

2 Corinthians Class 11 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 11 in our series on **2 Corinthians: The Ministry of Reconciliation**.

We did have two questions submitted from class number 10. So let's address those as we begin this class.

Question #1:

Was the collection for the Judeans, spoken about by Paul in the **eighth chapter**, in addition to the third tithe? Can we assume that the third tithe was also undertaken by the Jews and Gentiles in the Churches during this time, with the Jewish members no longer submitting the tithes to the Levites, but now to the ministry?

Well, I think we can be fairly certain this is not a third tithe issue for several reasons. For one thing, third tithe is a command, and God sets the amount that we are to give. Paul would not have needed to urge the brethren to give generously, as they were able. Third tithe is a responsibility, not a gift that we might give.

In addition, Paul urged them to complete the process. Third tithe is an ongoing matter. It's not something that can ever be completed. It continues from there. Anything we could say about how the first century Church may have administered tithing—third tithe, especially—would really be speculation. It would be very nice for us if, all down through history, the Church always understood exactly the same things in the same way, but I'm afraid it's not really that way.

I recently had the opportunity to chat with Mr. George Meeker, who was in town to walk his granddaughter down the aisle for her wedding. Mr. Meeker's first Feast was in Belknap Springs in 1951. He told me that while he was a student at Ambassador College, there were a number of doctrines that were just beginning to be understood that we very often take for granted today. He specifically mentioned second tithe as an example of that; it wasn't understood prior to that point.

I remember very well when the Church began in the 1960s to understand the spirit in man. Since the historical records through the history of the Church are really very sparse, it's difficult for us to know exactly how much the Church has understood at various times. It may well be that the Sabbath has consistently been understood across the years. But, we know, for example, with the Church of God, Seventh Day, where Mr. Armstrong began to understand the truth, they never did really understand or embrace the holy days.

It's apparent that the temple in Jerusalem continued to play an important role for at least those Christians who were in Judea in the first century until its destruction in 70 A.D. Did some of those individuals continue to give their tithes and offerings at the temple? Certainly a possibility. We just really don't know. We really can't say how those matters may have been handled in the first century Church.

If the third tithe was practiced as we basically understand it, undoubtedly it would have been administered locally because having a central administration just simply wouldn't have been feasible in the first century. I think that also illustrates for us that, while the Church never has the authority or, for that matter, even the desire to set aside what God says we are to do, the Church does have authority to adjust the way it may administer things as conditions change throughout time.

Question #2:

Who are the brethren to whom Paul is referring in **2 Corinthians 8:23** and as messengers of the Churches?

Well, as I tried to explain in class number 9, or, excuse me, class number 10, these were basically delegates that had been selected by the local congregations to accompany the gift that they were sending to the needy brethren in Judea. They assisted in getting the contributions there safely. They also served as, in a sense, ambassadors from their local congregations to those who were going to be receiving these gifts. And, they also, in a sense, served as guarantors of the integrity of Paul and those who were taking the gifts to the people in Judea. We have no record of their names. Paul simply referred to them briefly. And perhaps the people who were receiving the letter had a better understanding of who they might be, but we just really don't have any more grasp of it than that.

So again, thank you for your questions. And as we get ready for this class, class number 11, we do once again ask God's blessing upon the class. So if you'll bow your heads and join me, please.

[Prayer]

[6:05]

We've been making good progress. We have five more chapters to cover. We hope to cover them very quickly in the next few classes. But, we do want to make sure we spend the time to understand the very important principles that we find recorded in this epistle.

Last time, as we finished through **chapter 8**, we talked about the offering that was being collected for the needy saints in Judea. The apostle Paul was giving certain instructions about it, and as we explained, obviously, we don't have that same collection going on today. But, we do find some very important principles about "giving" and what God expects of us.

As we brought out in the last class—and we will continue today as we go through **chapter 9**—we see some principles about giving that apply to all of our giving. That sometimes, as we read through these and look at them, we think of them almost exclusively as the giving of money, the giving of offerings in that way. But, as we were reminded, we are called to live a "give way" of life, and we give more than money. We give time; we give concern; we give attention. And the way that we give is really important to God. So we're going to continue with that concept as we go forward here in **chapter 9**.

