

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blahely

Lesson #38

COMMENTARY ON: 9:6-10

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

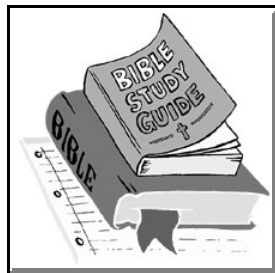
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

THE LOGIC OF SOWING

There is a certain logic in the spiritual concept of sowing. As seen in Christ Jesus, there are some parallels to sowing in this world, but, as we ought to expect, there is much more to be seen in the Spirit. The text before us is a case in point. There is certainly the matter of reaping in direct proportion to what is sown. However, what is sown is seen as a proportion of what is possessed, rather than an amount. Also, in the Spirit's view, the matter of "purposing" enters into sowing. There is also the *attitude* that accompanies the sowing. Unlike sowing in this world, seed can be supernaturally obtained, and even multiplied before it is sown. Those who have no means by which to obtain seed, being "poor," can receive a bountiful supply of it to sow for the Lord. Not only can the **seed** be multiplied beyond measure, but so can the **harvest!** What marvelous advantages we have in Christ Jesus!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 38



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Stand Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **JPS** = Jewish Publication Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD** = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT** = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TNK** = JPS Tanakh (1985), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

LEXICON LEGEND: **FRIEBERG**=Friberg Lexicon, **UBS**=UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA**=Louw-Nida Lexicon, **LIDDELL SCOTT**=Liddell Scott Lexicon, **THAYER**=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

THE LOGIC OF SOWING

“ 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” (2 Cor 9:6-10)

INTRODUCTION

As we embark on this lesson, it is important to establish the necessity of proper motives. This is particularly true when we are speaking of money, or financial resources – the “*unrighteous mammon*.” Speaking of this kind of resource Jesus said, “*And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations*” (Luke 16:9). “*Mammon*” is “*wealth*,”^{NIV} or “*riches*.”^{GENEVA} Jesus does not say to become friendly with the wealth itself. He rather says we are to make friends “*by means*

of”^{NASB} the wealth. **That is, we are use our resources to gain eternal advantages:** i.e. “*So that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*”^{NIV}

The wealth is referred to as “*unrighteous mammon*,” **not** because it was gained dishonestly, as some versions state (“*dishonest wealth*,”^{NRSV} “*wicked mammon*”^{TNT}), **but because it is part of the cursed realm.** Wealth is “*unrighteous*” because it is part of the seen order, and has thus been tainted with sin. It is part of the “*unrighteous*” order – i.e. “*worldly wealth*.”^{NIB} It is part

of what is passing away. As it is written, “*for the fashion of this world passeth away*” (1 Cor 7:31) – that is, the entire worldly order: the earth and everything in it. Riches are therefore said to be “*uncertain*” (1 Tim 6:17) – whether they consist of a meager “*two mites*,” or add up to millions, or even billions. It ought to be obvious that you cannot use something that is **inherently** unrighteous for holy purposes. Worldly wealth is “*unrighteous*” by its association with a world that is passing away. It can, however, be used by holy people for holy purposes, and thereby be sanctified.

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it– by Given O. Blakely

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Add to this scenario the fact that “riches” are, in some sense, “necessary,” and we have a situation that requires special attention – the kind of attention that is produced by faith.

By “necessary,” I mean they are required for temporal necessities in this world. Speaking of this matter, Paul instructed Titus, “*And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful*” (Titus 3:14). “Ours” refers to “our people,”^{NKJV} or fellow believers. “Necessary uses” are “*pressing needs*,”^{NASB} or “*daily necessities*.”^{NIV} Maintaining “good works” is engaging in good deeds from which

resources were obtained to meet the daily needs. Thus one version reads, “*And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful*” (Titus 3:14).

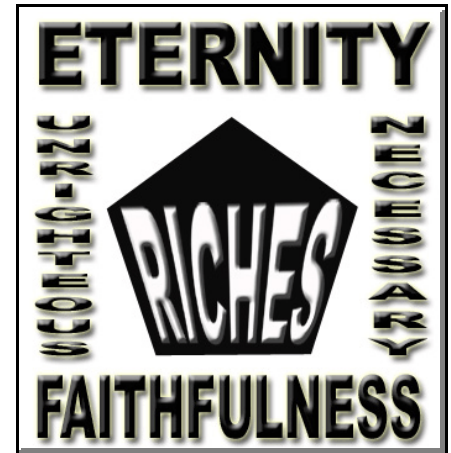
In the text before us, the “*pressing needs*” are actually the needs of our brethren. Now productive work is viewed as a means of becoming able to meet the needs of others, besides our own selves. This is not a strange teaching. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Eph 4:28). Here the thief, who formerly sought to meet his needs by stealing what belonged to others is commanded to abruptly stop stealing. Instead, he is to work at something “*which is good*” (i.e. maintain good works), not for himself alone, but “*that he may have something to give to him who has need.*”^{NKJV}

This is the kind of thinking that permeates this text. Admittedly, it clashes with the approach to working and possessions that is common in our country. In this perspective, which is the proper one, the individual is not the center of attention, but the family of God. The Lord builds and supplies for His family so that some people are enabled to provide resources for themselves and others as well. He also structures our lives so that we become acutely aware that this world is not our home, and that riches are not intended to be permanent. Thus, there come times when saints are humbled, being no longer able to provide for themselves – like Israel in the wilderness, Elijah during a famine, and Paul in prison. But when those times come, God marshals His “*household*” to meet the needs of His people.

THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAMMON

In His remarks about the “*unrighteous mammon*,” Jesus continued, “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?*” (Luke

16:10-12). Here are several weighty considerations.



- The handling of financial resources is associated with faithfulness to God.
- Money is “*that which is least*,” yet is a means through which faithfulness is made known.
- The ultimate consideration is that which is “*much*,” which is not temporal.
- The handling of our money confirms whether we are “*just*” or “*unjust*.”
- Obtaining “*true riches*” depends, in part, upon our handling of temporal riches.
- Our money really does not belong to us – it belongs to the Lord, and has been given to us for proper handling.
- The possession of eternal benefits is determined, in part, by how we have handled our money.

Paul is reasoning with this Kingdom perspective, and others, in mind. These are the sort of views that cannot be promoted or facilitated by means of a law or regimented procedures. No one who has no heart for the Lord and His people can profitably think within the perimeter of these realities. To the mind of the flesh, it makes no sense to expend labor in order to profit others – particularly God’s people. It is also foolishness to the flesh to view earthly resources as a means through which our faithfulness is tested, and in which a

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it— by Given O. Blakely

determination will be made concerning the extent of our inheritance in the world to come. Yet, *“the carnal mind”* (Rom 8:7), and *“the natural man”* (1 Cor 2:14) are flawed to the core in their logic. Their base of reasoning is founded upon one’s personal tenure in this world, with absolutely no regard for what follows death.

However, all inspired writings have been written with eternity in view. Life in this world is viewed as a period of preparation. While we are in this world, the only things that are truly ours are

our faithfulness, is put to the test. Within the perimeter of these *“good works,”* the kind of stewards that we are is being established – and *“it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Cor 4:2). **The prospects for an *“unfaithful steward”* are not good.** Jesus spoke of such a person as a *“wicked and slothful servant.”* His transgression was that he did not do anything with what His master gave him. The response of his master to this action was twofold. First, what was given to the unfaithful servant was taken from him: *“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him*

master’s will **were called *“good and faithful”* servants** (Matt 25:21,23).

- The one who did not handle his stewardship was called a *“wicked and slothful servant,”* who knew full well what he was to do, yet did not do it (Matt 25:26).

THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

The above description is the manner of the Kingdom. This is the outworking of the Lord’s will. Jesus introduced this teaching by saying, ***“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods”*** (Matt 25:14). This IS how the Lord will deal with His people, to whom, He has given a portion of His goods – which include the *“unrighteous mammon.”* We know this is the case because God has said, *“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts”* (Hag 2:8). **Stated another way, *“The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”*** (Psa 24:1). **Therefore, if we have any of it, whatever the measure may be, we have received it from Him.** In fact, we ourselves belong to Him – in a twofold sense. First, by creation: *“Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is **He that hath made us,** and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture”* (Psa 100:3). Second, we are His by redemption: *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”* (1 Cor 6:19).

Given this scenario, who is the person that imagines he can occupy a place in God’s kingdom, be given gifts, goods, and aptitudes that are in strict keeping with his ability, have a door opened to him to employ those goods for God’s glory, and yet refuse to enter into it?

what we hold by faith. All other possessions are temporary, being loaned to us for a season to confirm the extent of our participation in the world to come. It may appear that this is nothing more than a system of salvation by works, but this is emphatically not the case.

WORKS ARE NOT FOR JUSTIFICATION

Our works are not the means through which justification is realized (Rom 9:11; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9). However, we are created in Christ Jesus *“unto good works”* – *“works”* that have been *“prepared before hand”*^{NASB} by God, in order that we might *“walk in them”* (Eph 2:10). These are not optional activities that can be ignored or disregarded. **They are more than mere opportunities to be evaluated and accepted or discarded at the discretion of the individual.** They are the framework in which fellowship with Christ is realized (1 Cor 1:9). They are also the appointed outlet for Divine enablement, or spiritual gifts.

THE PROPER ROLE OF WORKS

These *“ordained”* works are areas in which the genuineness of our faith, or

which hath ten talents” (Mat 25:28). Second, he was expelled from the presence of his master: *“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Mat 25:30). Several things are to be noted in this account.

- **The cursed person was really one of the masters servants.** He was not an imposter, but was numbered among those of whom it was said, the master *“called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods”* (Matt 25:14).
- **His master had given him something of genuine value – a *“talent”*** (Matt 25:15a).
- **The gift given to him was to be handled properly,** for it was given to him in strict accord with *“his ability”* (Matt 25:15b).
- **What the unfaithful servant had been given was called *“his lord’s money”*** (Matt 25:18).
- Those who handled their stewardship in accord with the

Given this scenario, who is the person that imagines he can occupy a place in God’s kingdom, be given gifts, goods, and aptitudes that are in strict keeping with his ability, have a door opened to him to employ those goods for God’s glory, and yet refuse to enter into it? Is there some approach to *“sound doctrine”* that can be used to make this kind of person comfortable? Do we dare to think that God has promised such a one glory in the world to come? Will God give him the *“prize”* even though he has proven to be unfaithful? Even though he was neither good nor faithful, will the Lord treat him as though he was?

I understand that it is not wise to weave a complex doctrine with all of

these things that allows a person to save or condemn, for neither activity is within the provinces of humanity. However, when a person know these realities, it shapes how he preaches, teaches, and deals with the infirmities of his brethren. A person with understanding knows that the nature of God is unalterable, for God has said, *“For I am the Lord, I change not”* (Mal 3:6). He *“cannot deny Himself,”* or act in a manner that is inconsistent with His character (2 Tim 2:13).

This is why Paul is reasoning so extensively with the Corinthians. He is endeavoring to awaken them to righteousness, that they *“sin not”* (1 Cor 15:34). To **determine** to DO what God has shown you to be necessary, then to **fail** to do it, is not good! There is no way to cast a pleasant light upon it! That is something wicked and slothful servants do. It is the deed of an unfaithful steward, and God has made no place in His kingdom for such a person. Search and see if this is not true!

Thus Paul is not dealing with this matter merely because the poor saints in Jerusalem needed help – although they surely did. **However, he knew that God would bring them help from some other quarter if the Corinthians did not come through.** The relief of the deprived

The relief of the deprived brethren in Jerusalem did not depend on the Corinthians. The abundant giving of the Macedonians proved that to be true

brethren in Jerusalem did not depend on the Corinthians. The abundant giving of the Macedonians proved that to be true (2 Cor 8:1-3). However, like Mordecai, the uncle of Esther, Paul knew it would not go well with those who had been given an opportunity to come to the aid of God’s people, yet failed to do so. You may remember Mordecai’s words to Esther when he spoke to her about representing the Jews before the king – her own husband. When she balked at the thought, not being sure the king would receive her, Mordecai said, *“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall **there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed:** and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Est 4:14). Esther was being faced with more than an opportunity. This was a door opened to her from God, and she must enter into it or suffer the consequences.

