

Pressed Down, Shaken Together, & Running Over - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

One of the commentaries I read this week said that we all have a subconscious mental air missile defense system when we start talking about money and giving. Of course, there are many reasons for this. Yes, there are abuses in the church coming either from preachers who manipulate people to give with the promise of riches if they do. And there are churches and non-profit organizations who misuse the generosity of people using the funds without integrity or making the leaders wealthy. Yet, let's be honest, underneath any other reasons for this lies the reality that we have really put way too much trust in our possessions and financial portfolio. Often we claim to believe in Jesus, yet our true faith is in our financial stability and comfort. We have sticky fingers, which is demonstrated in the fact that on average, the poorer a person is the higher percentage of their income is given to the church. So it seems that if we want to make the church comfortable for people we should avoid this subject.

Yet, that is hardly what the Bible does. Throughout the text of Scripture there is a call to generosity among the people of God. This is revealed in the teaching sections and Proverbs and then demonstrated in the lives of those who walked with God. Some estimates are that as much as a third of Jesus' teaching touched on the topic of people's resources and their giving. Paul continues this trend in his letters, often reminding the people to be generous to and through their church. In fact, 2 Corinthians 8-9 are actually a fund-raising letter, a section included in this larger letter inviting the Corinthian church to join with the other churches in modern day Greece and Turkey in giving generously to care for their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who are suffering because of a famine and persecution for their faith. Yet, in all the passage what you will not find is any indication that we are to give because God needs our resources. God does not invite us to give because He is under resourced and in some way needs our giving to fund his mission. This is why we have to start with the last two sermons any time we talk about our finances and generosity. First, God is the ultimate giver, and second, He is the owner of all. Becoming a Christian means I am the receiver of His gifts while at the same time confessing that all that I am and all that I own now belong to Christ.

Still, our resources have a powerful hold over us, and become idols themselves and also a means to obtain other idols. God could fund our building, His mission, the care for the poor, and anything else He wants to accomplish without us. Yet, from the beginning it has been His purpose to include us in the work of the Kingdom through our generosity as an invitation to experience His grace and mercy in a deeper way. It is through our generosity that God prunes our fingers off of our idols and lifts our eyes to heaven in worship. Our giving then puts us before the infinitely generous God in a position to drink deeply from His grace and find beauty in the provision He gives us. And when we give above what we believe we can afford it leads us to greater faith and trust in the promises of God.

Paul tells us that God loves a cheerful giver. Now, we have to be careful with this and the other promises surrounding giving. Let's be clear what Paul is not saying. Paul is not saying that you are loved because you give, and he is not saying that God does not love the person who chooses to keep his resources. God's love is settled and unconditional, and is never based on our performance. Let me illustrate it this way. I love my children. I tell them all the time that nothing they do could cause me to love them more, and no failure to obey can push them outside of my love. They are my children, I am their father. Yet, when one of them willingly chose to obey or does something as an act of love toward my wife and I, of course I scoop them up in my lap and tell them how much I love them. Their obedience and expression of affection has put them in a place of blessing with their father and therefore they can experience the joy of my love for them. It is not that I love them more, but they are experiencing my love in a deeper, more relational and trusting way. So it is with God when we trust Him with our finances as revealed by a growth in our generosity. Our generosity, when

coupled with faith and obedience to Christ is evidence of our love and trust in Jesus and puts us in the position of experiencing the rich blessings poured out by God the Father through Christ His Son to you and me.

Therefore the Bible is always pushing those who know Jesus to greater and fuller generosity. It is one of the clearest markers of a person who is already experiencing the grace of God in life. And our faithful giving puts us into the position of receiving grace upon grace. Jesus teaches that when we give it will be given to us. Only in modern times has anyone read this as a promise of riches. Throughout church history we have understood Jesus' words as a promise to care and provide for needs while showering us with the blessings of grace and righteousness. But those blessing will be pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Think of your lawn waste trash can in the Fall when you are filling it with leaves. You think it is full, but you push down on them, even having the kids jump on top to push them down, and then you shake it to make more space, and you add more leaves. Then you fill it again, and repeat. This is the image of the blessing to God to His generous people. He invites us to take a shovel and dig pouring into God's hole. Yet, God also digs pouring into ours, and God has a much bigger shovel.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Isaiah 60	Isaiah 61	Isaiah 62	Isaiah 63	Isaiah 64	Isaiah 65	Isaiah 66

Reading from this past week: Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
 Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Matthew 6:19-34

Family Worship

Song - *Amazing Love (You are My King)*
<https://youtu.be/oqLa4EWyuhA>

Gospel Project

Unit: Into the Wilderness
 Story: God deserves our worship.
 Big Picture Question: What is worship?
 Answer: Worship is celebrating the greatness of God.
 Scripture: Leviticus 1-4

New City Catechism

Question #5: What else did God create?
 Answer: God created all things and all his creation was very good
 Verse: Genesis 1:31

Scripture

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- Why is it so difficult to talk about giving and money?
- How should the teaching about tithing in the Bible help us in our goals for giving?
- Why does God love a cheerful giver?
- What is promised for the generous believer in Jesus' words in Luke 6 and Paul's writing here in 2 Corinthians 9?

Prayer

*Pray for our Moms Next Ministry reaching out to mothers of elementary aged children in our area and for the leaders from our church investing in their lives.
 *Pray that as we launch our Rise Up & Build Campaign we as a church would trust God and be obedient disciples in through our giving and generosity.