2 Corinthians 9 verse 1 *Now concerning the ministering (or the serving) to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;*

In other words: "You're well aware of what the needs are, and I certainly don't need to drum up a greater response from you." That's not what the ministers of Jesus Christ do. That's not our approach. We're not trying to get people to do more, do more, do more. But what we find here is that Paul has encouraged the Corinthians by citing the example of the Macedonians. The Macedonians had very little, and yet their desire, their willingness to give, was, as Paul thought, more than what could be expected. And yet, they were eager to be givers.

[8:15]

Now, at the same time, he's also been encouraging the Macedonian brethren by the example of those in Corinth, saying: "Those in Corinth were ready a year ago. They were ready to give their contribution then." So, he was using each congregation as an encouragement to the other "to see how your brethren are doing."

So he says: "I don't really need to make some big mention to you. It's kind of superfluous for me, in a way, to say a great deal to you about the offering because," he says, **verse 2**:

[for] I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. (So, most of them are very inspired by their brethren.)

Again, I think it's a simple example that we see in the Church today. We are very often encouraged by the example of our brethren when we see how much effort they put forward into various things. It may be an offering. It may be other things. We've seen the reports, for example, from some areas in the world where people have to walk several miles to get to services. Or where getting there is a very difficult thing to do, and yet they make that effort, week after week. In some cases, even though they may have certain limitations in their ability to move around or do things, they still make that effort to be there. And we're inspired by that. We are encouraged to recognize how much effort they put into being able to be a part of Sabbath services each week. And it inspires the rest of us to recognize how important it is so that we can be a part too.

So, this is simply an example where Paul is doing this. When the Corinthians had heard about the need and the collection, their immediate reaction was enthusiastic desire to help. Paul used that reaction as a good example as he spoke later to the Macedonians. The Macedonians had, in turn, completed the process, and they were not only willing, they actually sent the offering. And Paul is now telling the folks in Corinth: "We hope that you're ready to do that too."

He says: **verse 3** *Yet I have sent the brethren* ("I sent a few people down there ahead of time."), *lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready;*

Now, again, he's not doubting the Corinthian brethren. But he's just saying: "You know, we've made this brag about you being ready because you told us you would be ready. Well, I'd sure hate for them to show up—because some from Macedonia are going to be accompanying us, and that's a part of the whole offering that's being given, that the various congregations have been invited to send representatives along with it—and we would hate for them to show up in Corinth and find out that: 'Oh, well, Corinth really isn't quite ready yet.' "

[11:08]

He says: **4** *lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.* ("So, we don't want anybody to be taken by surprise.")

So Paul is saying: "This is what we're doing. But," he said, "I know it's unnecessary, in a sense, for me to tell you about this offering. You're well aware of what's going on."

So, he says: **verse 5** *Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you* (to encourage them to go to you) *ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.*

"So when you made the promise, you were eager; you were happy to do it. Now, if suddenly we show up and you're not ready, well then, it's kind of like: 'Oh. I'm not really ready,' and you feel kind of obligated, and it's not the same way of giving that God is pleased with."

But he gives a principle. And it's—in a sense, it's an agricultural principle, but it's a principle that any of us should be able to understand.

[Verse 6] *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

So, we see this principle. Now we would certainly expect that, in a farming situation, if a farmer only

sows a small amount of property, then the harvest is not going to be very big. He sows more, then the harvest can be bigger. Even at that, though, we understand that for any farmer sowing seed, putting the seed out there in the field isn't all there is to it. There's much more involved. There's more for the farmer to do.

But beyond that, every time the farmer sows his field, it is, in a sense, an act of faith. It is a belief that the water will come, that the pests will be limited, that he'll be able to control the growing of the crop, and that it will produce, ultimately—because of good weather—it will produce the crop. If the rains don't come, no matter how much he seeds, it's not going to produce anything. If the rains come too heavily, it may destroy the crop; it may rot in the field. There are all kinds of things that can go wrong. So, putting that seed into the ground is an act of faith.

And I think, in a sense, that's part of what God is saying here—that when we give, it's an act of faith. It isn't a matter of, suddenly, we can automatically see: we've made an investment, and we're getting a return on our investment. No. We're trusting God when we give our offerings, just as the farmer is trusting God to provide the weather that's needed, and the water and all to produce that crop.

[13:58]

Now, he uses a couple of interesting words here: the word *sparingly* and the word *bountifully*. *Sparingly* is a word that is—we are told in the lexicons—pertains to: “what is done in a limited, sparing manner and of negligible quantity or extent.”