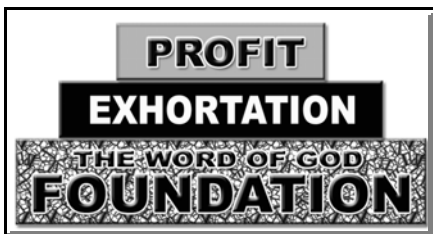
THE CASE BEFORE US

The case before us has the same weight as that before Esther. Paul is therefore employing all of his wisdom, trading, as it were, with his talents, to bring the Corinthians to a sound state of mind. He cannot simply sit by the wayside and let them remain unfaithful to the moving of the Lord. **He has no desire to see them suffer, but rather wants them to obtain the blessing that will be conferred upon the faithful.**

I do not believe the vast majority of the American church has the slightest notion of the gravity of this truth. There is too much unfaithfulness present in the professed church. It is as though the people were faced with multiple open doors, great and effectual doors. Yet, they cling to the notion that they have an option to neglect them, all the while maintaining favor with the Lord. This text will confirm this is nothing but a lie that has been foisted on them by Satan.

THIS I SAY

^{“9:6a} **But this I say . . .**” Other versions read, *“Remember this,”*^{NIV} *“The point is this,”*^{NRSV} *“But this is true,”*^{DARBY} *“Consider this,”*^{NAB} *“And this,”*^{YLT} *“But do not forget,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“Mark this,”*^{MONTGOMERY} and *“All I will say is.”*^{PHILLIPS}



Paul has exhorted the brethren at Corinth to finalize the offering they

themselves had intended to give. He has given them strong reasons to do this, showing that **godly intentions are to be honored.** Now he builds his case firmly upon the Word of God, for that is what causes a word to be profitable, and to yield fruit in the saints. **When there is no correlation between exhortation and Divine utterances, they lose their effectiveness.** Godly reasoning is good, but it is dependent upon the Word of God. Even though a godly man presents a sound and reasonable case, it must be harmonious with the Word of the King.

No word is truly wise that is not fully supported by the Scriptures. A word that is not founded upon Scripture cannot be bound upon the people of God.

A word that is in any way at variance with the Scripture is to be forthrightly rejected, for it is poison to the soul. It must not be considered for a moment, for it has its source in the ultimate enemy, the devil himself.

The Word of God must be in the heart as well as in the mouth. As it is written, *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, **even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:** that is, the word of faith, which we preach”* (Rom 10:8). **The word that is “in” both the heart and the mouth is the word that is believed.** Therefore it is called *“the word of faith.”* This is precisely why the Lord’s words were *“with power”* (Lk 4:32), while the word of the scribes was impotent (Mk 1:22).

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The Word has no power in a godless mouth or an undiscerning mind. When, for example, Satan utters one of the great promises of scripture, it has no comforting or sustaining power. Thus, Jesus rejected Satan's reference to Psalm 91:12 (Matt 4:6). A wicked heart can only distort the truth of God, much less speak it with any power or effectiveness. Thus Jude said of false prophets, "*But these men revile (scoff and sneer at) anything they do not happen to be acquainted with and do not understand; and whatever they do understand physically [that which they know by mere instinct], like irrational beasts—by these they corrupt themselves and are destroyed (perish)*"^{AMPLIFIED} (Jude 1:10).

There is a reason for this circumstance. **Any effective**

communication of the truth is accomplished within the context of Divine fellowship. Thus sound preaching is referred to as laboring together with God (1 Cor 3:9), "*workers together*" with Him (2 Cor 6:1), and God beseeching hearers through His speakers (2 Cor 5:20). In this manner, the Lord maintains strict control of His Kingdom, always working within the perimeter of the New Covenant, which is His appointed means of identifying with men.

It seems to me that an inordinate amount of modern preaching is the result of drawing water from the polluted well of human wisdom. This is so, of course, because those who do this have no genuine understanding of God's Word. Nor, indeed, are they walking in fellowship with the Father and the Son (1

John 1:3). How could it be possible for work of God to be accomplished outside of the reconciliation that is accomplished in Christ Jesus? **What possible logic can be adduced for imagining that the work of God could be accomplished through those who insist on maintaining a close alliance with the world, from which Jesus, by the will of God, has delivered us** (Gal 1:4)?

At some point, those who profess to be speaking for God must ground the people in the Word of God – in Divine utterance. **The fact that we live by the Word of God requires this.** It is something that cannot be ignored! Men must not appeal to the world's wisdom to buttress what they say. If they do not know the things of God, having them in their heart, they must not speak for God.

THE SPARING SOWER

^{46b} *... He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly . . .*"

This statement is not true because of the purported "laws of nature." Rather, "nature" reflects the will of its Creator, who is holding all things together. The rule is true because God has decreed it to be so. It happens that it is reflected more consistently in nature than in those who do not have a proper view of things.

Is spiritual life advanced without human deliberation and involvement with the living God? Can we live for God without being with Him? I think not. **Paul will come to grips with the Corinthian's hesitancy to give, showing that if they continue in this stingy posture, that have only hurt themselves.**

God is not dependent upon the Corinthians to support the saints in Jerusalem. He can marshal the fowls of the air to feed His people if need be, just as He did with Elijah (1 Kgs 17:4-6). **His ravens have not died!** It is also an insult to God, who "*giveth liberally and upbraideth not*" (James 1:5), to give meager and paltry offerings to His work. What could possibly lead a person to think such a thing is acceptable?

SOWING SPARINGLY

"He which soweth sparingly . . ."
Other versions read, "*He who puts in only a small number of seeds,*"^{BBE} "*anyone who sows sparsely,*"^{NJB} "*a farmer who only plants a few seeds,*"^{NLT} "*he who soweth little,*"^{PNT} "*if you give little,*"^{LIVING} "*he who sows with a niggardly hand,*"^{WEYMOUTH} "*he who sows sparingly and*

grudgingly,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "*poor sowing.*"^{PHILLIPS}

This is not a quotation of Scripture, but a statement of the spirit of Scripture – for Scripture has a spirit, or nature, as well as precise words. Take, for example, the greatest commandments under the Law: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matt 22:39). This is what the Lord Jesus said. He also commended a scribe who saw this truth, telling him he was "*not far from the kingdom of God*" (Mk 12:32-34).

Moses did not say these were the greatest commandments – "*the first*" and "*the second.*" Neither of these commandments were precisely stated in the decalogue – the ten commandments. They were, however, the spirit of the ten commandments, which reflected these priorities. The "*first commandment,*" concerning loving God with our entire persons, is stated in Deuteronomy 6:5 and 30:6. The "*second commandment,*" concerning loving our neighbor, is stated in Leviticus 19:18. Nowhere did Moses list these commandments together.

Is spiritual life advanced without human deliberation and involvement? I think not. Paul will come to grips with the Corinthian's hesitancy to give, showing that if they continue in this stingy posture, that have only hurt themselves.

Nowhere did He say they were the “*first*” and “*second*.” In fact the words “*first commandment*” and “*second commandment*” do not occur in any of the Old Covenant writings (Genesis through Malachi). **Yet, the spirit of the Law reflected these unquestionable priorities.**

So it is with the saying we are now considering. There is a spirit in Scripture that shouts these words to our hearts. Thus Solomon wrote, “. . . *there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty . . . He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse . . .*” (Prov 11:24-26). That is a text on giving “*sparingly*.” **There is a message in it that is not confined to its words.**

There is such a thing as sowing sparingly; meager giving, and stingy gifts. **Remember, “sparingly” is determined by proportion, not amount!** That is, the gift is meager in proportion to what had been given to the giver. Such gifts are not acceptable, and we should not hesitate to say so. Men may imagine they are free to give whatever they want to give, but that is not the case. **No one is free to receive an abundance from God, and then give as though they had received only a sparse amount from Him.**

JOSIAH AND ELISHA

There is a sterling example of the principle before us in an event that took place in Israel. It concerns a meeting between Joash, king of Israel, and Elisha who “*was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.*” Joash wept over the face of Elijah, knowing that he was about to depart from the world. “*O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.*” These were the words Elisha spoke when he saw Elijah translated into heaven (2 Kgs 2:12).

Elisha rallied, and told the king to “*take bow and arrows.*” Then he said, “*Put thine hand on the bow.*” The king did so, and “*Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands.*” The prophet then told the king to Open the window Eastward.” As soon as the window was opened, Elisha said, “*Shoot,*” after which he said, “*The arrow of the LORD’S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.*”

Here was a sort of symbolic shooting of arrows that would determine the extent to which Syria would be conquered by Israel.

The prophet then said, “*Take the arrows.*” After Josiah took the arrows, Elisha said, “*Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria*

till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice” (2 Kgs 13:19). **The king had sown sparingly, and now he would reap sparingly.**

Some one might object, saying that what we do has no effect upon the measure of blessing that we receive! But Elisha would only laugh at such a conclusion, chiding the fool who said it. The king did not put much of himself into what appeared to him to be inconsequential. Now, God would not put much of Himself into something that would prove to be **very** consequential.

Actually, the person who gives “*sparingly*” imagines that giving depletes or diminishes his resources, when actually it can be the means of increasing them. As Solomon said, “*there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty*” (Prov 11:24). Stated within the framework of our Western economy, “There are those who set aside their resources for themselves, refusing to use them for the needs of others. Such people will tend to become poor.” This is because they are living in God’s world, and have been given supplies from Him. If they violate His will, they will suffer His consequences.

REAPING SPARINGLY

“. . . *shall reap also sparingly . . .*” Other versions read, “*will get in the same,*” ^{BBE} “*reap sparsely as well,*” ^{NJB} “*will get a small crop,*” ^{NLT} “*shall reap little,*” ^{PNT} “*you will get little,*” ^{LIVING} “*will harvest very little,*” ^{IE} “*will also reap a niggardly crop,*” ^{WEYMOUTH} “*will also reap sparingly and grudgingly,*” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “*means a poor harvest.*” ^{PHILLIPS}

This is the manner of God’s involvements with men. Those who invest little of themselves and their

No individual can afford to think that he can consider himself the most important person, and still receive an abundance from the Lord. God does not bless covetousness, even when it is justified by all manner of feeble explanation from men.

resources in the Lord and His work should not be surprised when they do not receive much from Him. **No individual can afford to think that he can consider himself the most important person, and still receive an abundance from the Lord.** God does not bless covetousness, even when it is justified by all manner of feeble explanation from men.

As Paul has already indicated to the Corinthians, they were presently prospering, having received more than they needed – an “*abundance,*” or “*surplus.*” However, this might not be true for them in the future. Thus he wrote, “*your surplus over necessity at the present time is going to meet their want and to equalize the difference created by it, so that [at some other time] their surplus in turn may be given to supply your want*” ^{AMPLIFIED} (2 Cor 8:14).

What a wonderful arrangement! – and arrangement that depended upon them **not** sowing sparingly. **However, if they chose to “sow sparingly” when the poor saints in Jerusalem were in need, those very saints would sow sparingly when they were in need.** So they would, according to the Lord, reap in precise proportion to what they had sown. God will see to it that this is what happens to the sparing sower!

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it – by Given O. Blakely

THE BOUNTIFUL SOWER

^{6c} . . . and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

We are speaking of inexorable laws. In this case, what is seen in nature is a type of what occurs in the spiritual realm. Also, what a person gives materially has a great bearing upon what he will receive in the time of need.

SOWING BOUNTIFULLY

“ . . . and he which soweth bountifully . . . ” Other versions read, “whoever sows generously,”^{NIV} “and he who puts them in from a full hand,”^{BBE} “and he that sows in the spirit of blessing,”^{DARBY} “he who soweth in blessings,”^{DOUAY} “he that soweth liberally,”^{GENEVA} “the one who plants generously,”^{NLT} “he who soweth in giving largely and freely,”^{PNT} “he that soweth

One who sows “bountifully” is doing unto others what he would have them do unto him. Jesus said, “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31).

