is to qualify the Christian to render greater service. This service will bring other blessings which will qualify to yet more perfect service. Thus the cycle goes. Enriched by God's grace, the believer imparts the Divine bounty to others by deeds of goodness. This is the Divine plan.

4. The good steward produces increasing fruits of righteousness, verses 9-10. A good and charitable deed has abiding significance. The righteous life is much more blessed than the unrighteous. The good man will find God's blessings multiply his efforts until the results is production of increasing righteousness. The means of doing good will be increased as one takes advantages of opportunity to do good. The reward of righteousness is the ability to produce still more righteousness. The more faithful one is as God's steward the more his stewardship will be increased. He that is not faithful in little things need not expect God to trust great things to him.

5. The good steward enjoys a life of bountiful thanksgiving, verse 11. The liberality in financial stewardship brings a two-fold blessing. First, it blesses the hearts of those who are good stewards. Second, it blesses the heart of the teacher who inspires good stewardship. That faithful stewardship in the church which provides money to pay local bills, support educational institutions, and promote missionary service, will be a cause of great joy and gratitude to God. Paul here speaks of the thanksgiving rendered to God because the Corinthians had responded to his challenge to faithful stewardship. Every church can likewise find it so.

#### **IV. A Grand Result, 9:12-14.**

1. The needs of the saints are supplied, verse 12a. The offering under discussion in II Corinthians 9 was being received to relieve the needs of poor brethren in Jerusalem. It followed the principle of Christian love which John recommends, I John 3:17-18. The result of it was that the needs of the needy brethren were supplied! What a blessed consequence. It follows the

agreement of the church Covenant to “contribute cheerfully and regularly to . . . the relief of the poor.” The Bible seems to take for granted that brethren will care for brethren in their distress. In fact, this is part of the expression of pure religion, James 1:27.

2. The hearts of men overflow in thanksgiving to God, verse 12b. Saints look to God for the provision of their needs. When God chooses to use other saints to supply that need, the glory goes to Him. Therefore, the Macedonian offering to the needs of Jerusalem brethren brought thanksgiving to God. This is the way it should always be. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”* Matthew 5:16.

3. The Lord is increasingly glorified, verse 13. Faithful stewardship is evidence by conduct that the steward is a Christian, not in name only, but in deed. The Jerusalem Christians glorified God because the Corinthians were working to the precepts of the Gospel and thus furthering its influence. This is the covenant agreement of Baptists to seek “the spread of the gospel through all nations.” This may be accomplished by personal service and denominational cooperation. Either way it is God who gets the glory when the gospel is obeyed and propagated. The unity of the saints with one another and with God makes service for one become service rendered in behalf of all. Thus God is glorified when men serve one another out of loving dedication to Him.

4. The brethren pray for one another, verse 14. The helpfulness of a Christian brother draws out a fervency of affection on the part of the one who receives help. Love begets love. As one serves another in love he finds himself loved in return. This affection will express itself in fervent prayer for the other's welfare. This prayer is full compensation for the aid given. Charles Hodge has suggested, “The prayers and blessings of the poor are their benefactions to the rich, descending on them as the dew from heaven.” Truly, “he who prays for me enriches me.” This is why Paul so often called upon his brethren to support his ministry in their prayers. Prayer for the brethren in the church unifies it and strengthens it to service.

## **V. A Perfect Example, 9:15.**

This section on the stewardship of giving is closed by a doxology of praise for God's gift. The gift of God is His Son! Jesus is His one great, supreme, all-comprehending gift, which He has given to men. Paul sets out the infinite love and unspeakable gift of God in Christ to us, thereby contrasting our finite affections to it. *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought*

*also to love one another,*” I John 4:11. God's love and gift to us becomes the perfect example which we must imitate.

1. God's gift is the perfect example in motive. John 3:16-17 sets out God's motive in the gift of Jesus. It is that men may be redeemed from sin and made children of God. The Gift is for the sake of men—for their welfare. It is unselfish and unfading in expression and nature. Christians are to serve one another without thought of personal advantage. Christian love is an affection expressed solely in behalf of the person loved. This is the highest affection possible to men.

2. God's gift is the perfect example in value of the gift. David once resolved that he would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing, II Samuel 24:24. Otherwise the thing offered would not be a part of himself. God's gift is of such inestimable worth that all heaven bowed in wonder at the grace which provided it. In view of God's great gift, how can Christians offer only small and cheap gifts to Him? Let a man first give himself to the Lord and he will have little problem about giving his possessions to Him also.

CONCLUSION—He who would be a faithful Christian must be a faithful steward. One's stewardship involves the proper use of time, talents, and treasures, Luke 16:11. The joy of Christian stewardship in finances is: (1) It produces a good conscience toward God; (2) It frees from the sin of covetousness; (3) It provides funds for the Lord's work; (4) It often brings increased capacity to give; (5) It contributes to spiritual growth; (6) It fulfills one's financial obligation to his church; (7) It enables one to influence his household to become good stewards of all of life and its privileges, as will be pointed out in next Sunday's lesson.

Each member should find the delight of financial stewardship through his church. Only thus can he render proper stewardship to God. Only thus can he have a part in “the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations” in a manner which glorifies God. The work of the church is the most important work in the world. The church member has assumed a solemn obligation in becoming a part of that body” *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful,”* I Corinthians 4:2.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is “the supreme beatitude?” Discuss it.
2. Why should Christians give their offerings through their church?
3. Explain II Corinthians 9:6.

4. What does it mean to “purpose in the heart” concerning giving? Does this prohibit proportionate (percentage) giving?
5. What rewards come to the faithful steward?
6. What was the purpose of the offering received in today's lesson?
7. Discuss God's gift of Jesus Christ as the example for our giving.
8. List the reasons for faithful Christian stewardship.
9. What kind of a giver does God love?
10. Have special prayer for the financial program in your church—its support and investment.