The other word he uses here is *bountifully*. Literally, “on the basis of blessing” is literally what it means. “A large amount of something, with the implication of blessing or abundance.”

PRINCIPLES FOR GODLY GIVING

Sparingly = *phedoménós*

Pertaining to what is done in a limited, sparing manner and of negligible quantity or extent

Bountifully = *ἐπ' εὐλογίας*

Literally “on the basis of blessing”; a large amount of something, with the implication of blessing or abundance

So, he tells us here that the way that we give is similar to the act of the farmer in trying to grow his crop. Throughout this section, it's, again, important to apply what we see here to all of the forms of giving that we give. Because, as we said, there are a lot of different forms. If we think of this instruction, or this principle, here as only applying to the giving of a monetary offering, then we're really limiting our understanding of what God is showing us. God is showing us a bigger principle, that the more we put into something, the more the return is going to be. Not that we can directly produce that return. It's not the same, in a sense, as an investment. But, it is a “giving” with a recognition that we **expect** God, we **look forward to** God blessing the effort that's involved.

We—let's say, for example, we're talking about serving in the Church. Well, if we serve at a minimal level—okay, we can do that. It's still a level of service, I suppose, in a sense, and we can serve in a very limited way. But, we should recognize that the return on that—the result of our very, very limited serving—is probably going to be limited as well. The more a person is willing to serve, the more the opportunities for service come along.

Now, obviously, there's a limit. None of us has the freedom to just serve 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We don't have that freedom. But, to be able to serve at the extent we can—not just the minimal amount, getting by, and say: “Well, I do serve” —instead, to be able to serve more abundantly is going to produce a more abundant result.

One of the things we tell the students here at Foundation Institute—we have a second semester class that's called “Service in the Church,” and we focus upon the various forms service can take. And it's really kind of surprising, as you begin to go through that, to see all the different areas where service is

possible. I will tell you—for example, in the area of serving, to be able to have a weekly Sabbath service—what’s involved in that. We get input from the students each year. We ask them to think about: Okay, what areas of service are involved? We have over 100 different aspects of service that have to take place in order to have a weekly Sabbath service. There are plenty of opportunities for those who want to serve. And that’s a part of our class.

But we tell them: “Okay, when you graduate from Foundation Institute, and you go to your local Church area, are you suddenly qualified to take over whatever service is there? No. And the chances are good that when you arrive, you may be given certain opportunities, but they probably are somewhat limited, because, after all, many of those responsibilities are already being fulfilled by other people. So, how do you begin to serve when other people are already doing all of the service?”

[17:54]

Well, what you should do is you show yourself **willing** to serve, willing to help out wherever the need is. Not just: “Well, I think I should serve here or there.” But, wherever the opportunity is there, you make yourself available. And **as** you do that, you will find that more opportunities come your way. If you sow *sparingly*, there won’t be very many opportunities. If you sow *bountifully*, then probably there will be more opportunities that open up to you. Now we’ll talk about that as we go a little further. But we do need to keep this in mind: that the aspects, the principles of giving that are given here—like this one about sowing *sparingly* or *bountifully*—apply to **every** area of service or **every** area of giving that we have.

We should also note that—just as the farmer, in most cases—what we sow may not come back to us in exactly the same form. Now if we apply that to the giving of a monetary offering, when we give *abundantly*, it doesn’t necessarily mean that God provides more money for us. He may provide for us in other ways. Remember when Israel was wandering in the wilderness, their clothing didn’t wear out. Their sandals didn’t wear out, even though they’re walking across sand which should have worn everything out. It didn’t wear out in the way that you normally would expect. That’s a blessing. That’s something that God can do, because clothing can be very expensive.

So, [if] someone is abundant in giving to God, God may cause their clothing to last longer. Or He may make clothing available to them in a different way. He may provide them with certain things or opportunities that they may not have had otherwise. But because they’ve given, God responds, but not necessarily in the same way. A farmer grows grain. Well, he plants grain, and he’s going to get the plants that grow up, and he can harvest more grain. If you’re growing a garden and you plant carrot seeds, you don’t expect to get carrot seeds. You get carrots. It comes back to you in a different form. So we have to keep that in mind as well. When we give, the bounty we receive from God may not be exactly the same form as what we gave.

So, let’s continue on here. With this principle in mind, that when we give—of our time, of our love, of our concern for others, or of our physical blessings—when we give bountifully, God says you’ll reap bountifully. It will come back to you in that way.