Let it be clear, the one who sows “bountifully” is not doing so in order to receive bountifully. That is nothing more than covetousness, and ought to be so regarded. The bountiful giver does not reason, “If I help him now, he will help me then.” Such a thing will, indeed, take place if the heart is right. However, God does not give back to us ONLY because we gave to His people. Our giving must proceed from the proper attitude. It must not come from a grudging spirit, that would rather hold on to ones resources, but gives anyway because he things he will at least receive something back in

measure from them,”^{BBE} “will reap also in blessing,”^{DARBY} “shall reap also liberally,”^{GENEVA} “will get a generous crop,”^{NLT} “shall reap plenteously,”^{TNT} “he will reap much,”^{LIVING} “will gather a great harvest,”^{IE} “will also reap generously and with blessing,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “means a generous harvest.”^{PHILLIPS}

Not An Inviolable Law

This is not something that occurs automatically, as though there was an invisible law that makes it happen. This is **not** a law, for example, on which a wicked man may capitalize. Some do teach this is the case, but they are seriously wrong. They have no understanding of how the Lord works with the sons of men. Beside this, life confirms this is not an inexorable law to be applied to all men. An economy can collapse, washing away resources that have been laid up for the future. Death can come upon a man, thwarting all of his plans for the future (Luke 12:19-20).

The Confirmation of Moses

Moses told the people there was such a thing of laboring for nothing – expending much and taking in little. This condition was brought on by the sin of the people. “And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits” (Lev 26:20). In such a case, bountiful sowing would not produce bountiful reaping! Again Moses said with much strength, “Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in: for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes: for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil: for thine olive shall cast his fruit” (Deu 28:38-40).

The Confirmation of Isaiah

Isaiah also spoke of this circumstance, where the condition of the people impacted upon their reaping – even though they sowed abundantly. “Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath [six gallons], and the seed of an

Therefore, a “bountiful” giver is one who gives proportionately much, and does so with a willing mind, not thinking of himself, but of the one to whom he gives. Now, what will be the experience of such a person?

plenteously,”^{TNT} “but if he plants much,”^{IE} “but the man who plants a lot of seeds,”^{IE} and “he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone].”^{AMPLIFIED} and “generous sowing.”^{PHILLIPS}

A bountiful sower is one who gives “much” in proportion to what he has. This text is not necessarily speaking of the actual amount that a person gives, for “amount” is measured by what is left for the giver, not what is given to the needy. Thus the widow who gave “two mites” gave more than the wealthy who gave a seeming abundance (Mk 12:42-43). The poor widow who prepared a solitary “little cake” for the prophet of God, when she actually had scarcely enough for one more meal for her and her son, gave “bountifully” (1 Kgs 17:12-13).

the future. This is why the Spirit has moved Paul to carefully say, “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2 Cor 8:12). A gift of a million dollars that does not flow from a “willing mind” is really no gift at all, much less a bountiful one.

Therefore, a “bountiful” giver is one who gives proportionately much, and does so with a willing mind, not thinking of himself, but of the one to whom he gives. Now, what will be the experience of such a person?

REAPING BOUNTIFULLY

“ . . . shall reap also bountifully.” Other versions read, “will also reap generously,”^{NIV} “will have produce in full

homer shall **yield an ephah** [3/5th's of a bushel]" (Isa 5:10).

The Confirmation of Jeremiah

Jeremiah also prophesied of this condition. Even though a lot of seed was sown, and there was every reason to expect an abundant harvest, yet because it did not rain, they would not reap. *"Because the ground is chapt [cracked or parched], for **there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads**" (Jer 14:4).*

The Confirmation of Joel

The prophet Joel also spoke of this condition – the suspension of the normal laws of reaping. *"The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for **the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth**" (Joel 1:10).*

The Confirmation of Haggai

The prophet Haggai told Israel that, in their case, the laws of prosperity had been suspended because of their wickedness. *"Ye have **sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes**" (Hag 1:6). Again, he voiced this suspension with the words, *"Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty"* (Hag 2:16).*

The Confirmation of Micah

The prophet Micah spoke of this matter. *"Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt **not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine**" (Micah 6:15).*

The Confirmation of Zephaniah

Zephaniah also thundered this word about a lot of sowing, tending, and effort, yielding no benefits. *"Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, **but not drink the wine thereof**" (Zeph 1:13).*

A Harvest Is Dependent Upon Several Things

When a lot of seed is sown, an abundant harvest depends upon several things.

- That the seed itself is good – Matt 13:24.
- That the soil is good – Ezek 17:8.
- That it will rain – Deut 11:17.
- That the harvest will not be eaten by

environment. Our text takes all of this into consideration. Big harvests do not happen automatically, as the wayward nation of Israel can testify. You can work a lot, sow a lot, and take little or nothing in. A person's character and attitude impact directly upon their giving.

Proper Giving Brings Proper Results

Paul has labored to promote a proper attitude in the hearts of the Corinthians. He has appealed to holy

You can also add to these the requirement for pure hearts, noble motives, the absence of covetousness, a love for God, a liberal spirit, the absence of a love for this world, a thankful spirit, and a love for the brethren.

locusts, or some other scavenger – Deut 28:38.

- That the enemy will not take the harvest for himself – Isa 65:22.
- That men will live to enjoy the harvest – Luke 12:20.
- That robbers will not take it while men are on the way to the barn – Obediah 1:5 .
- That the seed was sown at the proper time: "seedtime" – (Gen 8:22).
- That the soil is properly prepared – Jer 4:3.
- That all of the seed will produce – Hab 1:6.

You can also add to these the requirement for pure hearts, noble motives, the absence of covetousness, a love for God, a liberal spirit, the absence of a love for this world, a thankful spirit, and a love for the brethren.

Those foolish teachers who tell men that giving a large quantity is a guarantee they will receive a lot are in serious error. Proper giving must be in a proper context, and in a good

remembrances, and spiritual considerations. **He is now affirming that when these are present, a bountiful harvest will be realized.** This is in perfect accord with what God has said on this subject at other times.

- **Pity and a consciousness of God produces a large return.** *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will **He pay him again**" (Prov 19:17).*
- **A bountiful eye is required.** *"He that hath a bountiful eye **shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor**" (Prov 22:9).*
- **The spirit of giving is necessary – giving and giving again.** *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).*
- **A liberal heart will be blessed, even though it appears much has been lost.** *"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth . . . **liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth***

shall be watered also himself" (Prov 11:24-25).

- Do not withhold what you have. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or

whether they both shall be alike good" (Eccl 11:6).

- Sow in hope and expectation of the blessing and good things of God. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl 11:1).

It has well been said that we cannot out-give God. Nor, indeed, is any labor done for Him in vain (1 Cor 15:58). Further, there is a sense in which all labor is really giving – giving of our persons, energies, and resources. Done correctly, it is an investment in eternity, and a place to confirm our faithfulness.

THE PURPOSING HEART

^{7a} **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give...**"

Again, Paul addresses the matter of giving without regard to the amount. **He has already established that amount is measure by what is left – by the**

in matters pertaining to life and godliness. It is written "**every man hath his proper gift**" (1 Cor 7:7), and that the Holy Spirit dispenses spiritual gifts to "**every man severally as He will**" (1 Cor 12:11). In the matter of the collection for the poor saints, the church in Corinth is

tells him."^{PHILLIPS}

Here there are two things to be seen. First, there is the matter of intention, aim, or determination – **as he purposeth**. Second, there is the matter of the environment in which the determination is made – **in his heart**. Let us consider these things.

As He Purposeth

The word "*purposeth*" is one that is compatible with man's nature – i.e., being made in the image of God. Its literal meaning is, "to choose for oneself, to prefer, to purpose,"^{THAYER} "to decide ahead of time,"^{FRIBERG} and "to bring forth, produce from one's store; to choose before or sooner; choose deliberately, prefer; to purpose, or purpose to do,"^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

There are a couple of things to be seen here. **First, the gift was to be taken from ones personal resources**. Secondly, it was **not** to be done on the spur of the moment, but was to be **purposed**, or planned, ahead of time. Both of these required extensive thought.

We are introduced to this kind of intentional giving in the Law. When an Israelite gave an offering to God, it was to be from his own store, or supply. The Law specified, "*At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates*" (Deut 14:28). Solomon also wrote, "*Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase*" (Prov 3:9).

During the time Jesus walked among men, there were certain who circumvented this manner of giving. They provided a more convenient way to

Here there are two things to be seen. First, there is the matter of intention, aim, or determination – as he purposeth. Second, there is the matter of the environment in which the determination is made – in his heart. Let us consider these things.

proportion it is of what the individual has received. Now he will affirm that the person himself must be in the giving. It must be done with due deliberation and holy objective.

EVERY MAN

"Every man . . ." Other versions read, "*So let each one,*"^{NKJV} "*each man,*"^{NIV} "*each of you,*"^{NRSV} "*Each person,*"^{IE} and "*Let everyone.*"^{PHILLIPS}

When the Spirit addresses the matter of giving, He is not speaking only to the rich, or to those who have an excess. This is a subject that involves everyone – the rich and the poor alike. The giving of each one will be evaluated "*according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*" (2 Cor 8:12) – but **everyone is involved**. Let us have done with the idea that a select few within the local congregation are the only ones who do anything, or are productive

not simply to tap the church treasury. The giving is to be personal, and "*every man*" is to be involved.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul said of this very offering, "*let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him*" (1 Cor 16:2). Here was a matter in which they were to be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor 1:10).

PURPOSING IN THE HEART

"... according as he purposeth in his heart, . . ." Other versions read, "*what he has decided,*"^{NIV} "*as you have made up your mind,*"^{NRSV} "*as he hath determined in his heart,*"^{DOUAY} "*as . . . he wisheth in his heart,*"^{GENEVA} "*as already determined,*"^{NAB} "*as he has decided on his own initiative,*"^{NJB} "*as he planned ahead of time in his heart,*"^{IE} "*as he has made up his own mind*" and "*as his heart*

sacrifice, selling sacrificial animals and other offerings in the Temple courts. They also provided the coins that were to be used in offerings made in the Temple. It is written of them that they were *“those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting”* (John 2:14). Some might consider this to be a very considerate convenience. It would allow for more freedom in coming to Jerusalem. Perhaps they could get there more quickly. However, this is not the way Jesus saw the situation. On this occasion Jesus *“had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father’s house an house of merchandise”* (John 2:15-16). What was wrong with what He saw? **The offerings being made required no purpose, no determination, beforehand. The oxen, sheep, and doves did not come from the flocks of the people.**

When giving to a godly cause, the the people of God are to deliberate. They should consider what God has done for them, and whether or not they have received more than they really need. The **measure** that is used to give, is to be considered (whatever it is), as the basis God will use to give back to us. Jesus said of this, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For **with the same measure** that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again”* (Luke 6:38).

In His Heart

The heart is the real person – what we really are. As it is written, *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he”* (Prov 23:7). Jesus said, *“A good man out of **the good treasure of his heart** bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of **the evil treasure of his heart** bringeth forth that which is evil: for of*

the way it all fits into walking in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). **If the saints can think properly they will purpose properly, and if they purpose correctly, they will give correctly.** This is accomplished when we think with God and Christ in mind. It follows making our plans with salvation and eternity in view.

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the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45). It goes without saying that only a purpose determined in a good heart is acceptable with God.

For the believer *“the heart”* is the *“new heart”* that is received in Christ Jesus (Ezek 36:26). In other words, the individual is to purpose in his *“new man,”* with thinking being directed by faith. Purposing in the heart is not merely a firm decision, or something that we really mean to do. **Rather, it is a purpose that is made within the framework of salvation** – with God in mind, and our affection placed on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2).

The *“new creation”* can think soundly, determining to do what is good and acceptable in the sight of the Lord. It can ponder who is receiving the gift, and

SO LET HIM GIVE

“... so let him give...” Other versions read, *“do just as he has,”* ^{NASB} *“should give,”* ^{NIV} and *“must give.”* ^{NRSV}

The people were to give in accordance with what they had purposed – with their whole heart. **They were not to give like mindless robots, and institutional machines.** This was not to be an exercise of empty routine, or mere religious formality. The gift was going to a very real people, and it was to come from those giving of themselves. Their giving should be in the spiritually customary manner: *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might”* And again, *“”* (Eccl 9:10). And again, *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”* (Col 3:23). That is the Kingdom norm, or standard. Nothing else is acceptable.

