

Gift-Giving and the Ultimate Gift 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Introduction

NJFK—receipts versus gifts

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Gift-giving at Christmas time reminds us of the wise men who came from the east to worship the Christ child, but the tradition of giving Christmas gifts as we do now developed in recent centuries. In some ways it harks back to ancient times and the celebration of the winter solstice called Saturnalia, but not exactly.

Many who celebrate Christmas today aren't thinking about the birth of the Lord Jesus at all, some even to the point of banning nativity scenes and substituting Happy Holidays for Merry Christmas. Never mind that Holiday comes from "holy day." Still in a culture like ours Christmas season offers more opportunity to turn attention to Christ than nearly any other time of year.

Sometimes all the gift-giving turns into a fixation on "gift-getting," feeding an affluent society's ever-present desire for more. But what if gift-giving were to express something profoundly Christian? I think that it can.

Gift-Giving and the Ultimate Gift

6 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!

In ancient times and modern times, we give gifts to those we love. We give gifts at times of celebration. We give gifts to those in need.

You recognize that this passage is not about giving gifts at Christmas time, but about giving to meet the needs of others. These verses are part of Paul's appeal to the church in Corinth (a wealthy city) to make good on their commitment to join in giving to the relief effort for believers in Judea who were suffering famine. They were to give as an expression of love to these brothers and sisters in need but they seemed to be lagging behind others who were less wealthy than they (believers in Macedonia).

1. Generosity: God Loves Generous Givers (6-7).
2. Trust: God Supplies Everything We Need (8-11).
3. Gratitude: God Has Given the Ultimate Gift (12-15).

1. Generosity: God Loves Generous Givers (6-7).

⁶ 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.

Giving is like planting. The more you plant the more you harvest. A farmer has only so much seed. If he decides to plant less seed, he is reduces his harvest.

If you are worried you won't have enough for yourself if you give to others, you are actually reducing what you have, not saving it.

As he has decided in his heart—be deliberate in what you give
Not reluctantly—not out of grief
Not under compulsion—don't do it because you have to
Cheerful—word we get hilarious from; it should make us laughing happy to give

Ephesians 4:28

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Christ's parable of the dishonest manager in Luke 16:

Use what's of value only on earth to make friends who will welcome you into heaven.

Luke 16:9

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

The gifts we can give are not just material things. We Christians should be giving our abilities, our time, our insights, our love. Taking whatever God has given us for the good of others and using those gifts that way.

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Romans 12:6a

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:

There are all kinds of opportunities to give in a world like ours, and Jesus takes note of what we do with those opportunities.

Matthew 25:34-40

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did

we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

2. Trust: God Supplies Everything We Need (8-11).

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.

God is the one who gives us whatever we have to give. Giving won't make us run out because God is the one who supplies what we need. Part of what He gives us is for giving.

Seed sown turns into a harvest reaped and bread baked and mouths fed. So our giving multiplies itself into all kinds of benefit not just for those who receive the gifts but for those who give them.

God enriches us SO THAT we can be generous. Don't waste what you have by hoarding it.

Teach your children to give freely. Teach them by your own example and train them to do it themselves. Let them experience the joys giving brings.

Giving to others brings glory to God, too. Because when Christians find their needs met through the generosity of other Christians, they give thanksgiving to God because He was the one who made them generous.

3. Gratitude: God Has Given the Ultimate Gift (12-15).

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!

The gospel is all about God's gift of salvation. We did not earn it. It comes to us by His grace as a free gift.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we give we reflect the generous heart of God toward us. And we build relationships with others as we respond to their needs with generosity.

His gift to us of salvation through Jesus Christ is beyond anything we could ever afford or earn. It is indescribable in value. Beyond what we can fully take in while we are still on this earth. Seemingly too good to be true.

Much of the giving we do as a church family is tied directly or indirectly to the gospel mission of the church to evangelize the world and to live out the gospel. It's amazing what can be done when God's people give faithfully. OT and NT saints right with God were givers. It's still that way.

It's strange for those that are part of a church body to take no personal responsibility for what they receive each week. Thankfully there are few like that. How often those with no skin in the game are the first to complain. Stinginess is not a godly trait.

But let me encourage those of you who are faithful in giving through the church here to make sure your generosity extends to every

part of your life at home and in the community. To see to it that you display the generous love of God in your own generous lifestyle wherever you come across needs. To show joy in giving not just things but your time and your self to others out of love for them and love for God. He has given us the ultimate gift, and that makes us who have received His amazing gift happy to give to others.

Conclusion

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