[20:33]

Verse 7 So (because of that principle, because what we do—because our giving is done in faith in God) *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

So each one is responsible to decide in his own heart what is an appropriate offering for him, or her, to give. That’s not something that can be measured by someone else. Our background, our personal

situation—all of those things are different for different people.

I remember working in a Church area at one time where, on one of the ends of the Church area, the people there had come from Eastern Europe, primarily, many of them. And, they had come to this country during the Great Depression. And the way that they grew up had a big impact on how they viewed what their financial situation was. The Church on the other end of the circuit was a very different group of people who were used to basically getting by for a long time, just on their own, without having a lot of income. And they viewed offerings a different way.

If we try to compare those two areas—when those people came from very different backgrounds—the amounts that they gave might seem very different. And yet, the heart was the same. Each, in each case, was “giving from the heart” what they thought would be an appropriate offering. God knows that. God judges those things. And we therefore are really not in a position to judge anybody else.

But, we have a responsibility. When you stop and think about that, it says: *as the individual purposes in his heart*. This implies that he gives some thought to the offering that’s involved. It isn’t simply a matter of: “Oh, well, how much do I have in my pocket?” Or: “How much do I have in my checking account at this point?” It’s a matter of thinking ahead of time, a matter of planning: Okay, I’d really like to be able to be generous, to give *bountifully*, as God says. What’s bountiful for me? What may be bountiful for me at this point, later on, years from now, or even weeks from now, may be different. But I have to consider where I am now, and I have to purpose *in my own heart*. It’s a result of inward decision, not simply a compulsion or what others are doing.

[23:08]

And you note here that God says He loves us to give, *not grudgingly or of necessity*, but because we really want to do so. And he uses this wonderful phrase: *God loves a cheerful giver*. It is used only here in the New Testament—the word *cheerful*. It means “a state of happiness that’s characterized by just being cheerful; being an upbeat person.” *God loves* it when we give cheerfully.

Now, again, just as in the previous verse, we often confine our thinking to the giving of a monetary offering. But, what about the other things we give? Service, for the most part in the Church, serving one another is not something that often requires a lot of extra money. Generally speaking, that’s not the kind of service we give. But it does require our time. Now we all know we all have the same amount of time.

Some of you will remember Mr. Armstrong’s *Autobiography*, where he talked about, as a student in school, that there was an assignment given over the weekend. And, when he came in on Monday morning, he didn’t have the assignment done. And he told the teacher: “Well, I didn’t have time to get it done.” And the teacher told him: “Herbert, you had exactly the same amount of time as everyone else. It was how you determined to use that time.” Mr. Armstrong took that lesson very seriously, and he remembered it the rest of his days.

Yes, we all have the same amount of time. The decision is how we’re going to use it. When we give true service to God’s people or to God’s Church, we are giving up a certain amount of time. We only have a limited amount of time—24 hours each day—and certain of those hours are already committed to eating and sleeping and cleaning ourselves and taking care of our immediate needs as an individual or as a family. There are certain commitments that we make. We can’t abandon our family for the purpose of service. We can’t fail to provide. We have to work and provide for ourselves. So, there are certain things that we have to do.

But **all** of us have a certain amount of time that is able to be used in whatever way we choose.

Sometimes it's limited. You have small children. You all know that they can consume an **enormous** amount of your time. And that time is going to vary as we go through different situations.

If someone's sick—okay, that's going to require more time to help care for them. There are all of those things that we have to consider. But we do have—all of us—a certain amount of time we can choose to use. How will we use it? If we grudgingly give up that time to go to some service project or to help somebody out, well, that isn't very pleasing to God. We should cheerfully give our service. I think that's a really important concept for us to consider.

[26:16]

Now I would apply that in a lot of different ways. But you know, there's one way that I really think about, that comes back to me as a memory. I was thinking about it just last night as I was kind of preparing for this class today. I was thinking about the experience of service at the Feast of Tabernacles. The first year my family went to the Feast was 1965. We went to Big Sandy, and in Big Sandy at that time, almost everyone camped out. Well, our family was used to camping so that wasn't really a problem for us. We had our supplies, and we got a tent and put it up. And we had our other supplies, and we were really quite prepared for camping. It wasn't difficult.