NOT GRUDGINGLY OR OF NECESSITY

^{7b} *“... not grudgingly, or of necessity...”*

Because of our condition in this world, it is often necessary to say what we are **not** to do. We have both *“the flesh”* and *“the Spirit”* (Gal 5:16-17). We have an *“old man”* and a *“new man”* (Col 3:9-10). We have this treasure in an earthen

vessel (2 Cor 4:7). What we are **not** to do pertains to the flesh, or the *“old man.”* What we **are** to do pertains to the spirit, or the *“new man.”*

NOT GRUDGINGLY

“... not grudgingly...” Other versions read, *“not reluctantly,”* ^{NIV} *“not giving with grief,”* ^{BBE} *“not grievingly,”*

DARBY *“not with sadness,”* ^{DOUAY} *“not out of sorrow,”* ^{YLT} *“He should not be sorry,”* ^{IE} *“not with regret,”* ^{ISV} *“not sorrowfully,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“not reluctantly or sorrowfully.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word *“grudgingly”* comes from a word that means *“with a sour and reluctant mind,”* ^{THAYER} *“with a grieved spirit, reluctantly,”*

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it– by Given O. Blakely

grudgingly," FRIBERG "with regret," UBS, and "pain of mind, grief." LIDDELL-SCOTT

To give grudgingly is to give as though one was experiencing great and unnecessary loss – as though an inconvenience had been imposed upon the giver. There is no sense of beneficence in giving "grudgingly" – even though the child of God has enjoyed the greatest beneficence in Divine favor and in a great and effectual salvation.

Here, reluctant giving is compared with giving with "purpose of heart" – that is, giving with an intention

"what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7).

NOT OF NECESSITY

"... or of necessity..." Other versions read, "or under compulsion," NASB "or by force," BBE "or in response to pressure," NLT "or by constraint," WEB and "or feel forced." IE

Giving out of "necessity" is giving that sees no connection with the will of the Lord. The "necessity" or "compulsion"

was the glory of God and the welfare of the saints.

These uncomely attitudes come from "the flesh," and are therefore totally unacceptable to God, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:8). If you have ever been afflicted with this kind of mind-set, you know there is no way to reason with it. The "flesh" so distorts the mind that one becomes spiritually insane. Personal possessions are seen as the result of personal effort, with no regard for their true Origin, God Himself. They are not seen as a stewardship, or as provisions that have been given by God for the assistance of someone else.

Even though a person thinking after this manner might give, the gift would not be acceptable, for it would be like water from a polluted well, contaminating the work of God. If one supposes that this circumstance justifies not giving, he must consider if it is right to keep that kind of mind, and if it is safe to do so.

Paul is not suggesting that those who would give grudgingly should not give at all. There is a difference between "not giving" and "not giving grudgingly." Paul's word is designed to encourage the persons who are giving grudgingly to abandon that kind of thinking, for it is never acceptable to think in an incorrect manner.

We are, through God's grace, to bring ourselves into accord with the Divine agenda. Like all uncomely traits, a grudging spirit is to be "put off" (Col 3:8) and laid aside (1 Pet 2:1).

In this kind of giving – giving "grudgingly" – giving is seen as putting us at a great disadvantage. It is almost like a robber taking our precious possessions and leaving us only with the bitter memory of what we could have had or done if we had not given of our resources.

to bless, instead of with a spirit of grief because of what one is losing. In this kind of giving – giving "grudgingly" – giving is seen as putting us at a great disadvantage. It is almost like a robber taking our precious possessions and leaving us only with the bitter memory of what we could have had or done if we had not given of our resources. Judge for yourself if this is a proper attitude for someone who has been saved by the grace of God, and has absolutely nothing that they have not "received." As it is written,

is seen as originating with others, not with God. Givers of this sort are pressured by what men have said, and are unable to associate those men – whether the ones requesting the giving or the ones receiving it – with the Lord and His purpose. These kind of people would not see the poor believers in Jerusalem as "saints," or as their own brethren – much less as those into whose spiritual olive tree they had been grafted. They would not see Paul and Titus as men being moved by God, whose sole interest

THE GIVER GOD LOVES

"^{7c} ... for God loveth a cheerful giver."

If a person will simply immerse his mind in the Word of God, it will become increasingly apparent that God's love is not unconditional. Only men of corrupt minds have ever made this statement – that God loves us

unconditionally. No inspired man ever said such a thing. Jesus never implied such a thing. The entire notion is of man, through man, and to man. If God's love was unconditional, it would not be possible for there to be a hell where certain men are finally consigned. It would not be possible to say to one person, "Well done good and faithful

servant," and to another, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." The very text before us would be an utter absurdity if there were no conditions associated with Divine love.

THE PERSON GOD LOVES

"... for God loveth..." Other versions read, "for God takes pleasure

in,^{”BBE} *“doth God love,*”^{”YLT} *“God prizes,*”
LIVING and *“for God loves (He takes
pleasure in, prizes above other things,
and is unwilling to abandon or to do
without).”*^{”AMPLIFIED}

Perhaps one of the reasons why the love of God is so often misrepresented is that its nature is not perceived.

- God’s love has to do with His **preference**. In this regard, He *“so loved the world,”* not the vast multitude of fallen angels, or Satan himself. God does not *“prefer”* everyone, and nowhere suggests that He does. He does prefer to bless, but there is a vast difference between preferring to bless all men and preferring all men.
- God’s love has to do with **delight**. Therefore Christ is said to have *“loved the church,”* and have given Himself for it (Eph 5:25). God does not delight in everyone. There are people with whom He is *“not well pleased”* (1 Cor 10:5).
- God’s love is frequently pictured as being **discretionary**. Therefore it is written, *“the Lord loveth the righteous”* (Psa 146:8), *“For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth”* (Prov 3:12), *“He loveth him that followeth after righteousness”* (Prov 15:9). Jesus said to His disciples, *“For the Father loveth you, because ye have believed Me, and have believed that I came out from God”* (John 16:27).

How could a person possibly be advantaged by the text before us if the love of God was “unconditional?” What could the statement it makes possibly mean in such a case? Would such a view promote a God-honoring response to this statement? Nay, it would only generate confusion to us. It only requires a small amount of sober thought to correctly answer such questions.

A CHEERFUL GIVER

“ . . . a cheerful giver.” Other versions read, *“a ready giver,”*^{”BBE} *“the person who gives cheerfully,”*^{”NLT} *“the happy giver,”*^{”WILLIAMS} and *“a cheerful (joyous, “prompt to do it”) giver [whose heart is in his giving].”*^{”AMPLIFIED}

The word *“cheerful”* means more than simply *“joyous”* or *“happy,”* as some

in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy Thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee” (1 Chron 29:17). Solomon described the cheerful giver as a *“liberal soul”* (Prov 11:25), and one with a *“bountiful eye”* (Prov 22:9), who looked for an opportunity to bless someone.

Generosity cannot come from a reluctant spirit, for reluctance clogs the heart, so that nothing good can flow freely from it.

versions suggest. **The idea of promptness and a total lack of hesitation is in the word.** Thus the Amplified Bible reads, *“prompt to do it,”* for true cheerfulness does not hesitate to do good. The giving itself brings the cheer, so that the heart is made glad because another could be helped.

Generosity cannot come from a reluctant spirit, for reluctance clogs the heart, so that nothing good can flow freely from it.

When the Lord called for offerings from the Israelites He said, *“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering”* (Ex 25:2). That is cheerful giving as defined by the Law. When offerings were gathered for the building of the tabernacle, the Lord said, *“Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD: gold, and silver, and brass”* (Ex 35:5).

When David gathered contributions for the building of the Temple, he told the Lord, *“I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me,*

From the New Covenant point of view it is said, *“I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). I gather that this was based upon Jesus’ parable. *“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: **And thou shalt be blessed:** for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just”* (Luke 14:12-14).

A **“cheerful giver”** is one who is making an acceptable sacrifice to God, not one who is depriving himself of things he alone desires. Thus it is written, *“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Heb 13:16). A *“cheerful giver”* is joyful that he has something to give, and that he has an opportunity to minister to the people of God. His heart has been impacted by the grace of God, so that, like His Lord, he comes to love to give.

WHEN ALL GRACE ABOUNDS

^{”8a} ***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you . . . ”***

The Holy Spirit will never move a godly communicator to leave people

replying upon their own ability. The Spirit is *“the Spirit of God”* (Rom 8:14)

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and “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9), and always promotes Their ways and work above those of men. **If the Spirit leads a person to speak or write, He will leave those who receive his message with faith and hope.** This is something that cannot be accomplished in the flesh.

GOD IS ABLE

“And God is able” Other versions read, “God is perfectly able,”^{NJB} “God will,”^{NLT} and “God can.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “able” comes from the Greek word *δυνατεῖ* (doon-a-tie), which lexically means, “absolutely, mighty, the preeminently mighty one, having power for something,”^{THAYER} “as being in a position to do something, be capable,”^{FRIBERG} “possible, strong, powerful, able, capable of,”^{UBS} and “pertaining to being possible, with the implication of power or ability to alter or control circumstances.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

What does “God is able” Mean? This expression can be emphasized in three different ways.

There are several things inherent in the concept of ability. **This is not a mere philosophical term that speaks of theoretical possibilities.** This is not the manner in which we speak of the Living God.

The nature of God is prominent in everything that He does for His people.

Of particular note are His holiness, goodness, and love. Whatever God does for His people is holy, righteous, and pure. It is inherently good, promotes good, and has no element of weakness or decay. God is also prompted by a profound love for His people.

There are other traits that characterize what the Lord is “able” to do. It will be valuable to note a few of them, for we must not allow ourselves to think of what God is able to do apart from matters such as these.

• **ABILITY.** The ability of God is only limited by His character or nature.

• **INCLINATION.** When we speak of God’s ability, we are also to understand this involves His inclination, or disposition, toward a thing. God will not do what He does not **want** to do. He does everything in strict accord with His will (Dan 4:35; 1 John 5:14).

• **RESOURCES.** God’s ability is also enhanced by His limitless resources. Man has no legitimate need that He cannot supply – and supply in abundance. The Lord once said through David, “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills” (Psa 50:10). He also said through Haggai, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag 2:8).

• **CONTROL.** In order for God be “able,” He must have unquestionable control of the situation, managing the affairs of men. He must be “above all, and through all, and in all” (Eph 4:6). He must be able to alter the circumstances and intervene in the affairs of men.

• **POSITION.** An “able” God is One who is in a position where He can do “according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan 4:35).

If God is deficient in any of these areas, or is adversely impacted by the influence of any opposing powers, we **cannot** have a strong confidence in Him, or be persuaded that He is “able” to work in our behalf.

MAKING ALL GRACE ABOUND TO YOU

“. . . to make all grace abound toward you”

Make

“. . . to make” Other versions read, “to provide you”^{NRSV} “to give,”^{BBE} and “bestow.”^{WEYMOUTH} **God must be able to override any inhibiting factors, negate any opposing influences, and put into ones life things that could not possibly be otherwise obtained.** Here we are told of things only a creative God can do: **“MAKE.”**

The word “make” comes from the



- With God Himself as the emphasis: “**GOD** is able.”
- With the present time being emphasized: “God **IS** able.”
- With Divine aptitude as the emphasis: “God is **ABLE**.”

When we, in any way, speak about God Almighty, what He does, and who He is, we are speaking of absolute and exclusive matters. There is no point to speaking of Him if He is one of several who can meet the objective being discussed. **God is not a mere alternative or option.** The very words “God is able” suggest that He is the **ONLY** one who is able in the matter of reference. This will become exceedingly evident as we proceed with this text.

He cannot lie (Tit 1:2), nor can He deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). He is not able to express Himself or work in contradiction of His own unchangeable nature. Therefore, if God is said to be “able” to do anything, it is taken for granted that it does not call upon Him to contradict His own nature. Only prayers, for example, that are in accord with His will are guaranteed to be heard (1 John 5:14)

• **POWER.** “God is able” also assumes He possesses the power or strength to do what is required. He is fully capable of **making** things happen. He is in no way deficient or unequal to any requirement. He can suspend the laws of nature as He did at the Red Sea (Ex 14:22,28).

Greek word περισευσαι (per-ris-seus-ai). Lexically the word means, "to make a thing to abound unto one, to confer a thing abundantly upon one," THAYER "cause to abound, grant richly, provide a great deal of," FRIBERG and "to make to abound." LIDDELL-SCOTT

The point that Paul is making is that in the Divine economy **we are not reduced to poverty by giving** – particularly when it is toward the children of God. The Lord is fully able to cause things to happen in our favor – to "command" a blessing upon us. Even under the Law, Moses told the people, "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee" (Deut 28:8). With the passage of time, God has certainly not become less competent, nor is He less inclined to do good to those who please Him – like a "cheerful giver." If He can "command the locusts to devour the land" (2 Chron 7:13), and "command the clouds that they rain no rain" upon the land" (Isa 5:6), why should it be thought incredible that He can "make" good things happen to us?

Why would anyone be led to believe that He who created the heavens and the earth from "things which do not appear" (Heb 11:3), cannot make things abound toward us, even though there appears to be little or nothing available for that purpose? He who can "make a way to escape" from temptation (1 Cor 10:13) is certainly not stymied by our circumstances! He who had pledged to "make all things new" (Rev 21:5), can surely work within the framework of a single individual!

All Grace

"... all grace..." Other versions read, "every blessing," NRSV "every gracious gift," DARBY "generously provide," NLT "all grace (every favor and earthly blessing)." AMPLIFIED

Those in Christ are informed that God is "the God of all grace" (1 Pet 5:10). That is, there is vast depth and breadth

to be found in the grace of God. **It reaches into every Divine storehouse, and can be focused upon a particular people.** When you lay "all grace" along side of poverty in all of its varied forms, grace is found to be thoroughly equal to any occasion. "All grace" can make a "path in mighty waters" (Isa 43:16). It can find sufficient

What is there that "all grace" cannot do? What circumstance is there that it cannot meet? And when God sends "all grace" to a person, who or what can delay its arrival?

"bread and flesh" in a famine, and command that carnivorous birds bring food to a particular prophet beside a certain brook (1 Kgs 17:6).

What is there that "all grace" cannot do? What circumstance is there that it cannot meet? And when God sends "all grace" to a person, who or what can delay its arrival? God can dispatch a holy angel to cook a prophet a single meal that will keep him strong "for forty days and forty nights," even enabling him to climb Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8). God can command a blessing on a solitary bottle of oil, and it be used to fill a houseful of multi-sized vessels (2 Kgs 4:4-6). Think large, child of God! Think large! Do not look at the meager supplies that are presently at your disposal, and think that they are too small to bless others? Ponder the great God of heaven making "all grace" to be focused on you!

To Abound to You

"... abound toward you..." Other versions read, "abundant for you," NAB "to enrich you," NJB "every blessing on you in abundance," WEYMOUTH "overflow for you," ISV "give you an overflowing measure," MONTGOMERY "come to you in abundance," AMPLIFIED

It is one thing to think of "all grace" in a theoretical and detached manner. Some may even descend into the lowlands of debate, and haggle about what the grace of God is or is not able to do. But such speculations are profitless, and do great harm to the soul. This is the day when souls can receive "grace upon

grace" NASB (John 1:16). It is the time when the working of "the abundance of grace" is being chronicled among the sons of men through the Gospel (Rom 5:17). Now we hear of grace "abounding" (Rom 5:20), "reigning" (Rom 5:21), and of grace being "with" us (Rom 16:24).

Now we speak of grace being in "exceeding" measures (2 Cor 9:14), and being "sufficient" (2 Cor 12:9). What child of God who has not heard of the "riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7), and having "grace" in our hearts (Col 3:16). Now we have access to the "throne of grace" (Heb 4:16), and the "Spirit of grace" dwells within us (Heb 10:29). Now the heart is "established with grace" (Heb 13:9), and we are reminded that "He giveth more grace" (James 4:6). Another way of saying "all grace" is "manifold grace" (1 Pet 4:10), and it all has to do with US! For God to **MAKE** "all grace abound to you," then, is a staggering consideration.

We must separate ourselves from meager ways of thinking about the grace of God – as though it only helps us to limp through life like a spiritual cripple. This text will tell us what "all grace" toward us **will do!** Grace works mightily in us and for us.

ALWAYS SUFFICIENT

"^{8B} ... that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things..."

Since the professed scholars have assumed the leadership in theological thought, things have become too

theoretical, abstract, and separate from day-to-day living. Now it is more fashionable to speculate than to believe,

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and to wish than to hope. It is more difficult to associate the grace of God with ones own person, for it is viewed more as a Divine attitude than a spiritual resource. Too often “grace” is viewed as a sort of theological blanket that covers up what we really are, allowing God to tolerate us.

Whatever element of truth there

AMPLIFIED

Is it possible to experience “always having?” – never being without? When it comes to resources, can we have adequate supplies in **all** circumstances – whether times of plenty, famine, pestilence, or other forms of deprivation? That is what this text will address.

Something to Be Considered

This is not an unqualified promise, but a statement of what can happen to those who believe. There have been godly people who have suffered need – like the poor saints in Jerusalem, for whom this very offering is being gathered (Rom 15:26). There have been afflicted saints who lived by faith, yet were “destitute, afflicted,” and “tormented,” wandering “in dens and caves of the earth”

may be in such a view, that is not how our text is viewing the grace of God. In this case, grace is going to **DO** something. **It is going to alter our earthly circumstances, and change our temporal condition.** The grace of God is going to enable us to DO something that can actually benefit others as well as ourselves.

This will be an exceedingly practical affirmation, and thus will be very difficult for some to receive. **This is because it will appear to contradict experience.** However, by faith we must see it as opening the door to a different kind of experience – one that is driven by Divine purpose and fueled by Divine ability.

ALWAYS HAVING

“ . . . that ye, always having . . . ”

Other versions read, “in all things and at all times,”^{NIV} “ever having,”^{BBE} “having in every way,”^{DARBY} “so that you will always have,”^{NLT} “that in everything always,”^{YLT} “you will always have,”^{IE} “in every situation you will always have,”^{ISV} “all your wants of every kind,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need.”

However, we must see that this is not speaking of mere comfort – of us personally never being deprived, put to a disadvantage, or suffering need. **This is speaking about being able to meet the needs of our brethren, all the while solemnly reminding us that it is quite possible that others may be meeting our need some day** (2 Cor 8:14).

This is not set forth as something that God **WILL** do, but something that He “*is able*” to do! And what is the difference between a commitment to do a thing, and the ability to do it? **The difference is this: God is moved by His will, which centers in His purpose, not in human circumstance.** When, by faith, we are “filled with the knowledge of His will” (Col 1:9), and He is working in us “that which is well pleasing in His sight” (Heb 13:21), **that** is when this text applies! In such a circumstance, **that** is when we can “always have!” God can **cause** that to happen!

ALL SUFFICIENCY IN ALL THINGS

“ . . . all sufficiency in all things . . . ” Other versions read, “having all that you need,”^{NIV} “always having enough of everything,”^{NRSV} “all sufficiency in

everything,”^{ASV} “having enough of all things,”^{BBE} “always all-sufficiency,”^{DARBY} “all contentment in all things,”^{ESV} “always have enough for every conceivable need,”^{NJB} “you always have everything you need and plenty left over,”^{NLT} “having sufficient unto the uttermost,”^{TNT} “everything you need and more,”^{LIVING} “will always have more than enough,”^{IE} “all sufficiency at all times,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance].”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is not an unqualified promise, but a statement of what **can** happen to those who believe. There have been godly people who have suffered need – like the poor saints in Jerusalem, for whom this very offering is being gathered (Rom 15:26). There have been afflicted saints who lived by faith, yet were “destitute, afflicted,” and “tormented,” wandering “in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:37).

Paul testified of his own experience, “I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil 4:12). And who was it that delivered this instruction to our “beloved brother Paul?” Was it the devil? What fool would imagine that the devil taught such lessons to the saints of the most high God? **Satan tempts us, but he does not teach us! He sifts us, but he does not instruct us!** It was the very God who is able to “make all grace abound” toward the individual who instructed Paul in **HOW** to be hungry, and **HOW** to suffer need. Let no one imagine for a moment that God **ONLY** causes “all grace to abound toward us so that we always have sufficiency in all things.” This is not a statement of what will unquestionably be brought to us. It is a statement of what God is “able” to do! This is not theoretical, but has to do with Him fulfilling His good pleasure through us.

And what does this mean – that God is able to **make** all grace abound toward you so that you will always have everything you need? **It means that God is fully able to cause you to have no need that you are not fully able to meet.** It means God is able to put enough into your treasury so that you can lend, and never need to borrow. It means that God is able to so bless you that after you have

met all of your legitimate needs, you will have something left over to give.

This statement is not intended for covetous people, or for those who are driven by the *“lust of the eyes”* (1 John 2:16). **Those who have an earnest desire to retire with plenty of resources must not turn to this affirmation to comfort their hearts.** Those who desire to have such sufficiency as allows them to take their ease, and indulge in all manner of leisure, will find no help in this text. **If you simply do not want to be distracted with bills, this passage is not for you.** Jesus has another words for such people. *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15). Paul also addresses those who think in such a

manner. *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Tim 6:9-10).

The *“prosperity”* merchants who set before the people of God guarantees of riches and possessions have only defiled the temple of God with their *“damnable heresies”* (2 Pet 2:1). **Not only have they revealed their own corrupt natures, they have made it easier for people to become covetous, and have made the earth too appealing.** They do not remind the people that riches have wings, not only to come to men, but to fly from them as well (Prov

23:5).

Paul will now expound the purpose for having more than we need. He does not withhold from any person the right to wealth – not if it is honestly gained, is not accompanied by covetousness, and is devoted to noble purposes. **He will answer what we can do when God makes all grace abound toward us so that we are not deficient in any need, and yet have some left over.** He will not tell us to call for a financial advisor, but to consider *“every good work.”*

He will confirm that God so orchestrates His kingdom, that His people can join Him in providing for the needs of those in Christ Jesus. We can work together with Him!

ABOUNDING TOO EVERY GOOD WORK

^{8c} . . . *may abound to every good work.*”

You will note that the writers of Scripture never became absorbed with things pertaining **only** to this world. They always wrote with the work of the Lord in mind – a work that is fashioned within the prospect of eternity.

ABOUNDING

“ . . . may abound . . . ” Other versions read, *“may have an abundance,”* ^{NKJV} *“you will abound,”* ^{NIV} *“you may share abundantly,”* ^{NRSV} *“may provide in abundance,”* ^{RSV} *“you may be full of,”* ^{BBE} *“and your resources overflow,”* ^{NJB} *“plenty left over to share,”* ^{NLT} *“may be rich unto,”* ^{PNT} *“plenty left over to give,”* ^{LIVING} *“more than enough to do,”* ^{IE} *“you may have ample means,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“and so overflow,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“and “you may give of your abundance.”* ^{MONTGOMERY}

Here is the scenario. **God gives an abundance so the receiver may also give an abundance!** Jesus once spoke of a rich man who had an abundant crop. The man was condemned because he did not use that abundance properly. *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth*

not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:15-21).

Our text is not viewing surplus as did that man whom, God referred to as *“Thou fool!”* Here we are being exposed to HOW the appropriate distributions can be made to the needy – particularly those who are members of *“the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10).

Admittedly, this is a spiritually lofty way of thinking, yet it is one that must find its way into our minds. **This is speaking of things that God *“is able”* to do, and such things are always in strict**



concert with His purpose and will. I do not believe God is ever depicted as able to supply all of our lusts – although He has been known to give His people what they wanted for themselves, then slay them while they were consuming it. It is written of one occasion, *“And while the*

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flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague" (Num 11:33).

It should require no further elaboration to confirm that God does not want to be known as the supplier of fleshly lusts. That is why James wrote, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). Therefore, Paul will show us how the Lord can enable us to give liberally to noble causes. **It is by**

Christ? Is the assistance of needy brethren a matter of mere fund raising? Is that the manner in which the work of the Lord is supported? The financial mongers have convinced the modern church that estate planning, shrew fund raising techniques, and the likes are an appropriate manner in which to support the work of the Lord. In fact, if it was not for such measures, many professed "ministries" would utterly fail.