Not everyone was the same way. And I remember, even in that first year—that first day before we started the Feast, and people were coming in—I remember helping people get their tent set up. I'd set up quite a few tents. I was a—I'd just graduated from high school, so I was about 18, and I got a pretty good idea how to set up tents so I helped quite a few people set up tents that day. Later on we helped them take them down, get them packed up, because we knew those things.

But even before that, as we were getting ready to head for the Feast, every Church area had been assigned certain responsibilities. And our deacons and all had come to us and said: "Okay, our Church area's responsible for "this" at the Feast of Tabernacles. When would you like to serve? Now it wasn't a matter of: "Are you going to serve?" It was a matter of: "When do you want to do it?" And we did various things.

I remember getting up very early and going in with a crew to clean the restrooms because we all had to get that done. And, of course, as you can imagine, in Big "Sandy" there was a lot of sand that tracked into the restrooms over the course of a few days. So we had to go in with hoses and brooms and get the sand out and get the restrooms cleaned up so that everyone could use them properly. That was a part of our service during the Feast. I remember doing that.

The next year I was at Ambassador College. And again, since we were in Big Sandy, the Feast came to us, and every student who was there on campus was given a responsibility for service. Some were involved in the concession stand. Some did different things. I had the opportunity to work on the tent crew. Some of you will remember the big tent we had back then, with six 60-foot center poles. And we put several thousand people into those tents for the services. Well, I got to work on the tent crew. We helped set up. We helped keep it in good shape during the Feast. And we had "duties schedule" set up so that we were on duty at certain times. We did that. Actually, I worked with the tent crew for three years.

[28:59]

The last year, my senior year, I worked in the mailing department. And, since Pasadena shut down during the Feast, all of the mail that came in was sent to Big Sandy. So those of us in the mailing department had schedules to work a couple of times. We even had services piped in to us while we

continued to work because there was so much mail that need to be processed, and our goal was to process it the day it came in. So we put in quite a few hours.

I remember the next year, my wife and I had married. We'd graduated. We went to the Feast for the first time as a married couple. And we were assigned to Penticton. Now, again, wonderful site. Great people. But, it was a little awkward for us. We were assigned to work with the counseling and anointing area. Well, my wife could serve a little bit as the secretary there for a few days. And I was there, but I wasn't ordained. So, all I could do was kind of sit with the ministers as they counseled or anointed someone. But that was really all I could do. I remember my wife and I [were] talking about it, saying: "This feels strange. We don't feel like we're serving properly at the Feast" because, for us, every Feast had been a service responsibility and opportunity. And we looked forward to it. And that first year was a little awkward.

The next year we were back with counseling and anointing, but I was ordained by that time. So I could go ahead and do some of the anointing too. We had a little more responsibility there, and I would serve on anointing duty during the Feast. So I would get calls and go out to anoint people and so on as the other elders did. So, it felt a little bit more normal.

But, through the years, every year my wife and I—because of our experience at Ambassador College—have always felt that we wanted to be able to serve in some way at the Feast. And we continue to do that through the years. It just doesn't seem like the Feast without some kind of service.

[30:56]

This past year we had the opportunity to be in Spokane. And, I was able to serve not only in speaking, but as the business manager there in Spokane. A relatively small site, but, we still had to process the Holy Day offerings and do the business office responsibilities. And that was fine. We appreciated the opportunity. My wife always helps me with something like that. She's had a lot of experience in her work in finances so she always helps out.

But it was kind of interesting this year. When we asked for volunteers for various duties, it was really difficult to get volunteers. For our Holy Day offering processing there, we only had three volunteers, and one of those ended up being our security man. So we really only had two volunteers, besides my wife and me, to process the Holy Day offering for the whole site. Now, thankfully, those two volunteers were very good; they'd had experience before. We were able to do the job just fine. But it sure would've been nice to have a few more people. My wife even volunteered to help out with ushering because we didn't have enough men who were willing to do that.

I would ask you: when you go to the Feast, do you think of it as a "service opportunity"? You know, one of the things that we've done for the ministry through the years, we've had a policy for the local ministers that they're able to transfer once every three years. But the rest of the time we like them to go to the Feast site where their own congregations are primarily serving or attending. Most of the ministers have no problem with that at all. They're eager to go there. In fact, we always look forward to going to the Feast site with the brethren because it's a different environment, and you're able to spend more time together and enjoy social things together—share meals together in a way that a lot of times when we're back home, we're so busy we don't have the time to do it. So we always look forward to that.

And I can look back over 35 years as a field pastor, and we only asked to transfer a couple of times during those years. I was talking to another pastor the other day, and he was saying—he and his wife were saying: "Well, we've been out in the field ministry 40 years, and we asked to transfer three times." And that's fine, we don't begrudge that at all. We enjoy being with the brethren at the Feast. But, the

ministry is taught that the Feast is a service responsibility. They're there to serve. They're there to fulfill various responsibilities, and our ministry has done a very good job of serving in that way.

Why do we do that? Why is that so important at the Feast? Well, ask yourself a question. The Feast is supposed to picture the millennial reign of Jesus Christ **and** the saints. What are the saints going to be doing during the Millennium? We're going to be serving. We're going to be caring for all of those people that are, for the first time, beginning to understand the truth of God. We are going to be serving. Doesn't it make sense that when we go to the Feast today, we ought to be serving? Now, what's my purpose in all of that?

[33:53]

We have, every year, a wonderful opportunity to attend the Feast all over the world. We have so many Feast sites in different places around the world. And, sometimes those sites are **really** nice tourist destinations. And, immediately those sites fill up with people who say: "Oh, I want to go here. Oh, I want to go there. Oh, what a wonderful opportunity!" Okay. That's fine. Do we stop and think: "Is there some way I can be of service? Is there some way—wherever I go, at the Feast—that I could volunteer to help out and serve in some way?"

Doesn't have to be some big thing. It can be some very small way of serving. And, of course, there are ways of serving at the Feast that don't involve signing a volunteer list. You may serve someone individually, or you may help out in a variety of ways. And that's fine. But I would ask, as you look at the Feast, you make your plans, at least once in a while—at least once in a while—ask yourself: "Where could I go that I could be of service?"

Some of you who like to travel internationally—that's wonderful! Many of our brethren in some of those international areas live so far separated from other people that they really don't have much opportunity to be with others and to fellowship with others. So just simply **being** there with them and fellowshiping with them is a tremendous service; it strengthens and helps them. I would just ask that we stop and consider that. *God loves a cheerful giver*—not just of giving money. Giving our time, giving our service, giving our attention, giving our love to others. It should be something we're able to do cheerfully. And I hope we can all consider that.

[35:39]

Okay, let's move on.

God then adds something to this principle of *God loving a cheerful giver*.

He says: [**2 Corinthians**] **verse 8** [*And*] *God is able to make all grace abound toward you, —*

Remember, grace? "A gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient." **All** the different forms that "giving" can take, God is the One who is able to make all of that **abound** toward you.

—that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

He says: "God has a power." The fact that it says *He is able* here—the word is *dunatos*, and it means He's powerful; He is mighty. It's not just saying God is **capable** of doing something. It's saying God is **powerful**. He is **mighty** to make all grace **abound** toward you so that you always have sufficiency—all the sufficiency. You have your needs met *in all things*, **and**, *may have an abundance for every good work*. Not only does He give you enough, He enables you to be able to give more, to share more, to be abundant in your giving. Just as God is abundant in His giving, He wants us to be abundant in ours.

Verse 9 *As it is written:*

*“He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”*

This is how God describes—it’s in **Psalm 112**—how He describes the righteous person. He *has dispersed abroad*, not just right there for those who can help him. He’s *dispersed* to others; he’s helped others. He’s *given to the poor*. There is a *righteousness* in giving that *endures*.

So, he tells us in **verse 10**: *Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, —*

Who’s that? Well, God supplies the seed. Where does it come from? The previous harvest. God has blessed that harvest, and, now the sower takes the very best of that seed that God has provided so that he can sow the next year.

—and bread for food, —

God has provided, not only enough seed to sow, but also seed to be used for food. And it has been used in that way.

May the One who supplies all of that:

*—supply and multiply the seed **you** have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,*

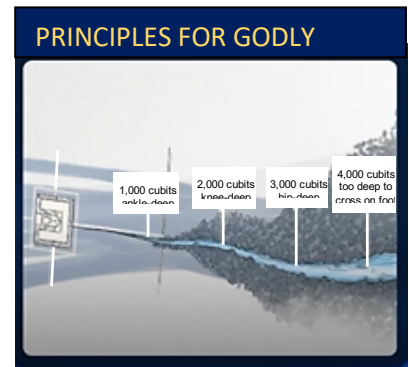
In other words, God provides us with more so that what we give does not reduce our ability to produce more. We still have the ability to grow, to produce, because God has given us not only sufficiency, but even more. He also blesses what we sow so that it produces abundantly, often more than we could’ve expected. And, He also here tells us that He multiplies the good that is done by what we’ve given. Through the years we’ve been able to accomplish much more than would’ve been thought possible, based upon the income that we received. God is able to bless it and to cause it to produce more than we imagine.