While it is true that we are not dealing with matters of law here, or things to be bound upon the consciences

with others,"^{NLT} "to give joyfully to others,"^{LIVING} "to do any good deed as well,"^{IE} "for all good works,"^{WEYMOUTH} "for every good cause,"^{WILLIAMS} "for every good work and charitable donation."^{AMPLIFIED}

"Every good work" is defined by God's revealed purpose, not by shrewd and crafty men. These are the "good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). When God is said to comfort our hearts and establish us in "every good word and work," it is within the framework of **His own will** (2 Thess 2:17). These are the only "good works" in which true fruitfulness can be realized (Co 1 1:10). Dorcas, for example, was a woman said to have been "full of good works" (Acts 9:36). And, what kind of "good works" did she do? We are told that she made "coats and garments" for the widows with whom she accompanied (Acts 9:39). She was filled with the "good works" which God had ordained for her – works in which she was to walk.

If it was difficult to speak with the Corinthians about these matters, it is even more toilsome to speak with our peers about them. **The theological waters have been so muddied by the prattle of religious opportunists that it is as though we descend into the murky deep whenever we have to deal with such things.** Now we not only have the natural lusts of men with which to contend, but a plethora of religious careers, institutions, campuses, literature empires, entertainment media and the likes, as well. The whole situation has been greatly complicated by the near-total separation of any Christian communication concerning finances from the Scriptures themselves. Some have dared to make feeble attempts to justify their approach to money by distorting certain words of Scripture, making a hearty effort to bend them around their own programs. However, precious few are those who deliver anything remotely similar to the things Paul is affirming in this text.

AN APPLICATION

In one of His accounts, Jesus spoke of a set of circumstances that precisely show what is intended by this strain of teaching. **Some receive a surplus in order that they may meet the**

Is the assistance of needy brethren a matter of mere fund raising? Is that the manner in which the work of the Lord is supported? The financial mongers have convinced the modern church that estate planning, shrew fund raising techniques, and the likes are an appropriate manner in which to support the work of the Lord.

means of giving us a surplus, so that no special offering needs to be taken. That is, God can enable us to live so that we are always "prepared," or ready, to give liberally to "every good cause."^{WILLIAMS} As difficult as it may seem for some, **God can orchestrate His kingdom through us in this manner, so that the needs of some are always matched by the surplus of others.** From this passage, it seems clear that this is the **preferred** manner. However, God must have a spiritual and alert people through whom to do this, for the workings of God are accomplished in us by means of Divine fellowship and a robust faith. That is what this text is teaching.

This is an area of spiritual liberty, and is largely determined by how we avail ourselves of Divine fellowship and supplies. If Christ died to "reconcile" us to God (Eph 2:16), is interceding for those who are coming to God (Heb 7:25), and we have been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Cor 1:9). **How can the work of the Lord be accomplished outside of intimacy with**

of men, we **are** dealing with the manner in which God accomplishes His work. This is **how** He works within His people "that which is well pleasing in His sight" (Heb 13:21). The nature and length of Paul's writing on this subject confirms this is the case **He does not want the brethren in Corinth to give out of a sense of outward compulsion, or to give out of a sense of great loss.** That is not the kind of giving that pleases God, even if it manages to apparently meet the need.

Paul promotes giving by buttressing the faith of the people. He unveils to them the manner in which God works, and the good things that take place within the context of Divine blessing and fellowship. **He confirms that in the real working of the Lord, everyone is given advantages, and none are caused to suffer disadvantage because of their involvement.**

TO EVERY GOOD WORK

"... to every good work." Other versions read, "for every good deed,"^{NASB} "all kinds of good work,"^{NJB} "to share

need of others. Our Lord spoke of a certain beggar named Lazarus who was "full of sores." Every day this poor man was placed "at the gate" of a man who was rich – or had a surplus. Lazarus was not a man laden with inordinate desires. Jesus said he only was "longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from

the rich man's table." ^{NASB} We know from the outcome of this circumstance that the rich man did not minister to poor and afflicted Lazarus. **He had the resources. They were given to him by God.** We know that, like Lazarus, he was a Jew, for he considered Abraham to be his "father." But he did not "distribute" his goods, or

share his surplus (Luke 16:20-31). He chose to reject a compassionate spirit.

I wonder how many needy people have been placed before our gate when we were enjoying a surplus from the Lord? It certainly is something worthy of some extended thought.

HE HATH DISPERSED ABROAD

"^{9a} As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad . . ."

Being himself filled with the Spirit, Paul now turns again to the Scriptures. **There is where the "seed" for proper thinking and fruitage is to be found!** There can be no "sound doctrine" (2 Tim 4:3), or speaking things "which become sound doctrine" (Tit 2:1), without resorting to the Word of God. I well remember some few years ago (1993), when I was on staff in a Christian institution. Monthly letters were sent to supporters and potential supporters of the institution in which certain appeals were made for contributions. Having been asked to write some of these letters, I sought to associate giving with the Word of God. I was forthrightly told that I used too much Scripture. The letter was not intended to be a means of teaching, but a practical effort to gain the support of the people. I noticed from succeeding letters that those who followed me apparently bought into that idea.

The point to be seen here is that there is a certain manner in which the Holy Spirit approaches such practical matters as giving. It is on the part of wisdom to give heed to HOW He speaks on such things, and learn to become deaf to the contradicting words of men.

IT IS WRITTEN

"As it is written . . ." Other versions read, "As it is said in the Writings," ^{BBE} "according as it is written," ^{DARBY} "As the Scripture says," ^{NJB} "It is as the Scriptures say," ^{LIVING} and "It is like what this Scripture says." ^{IE}

The words "it is written" occur at least eighty times in Scripture. In the

vast majority of those times, the reference has to do with "the Scriptures" or "the Word of God." Men employing this language include Joshua (Josh 8:31),

diluted with the thoughts of mere men?

Those who have a penchant for the "original manuscripts," "the original

TABLE OF OLDEST BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS					
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John	P66	P45, P75	B	Sinaiticus	Alexandrinus
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Romans-Hebrews	P46		B	Sinaiticus	Alexandrinus
James-Jude			P72, B	Sinaiticus	Alexandrinus
Apocalypse (Rev)		P47		Sinaiticus	Alexandrinus

David (1 Kgs 2:3), Josiah (2 Kgs 23:21), Nehemiah (Neh 10:34), Daniel (Dan 9:13), Jesus (John 6:45), Peter (Acts 1:20), Stephen (Acts 7:42), and Paul (1 Cor 9:9). In the New Covenant writings (Matthew through Revelation), there are forty-nine references to the Scriptures.

If there was any question about the authenticity or validity of what is written, such references would be entirely out of order. To call upon the saints to consider what is written, yet is fundamentally flawed, incorrect, or not to be trusted, is a notion befitting only of a fool. If there are additions or interpolations in Scriptures that are to be ignored, then how can men possibly be admonished to resort to them? How can man "live by every word of God" if it is not available to them, or has become

language," and the "autographed copies," must explain to us why no such documents are in existence. If God has, indeed, only inspired the original documents, then how is it that He did not make provision for them to be maintained – like He did, for a while, with the "tables of the covenant" (Heb 9:4)?

For about sixty years (2005) now a tiny papyrus fragment of the Gospel of John has been the oldest "manuscript" of the New Testament. This manuscript (P52) has generally been dated to A.D. 125. The oldest complete Bible is thought to be the Codex Sinaiticus, which is believed to be from the fourth century (A.D. 330-350).

Without laboring this somewhat distasteful subject, this hardly seems to

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it— by Given O. Blakely

be a good foundation for building a system of theological thought around “original manuscripts” – what was “written.” **It seems to me that the proper approach to Scripture must have the Author of Scripture at its heart.** At some point, we must possess a faith that the God who calls upon us to believe His Word, and affirms that it is the means by which spiritual life is sustained, must have been imminent in the affairs of men, so that His Word has been continually available to us. If this is not the case, then references such as the one before us, have no comforting quotient, nor can we guarantee that the Scriptures are able to make us “wise unto salvation,” being “profitable for doctrine,

Psalm, which is a Psalm about the godly (Psa 112:1-9). This is about “*the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments*” (v 1). This is not the description of a man under a particular covenant, but of one who fears God and thoughtfully and thoroughly obeys Him. Such a man might have lived prior to the Old Covenant – like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph. He might have lived during the Old Covenant, like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, or one of the holy prophets. Or, he might have lived during the New Covenant, like Paul, Timothy, Titus, or Philemon. Regardless of the time during which such a person lives, here are the spiritual traits that

- ☛ Shows favor and lends (5a).
- ☛ Guides his affairs with discretion (5b).
- ☛ Shall not be moved (6a).
- ☛ He is held in remembrance (6b).
- ☛ He shall not be afraid of evil tidings (7a).
- ☛ His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord (7b).
- ☛ His heart is established (8a).
- ☛ He shall not be afraid of his enemies (8b).
- ☛ Disperses and gives to the poor (9a).
- ☛ His horn is exalted with honor (9b).

With the expertise of a spiritual tactician, Paul extracts one, maybe two, of these traits, and brings them to bear upon the situation with which he is dealing.

- ☛ Shows favor and lends (5a).
- ☛ Disperses and gives to the poor (9a).

In doing this, Paul has now associated giving with fearing God and keeping His commandments – for that is the kind of man being described in the 112th Psalm. Specifically Paul says, “*He hath dispersed abroad*,” or “*scattered*” his seed over a wide area. He has done what Paul said: sowed “*bountifully*.” That is not what the man who fears God ought to do, it is what he **has done** – “*he hath dispersed . . .*” And what is it that he has dispersed, or “scattered abroad”? It is the “*wealth and riches*” that God has placed “*in his house*” (Psa 112:3).

The person who fears and obeys the Lord is given wisdom to handle his riches, or surplus, correctly. He fulfills the word spoken to those who have a regular surplus: “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute*” (or share) – 1 Tim 6:19).

It seems to me that the proper approach to Scripture must have the Author of Scripture at its heart. At some point, we must possess a faith that the God who calls upon us to believe His Word, and affirms that it is the means by which spiritual life is sustained, must have been imminent in the affairs of men, so that His Word has been continually available to us.

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:15-17).

I understand there are some areas of scholastic difficulty that may confront us, but in all of it, our faith must be in God, who has promised “*he that believeth shall not be confounded*,” or “*put to shame*”^{NKJV} (1 Pet 2:6)

HE HATH DISPERSED ABROAD

“*. . . He hath dispersed abroad . . .*”

Other versions read, “*He scattered abroad*,”^{NASB} “*He has sent out far and wide*,”^{BBE} “*He has dispersed abroad*,”^{DOUAY} “*He has distributed freely*,”^{ESV} “*He gave out without stint*,”^{NJB} “*Godly people give*,”^{NLT} “*He scatters everywhere*,”^{ISV} and “*He [the benevolent person] scatters abroad*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a quotation from the 112th

will identify him. We will find them to be unvarying in all ages.

- ☛ Fears the Lord (1a).
- ☛ Delights greatly in His commandments (1b).
- ☛ His seed is mighty on the earth (2a).
- ☛ The generation of the upright will be blessed (2b).
- ☛ Wealth and riches shall be in his house (3a).
- ☛ His righteousness endureth forever (3b).
- ☛ To him there arises light in darkness (4a).
- ☛ He is gracious and compassionate (4b).

If this is what the person does who fears God and keeps His commandments, then what may be said

of the professing believer who does not sow his surplus bountifully, and out of a love and consideration for the saints of

God? How will God regard such a man? As you know, the Spirit will apply that to our hearts.

HE HATH GIVEN TO THE POOR

^{9b} . . . *He hath given to the poor* . . .” Other versions read, *“he gives to the poor,”*^{NRSV} *“He gave to the poor,”*^{NAS} *“To the needy he gave,”*^{NLT} and *“gives generously to the poor.”*^{LIVING}

There is something else that is done by the one who fears God and keeps His commandments. He *“gives to the poor.”* The Psalmist said he *“is gracious and lends”*^{NASB} (Psa 112:5), and *“has given freely to the poor”*^{NASB} (Psa 112:9).

The matter of giving to the poor can be approached from Mount Sinai. Much of the Law addressed this subject.

- One of the reasons for the seventh year land sabbath was *“that the poor of thy people may eat”* (Ex 23:11).
- When harvesting a vineyard, the Israelites were to consider the poor. *“And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God”* (Lev 19:10).
- Solemnly the people were told to leave the corners of their fields, not reaping that area of them. *“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto*

The truly godly man does not minister to poor saints because God has commanded him to do so – although if he can find no other reason, that is true. Rather, his faith in God and love of the brethren will move him to do this.

the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God” (Lev 23:22).

- Because the poor would always be among them, Israel was told to open their hand wide to them. *“For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land”* (Deut 15:11).
- Again Israel was told of the poor: *“But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth”* (Deut 15:8).

God did not leave our concern for the poor in obscurity, but spoke plainly about it. **Further, the focus was on the poor of their brethren,** as each of the texts above clearly affirm.

Jesus spoke of those who ministered to or withheld clothing, food,

and drink from his *“brethren”* (Matt 25:40).

The truly godly man does not minister to poor saints because God has commanded him to do so – although if he can find no other reason, that is true. Rather, his faith in God and love of the brethren will move him to do this.

James would call this visiting, or ministering to, *“the fatherless and widows in their affliction”* (James 1:27). The Apostles would refer to it in these words, *“we should remember the poor”* (Gal 2:10). Adding a little different perspective on the matter, Solomon would say, *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again”* (Prov 19:17).

The godly man does not see his resources as his own. They are given to him by God – entrusted into his care in order for uses that will confirm personal faithfulness, and bring glory to God.

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS REMAINS FOREVER

^{9c} . . . *His righteousness remaineth for ever.*” Other versions read, *“His righteousness abides forever,”*^{NASB} *“his righteousness is forever,”*^{BBE} *“his benevolence remaineth forever,”*^{GENEVA}

“his uprightness stands firm for ever,”^{NJB} *“Their good deeds will never be forgotten,”*^{NLT} *“His good deeds will be an honor to him forever,”*^{LIVING} *“his deeds of charity go on forever,”*^{WILLIAMS} *“his*

almsgiving continues forever,”^{MONTGOMERY} and *“His deeds of justice and goodness and kindness and benevolence will go on and endure forever!”*^{AMPLIFIED}

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it– by Given O. Blakely

Solomon says essentially the same thing in Proverbs 21:21: *“He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor.”* **The point is that the individual who consistently seeks righteousness will conduct himself righteously.** Jesus said of such a pursuit, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt 6:33). **The point here is that the godly person is consistent in the proper use of his resources.** His giving is nor sporadic, and his eyes do not fail to see the opportunities that are placed before him.

If this is taken to be descriptive of

Such righteous deeds are done because the individual has availed himself of the things that *“accompany salvation”* (Heb 6:9). By so doing, *“brotherly kindness”* is made known in considerate and faithful deeds of kindness – deeds which do not fail, or find a terminal point in this world. As it is written, *“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord*

The point is that the individual who consistently seeks righteousness will conduct himself righteously. Jesus said of such a pursuit, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). The point here is that the godly person is consistent in the proper use of his resources.

God’s righteousness, the statement is much like that of Isaiah 51:8: *“For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.”* This, however, is not the point of this text. This is Paul’s elaboration on the *“cheerful giver,”* whose giving is considered a deed of righteousness. **The “righteousness” of reference is the beneficent deeds of the man who fears God and keeps His commandments.**

By saying *“his righteousness remaineth for ever,”* Paul means that such works transfer into the world to come, following him after his life in this world has ended. As it is written, *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them”* (Rev 14:13).

Jesus Christ . . . if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:5-11).

In this masterful presentation of the case, Paul has linked ministering to the needs of the brethren to several things.

- Fellowship (8:4).
- Giving oneself to the Lord (8:5).
- Grace (8:6,7).
- Abounding (8:7).
- The sincerity of ones love (8:8).
- Following the example of Christ Jesus (8:9).
- The salvation wrought out by the

Son of God (8:9).

- A willing mind (8:12).
- Supplying the want of their brethren (8:14).
- A ready mind (8:19).
- Ministering to the saints (9:1).
- A willingness that provokes others (9:2).
- Giving as a matter of bounty (9:5a).
- Not being covetous (9:5b).
- Sowing and reaping bountifully (9:6).
- Purposing in the heart (9:7a).
- Not giving grudgingly (9:7b).
- Giving cheerfully (9:7c).
- Being loved by God (9:7d).
- God causing all grace to abound toward us (9:8a).
- Having all sufficiency in all things (9:8b).
- Abounding to every good work (9:8c).
- In fulfillment of Scripture, dispersing abroad (9:9a).
- In fulfillment of Scripture, giving to the poor (9:9b).
- In fulfillment of Scripture, possessing an enduring righteousness (9:9c).

There are twenty-five Divine associations with taking up a collection for the poor saints. The person who is *“unskillful in the word of righteousness”* (Heb 5:13), could never make these associations. Those who cannot *“rightly divide,”* or *“correctly handle the word of truth”*^{NIV} are oblivious of these adjuncts to the matter of giving. But giving is connected to these realities, and when those connections are perceived they provide a stronger incentive than the most demanding law or most threatening judgments.

GODLY REASONING

This is a sterling example of godly reasoning, and of the superiority of perception to feeling or raw emotion. **It is possible to play upon the harp of emotion so that a person gives only to gain relief**

from the misery brought on by a smitten conscience. It is also possible to motivate people to give because they imagine they will gain financially and materially from the activity. **However, when people give because they have gained a grasp of the**

truth as it is in Jesus, and because they love the saints, they have given out of the most noble incentives. Their gifts are a thank offering to God, given cheerfully, and to aid their brethren, and confirming their trustworthiness.

HE MINISTERS SEED TO THE SOWER

“ 10a **Now He that ministereth seed to the sower . . .**” Other versions read, *“He who supplies seed to the sower,”* NKJV *“He who gives seed for putting into the field,”* BBE *“He that findeth seed to the sower,”* GENEVA *“The One who so freely provides seed for the sower,”* NJB *“For God is the One who gives seed to the farmer,”* NLT *“He who is supplying seed to the sower,”* YLT *“God gives seed to the man who plants,”* IE *“He who continually supplies seed to the sower,”* WEYMOUTH and *“He who always supplies the sower with seed.”* WILLIAMS

Here is a refreshing view of the Lord: *“He who is supplying seed to the sower.”* YLT For Paul, this is a deep desire for the saints in Corinth. **However, it is based upon the nature of God, and of His dealings with His people – matters that are revealed in the Scriptures.**

It was God who first brought forth the seed. *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Gen 1:12). As our text confirms, God did not withdraw from His creation, but is still ministering *“seed to the sower.”*

God even marshals all of nature in order that seed might be brought forth for the sower. Isaiah declared, *“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me*

void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa 55:11).

Who Is the “Sower?”

First, the “sower,” as Paul is using the term in this passage, refers to the person who is cheerfully giving to the needs of the saints. Thus he has already encouraged liberal offering for the poor Jewish brethren by reminding the Corinthians, *“But this I say, He which SOWETH sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which SOWETH bountifully shall reap also bountifully”* (2 Cor 9:6). Now He brings the Lord into the matter, affirming that **He** is the Supplier

- ☛ It is the SOWER that receives the seed, **not** the one who does not sow – *“to the sower.”*
- ☛ A “sower” is one who is giving willingly (2 Cor 8:12).
- ☛ A “sower” is a “cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7).
- ☛ A “sower” is one who is not covetous (2 Cor 9:5).
- ☛ Seed to “sow” is equated with the surplus, or “abundance” from which a person gives – as defined in 2 Corinthians 8:14.

The Spirit has already said that God is imminent in the affairs of His people, giving an abundance to some, in order that they might supply the lack of another (2 Cor 8:12-15). Now He fortifies this teaching with the powerful affirmation of an unwavering characteristic of the Lord.

of resources.

There are several preliminary things to be seen in the phrase, *“He that ministereth seed to the sower”* – a saying that is pregnant with meaning.

- ☛ The Source of seed, whether it is for the field or for the saints, is God Himself – **“He that ministereth.”**
- ☛ He supplies the seed continually – *“continually supplies,”* WEYMOUTH and *“always supplies.”* WILLIAMS

- ☛ Strictly speaking, an “abundance,” surplus, or more than is needed, is defined by God, not man.

The Spirit has already said that God is imminent in the affairs of His people, giving an abundance to some, in order that they might supply the lack of another (2 Cor 8:12-15). Now He fortifies this teaching with the powerful affirmation of an unwavering characteristic of the Lord.

GOD GIVES SOMETHING TO GIVE

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it– by Given O. Blakely

What does it mean for God to “minister seed to the sower?” For the farmer, it means God gives him something to plant, whether for a field of grain, a vineyard, or an olive garden. **In this text, it means God gives the individual resources to give to His people.** It goes without saying that it is not wise to use such resources for personal uses.

How Can We Know?

If one wonders how it is possible to distinguish such resources, I answer that it cannot be by means of a static and lifeless procedure. The “just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), and it is only by living in this manner that a person can know what God has “ministered” to him. Everything in spiritual life depends upon faith – an unwavering knowledge of and dependence upon the living God.

God illuminates and directs His

a husband knowing his wife (as in Gen 4:1,5; Matt 1:25).

Those who live expecting God to strike them, so to speak, with a thunderbolt to get their attention and direct them, are not wise. God can certainly arrest a person’s attention by violent interruptions, and let us make no mistake about it. However, that is not the mode of operation in Christ Jesus. **It is as we are “looking to Jesus”**(Heb 12:1-2) **that we are directed with His “eye,” not His rod.** Thus God said through David, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee **with Mine eye.** Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee” (Psa 32:8-9). The latter part of this text – “lest they come near unto thee” – can be rendered, “lest they kick against thee.” ^{CALVIN} Some versions read, “Otherwise they will not come near

Cor 3:18). The New Covenant involves God shining into our hearts “with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus”(2 Cor 4:6). It involves “a new creation,” where old things “pass away” and “all things become new”(2 Cor 5:17). **Exactly where does a recalcitrant and wayward spirit fit into that scenario?**

The New Covenant is one in which reconciliation with God is realized (Rom 5:10), His laws are written upon the heart and put into the mind (Heb 10:16), and a new heart and a new spirit are received (Ezek 36:26). In salvation we are called “into the fellowship” of God’s dear Son (1 Cor 1:9), and become “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). **All of this provides a framework in which we actually walk with God, and consequently come to increase “in the knowledge of God”** (Col 1:10). There is not a hint of a salvation from God in Christ Jesus in which these involvements are not realized.

The Relevance of This to Our Text

God ministers “seed to the sower” within the context of newness of life and its ordained involvements. That is the environment in which every salvational benefit is realized. **It is the context of every single facet of participation.** If a person chooses to walk by sight instead of by faith, or live in the flesh instead of in the Spirit, all of these benefits are forfeited. **There simply are no covenantal provisions and benefits that come to those who choose to live in the realm from which Jesus has delivered us.**

No one will receive an abundance of “seed” to be used in God’s work if they quench the Spirit by walking in the flesh and being a friend of the world. **When the “mind of the flesh,” or the “carnal mind,” becomes dominant in the individual, the Divine supply line is cut off.** In that case, religion cannot extend beyond mere theory. There is, in such a case, no participation, no power, no promise, and no partaking – none at all! A person cannot participate in the blessings of God while living in contradiction of them. **The Lord will not draw near to those who find Him repulsive, or direct those who have a penchant for walking contrary to Him.** All of this seems so elementary, and yet those who perceive it appear to be few.

God illuminates and directs His people within the context of their fellowship with Him. It is as they “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7), “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16-17), and “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7,) that He directs their paths. To say it another way, when we are conscious of the Lord, and He is in our thoughts, we will tend to see and do the right thing.

people within the context of their fellowship with Him. It is as they “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7), “walk in the Spirit”(Gal 5:16-17), and “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7,) that He directs their paths. **To say it another way, when we are conscious of the Lord, and He is in our thoughts, we will tend to see and do the right thing.** This is precisely what Peter was referring to when he wrote, “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue”(2 Pet 1:3). Another version reads, “through the [full, personal] knowledge of Him.” ^{AMPLIFIED} “The knowledge of Him” refers to our involvement with God – like

to you.” ^{NASB} or “they will not come to you.” ^{NIV} The KJV emphasizes that the horse or mule that must have a bit and bridle tend to be rebellious, and must be forced to do their master’s will. The other versions emphasize the lack of affinity such beasts have with their master.

From the New Covenant perspective, being guiding with God’s eye is not one of several options. **There really is no provision for “bit and bridle” people in Christ Jesus. Just where would they fit in?** The New Covenant is associated with an ongoing change within its constituents – a change that is facilitated by the Holy Spirit Himself, and is from “one degree of glory to another” ^{NRSV} (2

HE MINISTERS BREAD FOR FOOD

^{10b} . . . **both minister bread for your food . . .**” Other versions read, “*He who supplies . . . bread for food,*”^{NKJV} “*He who gives . . . bread for food,*”^{BBE} “*will minister likewise bread for food,*”^{GENEVA} “*The One who so freely provides . . . food to eat*”^{NJB} “*For God is the One who provides . . . bread to eat,*”^{NLT} “*He who is supplying . . . bread for food,*”^{YLT} “*He will give him bread to eat,*”^{IE} “*God who continually supplies . . . bread for eating*”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*He who always supplies . . . the eater with bread.*”^{WILLIAMS}

Whether it is “seed” for sowing or “bread” for eating, it all comes from the Lord. Israel provides the most sterling example of this reality. During their wilderness journey it is written that God fed them with bread “in the wilderness” (Ex 16:32). It was a different kind of

bread – a miraculous bread – that had marvelous utility for those who were traveling through the wilderness.

God is still providing the staples of life – “bread for your food.” Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us *this day our daily bread*” (Matt 6:11). Again, the depiction of this kind of provision is seen in the journeying Israelites. God gave them manna that was to be gathered “daily.” The people were to gather “a certain rate every day” (Ex 16:4-5). A surplus of provision was given to them only when it was needed – the day before the Sabbath. On that day, the Lord gave them “*the bread of two days*” (Ex 16:29).

The ministration of bread “for your food” postulates a traveling posture – one in which we are strangers and

pilgrims in the earth. It views daily provisions as “*necessary uses*” (Tit 3:14).

The point that Paul is making is that he by no means desires for any of the Corinthians to be short of their needs because they have given to the poor saints in Jerusalem. **He desires for God to fully supply their bread, without any reduction in it – even though they give a bountiful offering to their needy brethren.**

When there is a noble cause toward which the saints have opportunity to contribute, let us be swift to confirm that we desire that God minister bread for their food as well as the ones who stand in need. Although we work in order to eat, our food – all of it – comes from the Lord.

HE MULTIPLES THE SEED THAT IS SOWN

^{10c} . . . **and multiply your seed sown . . .**” Other versions read, “*multiply the seed you have sown,*”^{NKJV} “*multiply your seed for sowing,*”^{NASB} “*supply and increase your store of seed,*”^{NIV} “*supply and multiply your seed for sowing,*”^{NRSV} “*supply and multiply your resources,*”^{RSV} “*will take care for the growth of your seed,*”^{BBE} “*supply and make abundant your sowing,*”^{DARBY} “*will provide you with ample store of seed for sowing,*”^{NJB} “*give you more and more seed to plant,*”^{LIVING} “*God will also give you plenty of seed,*”^{IE} “*will supply you with seed and multiply it,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*will supply and make plenteous your seed,*”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*will provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is a most refreshing concept: God can give His people more seed to sow. He can multiply what they have to give. During the Law, God promised Israel that if they walked according to His ways, He would bless their storehouses. “*The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest*

thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Deut 28:8). The “storehouse” is where the seed was kept, and differed from the “barn,” where the harvest was stored. Thus Jesus said of the ravens, “*Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?*” (Luke 12:24).

In our text, of course, the Lord is not speaking about agricultural seed, but particularly of the financial “seed” that is “sown” in the support of the needy brethren. He is speaking of the

“abundance,” or “surplus” mentioned in the eighth chapter (8:14). This means more than abundantly meeting YOUR needs. This is the sowing that has to do with “*abounding unto every good work.*” Let me remind you again how Paul has strengthened our hearts by proclaiming what God is “able” to do. “*God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others*”^{LIVING} (2 Cor 9:8).

All of this presumes the presence of several spiritual virtues – virtues that we cannot afford to be without.

He is speaking of the “abundance,” or “surplus” mentioned in the eighth chapter (8:14). This means more than abundantly meeting YOUR needs.

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it – by Given O. Blakely

- A certain detachment from this present evil world.
- A faithful steward.
- A sensitivity to the will of the Lord.
- A “ready,” forward, and willing mind.
- A fervent love for the brethren.
- That the individual is walking in the light.
- That the person is looking for opportunities to honor God with his substance.
- That there is a dependency upon the Lord for daily necessities, and a surplus to be used by God.
- That the believer wants to have a lot of seed to sow.
- That there is an inclination to be prepared, or be “ready unto every good work.”
- That the person is not covetous.
- That the person is a cheerful giver.
- That the person is walking in the newness of life.

As in any of the “good works” that God has ordained, “that we should walk in them,” it is assumed that the people have diligently prepared themselves to be used by God. As it is written, “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and **prepared unto every good work**” (2 Tim 2:21), and is not “reprobate unto every good work,” as those who deny Him in their works (Tit 1:16).

It simply is not possible to divorce what we do from who we are. Our works are our character are married; our deeds and our nature always travel together.

HE INCREASES THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“^{10d} . . . and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” Other versions read, “increase the harvest of your righteousness,”^{NASB} “increase the fruits of your benevolence,”^{GENEVA} “make the harvest of your uprightness a bigger one,”^{NJB} “produce a great harvest of generosity in you,”^{NLT} “so that you can give away more and more fruit from your harvest,”^{LIVING} “make your righteousness grow into a fine harvest,”^{IE} “cause your almsgiving to yield a plentiful harvest,”^{WEYMOUTH} “enlarge the harvest which your deeds of charity yield,”^{WILLIAMS} “increase

with what is harvested and placed in the barn for the use of the one who did the sowing. Here, however, “righteousness” is applied to the giving itself, and the “fruits” to the outcome of the giving, not the target of it. There is an objective for all righteous expressions. They are not an end of themselves. Like all righteous deeds, giving produces a God-honoring harvest. For example, the help of the needy is not an end of itself. The fact that the saints have helped those in need does not conclude the matter. Paul is asking the Lord to increase the result of their

glory of God” (2 Cor 4:15). When the poor saints in Jerusalem received the gift, Paul is praying that a great eruption of thanksgiving to God will occur, thereby increasing the fruits of their righteousness. That is, more and more glory will be brought to the Lord.

An Example

God is not glorified when no association is made between the gift received and the God who enabled it. Take, for example, the great miracles of Christ Jesus. On one occasion, He confronted ten lepers who cried out to Him, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When Jesus saw them He said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” The Scriptures tell us, “And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.” Jesus had sown precious seed into that hopeless soil. What kind of glory will be brought to the Lord in the harvest of healing that it yielded. We are told that only “one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.” He “fell down on his face” at the feet of Jesus, “giving Him thanks.” Surely that will be enough. At least there was one of the lepers that duly honored the Lord. After all, as some say, the numbers are not important.

Jesus is quite sensitive to the whole situation and responds, “Were

God is not glorified when no association is made between the gift received and the God who enabled it.

the harvest springing up from your almsgiving,”^{MONTGOMERY} “increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness, and charity],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “and, for harvest, the satisfying bread of deeds well done.”^{PHILLIPS}

Ordinarily “fruit” is associated

giving – to enhance the outcome of their gift.

The principle is stated earlier in this book. It is a principle that pervades every aspect of kingdom activity. “For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the

there not ten cleansed? **but where are the nine?** There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger” (Luke 17:17-18). There was not a multiplication of the “fruits of righteousness.” The glory that God received was not appropriate for the measure of grace that had been dispensed! What Jesus had done was deserving of more than the response of a single man! Ten had been blessed, and ten should have given thanks!

Men may grow accustomed to meager yields, but God does not. He cannot abide them. That is why Paul expresses his desire for God to multiply the harvest of their benevolence.

If it is true that God has so

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orchestrated salvation so that – “Unto Him be glory **in the church** by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph 3:21) – then “glory” to Him is the only proper outcome of “good works.” That is the “increase” that Paul is desiring for the Corinthians. It is an outcome that cannot be produced by niggardly giving.

This is the kind of “fruit” on which men cannot capitalize. It brings no benefit to “the flesh,” and does not produce any incentive for insensitive souls to be benevolent – especially toward the household of faith. But for the person who is tender toward the Lord, these “fruits of righteousness” are of the greatest relevance.

CONCLUSION

The tragic results of a church that has “fallen away” are becoming more and more obvious to me. **Where such a condition exists there is little or no sensitivity toward God.** Men do not live by faith or walk in Spirit (Heb 10:38; Gal 5:16-17). Their hope shrivels and wanes instead of abounding (Rom 15:13). Their affections are not set on things above (Col 3:1-2), and they do not abstain from fleshly lust that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11). The love of the brethren recedes into the background, if indeed, it is present at all (1 John 5:24). Men do not press toward the mark (Phil 3:14), fight the good fight of faith, or seek to lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). They do not cleanse themselves of all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). They are not found crucifying the flesh, together with its affections and lusts (Gal 5:24). They become carnally minded, and thus die toward God (Rom 8:6). They become friends with the world, and thus become the enemies of God (James 4:4). The “flesh” produces more in them than “the Spirit” (Gal 2:19-23), and they do not hear “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 2:7). They no longer “live by every word of God” (Lk 4:4), “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt

5:6), or “run with patience” the race that has been set before them (Heb 12:1). Instead of purging out the “old leaven,” they allow it to creep into their presence (1 Cor 5:7). Instead of going “on to perfection,” they remain in a state where they need to again be taught the “first principles” (Heb 5:12-6:1). Instead of “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,” they are overcome by them (Tit 2:11-12). Instead of being “strong in faith,” they are “weak in the faith” (Rom 4:19-20).

Who does not know that these conditions are common within the professing church? Who is not keenly aware of the relative rarity of anyone wearing the name of Christ who has risen above such woeful deficiencies?

And, what may be said of such a condition? What impact does it have upon the work of the Lord, true benevolence, preaching the Gospel, and shining as lights in the world? Does anyone imagine that a fallen condition does not have an impact upon these things? Does the work of God go along even though there is serious fault found among those who wear the name of Jesus? Or does Jesus really “remove” the churches who stop their ears to His admonitions (Rev 2:5)?

The truth of the matter is that a dead church does not bring the glory to God that is intended to occur in Christ Jesus. **The only glory such a church brings to God is to justify Him in excluding them from His courts.** Such a

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church will **not** be given seed to sow. It will not be allowed to sow seed in God's field. It will **not** reap the benefits of a great harvest, or be the cause of

thanksgiving in others. For such things to occur in a lifeless church would require God to ignore the sacrifice of Christ, and deny Himself. In such a case the New

Covenant would be nothing more than a philosophical and unrealistic goal, and the work of the Holy Spirit a hopeless ideal. Such things cannot be!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/11/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The thirtieth lesson will cover verses one through six of the tenth chapter: **"EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL WEAPONRY."** When once it dawns upon our hearts that the spiritual battle in which we are engaged is of great magnitude, a deep appreciation for effectual spiritual weaponry will be experienced. This lesson will deal with that Divine arsenal. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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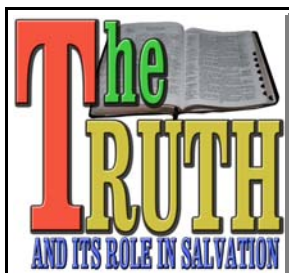
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FIRST ANNUAL PREACHING FESTIVAL

Sponsored by The Word of Truth Fellowship. November 4-5, 2005. Friday: 7:00-9:00 PM. Saturday: 12:30-4:00 PM. The theme of the Festival will be, "The Truth and Its Role In Salvation. 6-7 Messages, Hymn singing, Scripture quotations by the youth, and provision for audience responses to the messages. This will be a time of rich fellowship in Jesus.



Don DeWalt Prayer Center

What men invest in the Kingdom of God will determine the measure of benefits they receive from it— by Given O. Blakely