[39:12]

Now, I’d like you to consider an example, a prophecy actually, that is for the Millennium. But it shows a principle that I’ve always found fascinating. It’s in **Ezekiel chapter 47**. I’m not going to turn there, but it’s covered in the **first 12 verses** of that chapter. In it, Ezekiel is inspired to see the millennial temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. And, of course, remember that the Mount of Olives by this time—because at Jesus Christ’s return, it splits in two—there’s a valley that runs out from the temple in Jerusalem. And, that valley runs out, headed toward the area of the Jordan Valley and where the Dead Sea is today.

And, the prophecy talks about a very tiny stream beginning to come out from the temple. And he describes it as going out—Ezekiel describes this man with a measuring device. And, he goes out a thousand cubits, about a third of a mile, from the temple. And the water flowing out in this stream, down the valley toward the Jordan Valley, is ankle-deep. But as the river flows, or as this water flows out a little further, another thousand cubits, and it’s knee-deep. Another thousand cubits and it’s waist-deep. And another thousand cubits, and he says: “It’s so deep you have to swim to go across it.”

It’s fascinating to see in this illustration indicated that here was this water flowing out—clear, beautiful, life-giving water—and it’s getting deeper and deeper. Well now, you and I know that in our world today, rivers get bigger and deeper because of tributaries that come in and add water. But when you look in this



particular example, there are no tributaries. There's nothing else flowing into it. There's no place else for water to come from. It comes out from the temple, and it keeps getting deeper and bigger and wider. In other words, God is causing this water to become greater and greater. And as the prophecy continues, it flows all the way down into the Jordan, then into the Dead Sea, and the Dead Sea is no longer dead. But instead, there are fish there. It describes fishermen spreading their nets along the side to dry out, that there will be a viable fishing industry in a sea that today has nothing in it that lives except bacteria. God is going to cause this water to go out.

But, my point here is that God is the One who multiplies what's there. He has the power to multiply where you can't find a reason for it, but you see that it's happening. That, in a sense, I think, is the principle of what we see here in **verse 10**. We give, and even though we're only able to give a small amount perhaps, God is able to magnify it and make it greater. God is able to produce more.

When we consider even such a thing as the office that has been built here in McKinney, the land that we acquired, that land was acquired, really, at a fraction of what it would be—what it would cost today. God was able to take the resources we had, and instead of giving us vast amounts of money, He made that money buy more. And, the property is worth **so** much more today than it was when we were able to purchase it. God blesses us in a variety of ways. And when we give, God is able to make our gift abound. Whether that gift is money, that gift is our time, that gift is our attention to others, God is able to make that grow. I think that's a very, very important concept for us to keep in mind.

[43:11]

Verse 11 (He says:) *while you are enriched in everything for (the purpose of) all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

So what's Paul saying? Well, he's giving us, again, a principle, though it probably applied in his mind more directly to the offering we're talking about. He says: "This generosity that you have in giving this offering, you are enriched. God has made you **able** to give. And, because you have given liberally, and the offering is abundant, when it arrives to those who are in need, their thanksgiving, in one sense, while they're going to be thankful to you, ultimately their thanksgiving is going to be to God because they realize God is the One who's made it possible.

When you and I give our tithes and offerings today, and God multiplies those and enables us to accomplish more in other areas of the world, those brethren who are most benefited by those tithes and offerings give thanks to God. Sure, they're thankful that you and I have been able to give, and that we're eager to do so, that are giving our tithes and offerings, but they know as well as we do that our ability to give is because God has blessed us. So ultimately, when we give, we're bringing honor and glory to God. And that's what we should want to do.

He goes on to say: **verse 12** *For the administration of this service (the way that we're carrying it out) not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,*

Okay, so he's telling us here that many people are being very thankful to God. They're giving thanks to Him for this offering that's being sent to them. Well, why is that important? Well, certainly, obviously, to thank God is an important thing. But remember, we're told that whenever we go through a difficult time, we are to bring our needs before God in *prayer...with thanksgiving* [**Philippians 4:6**]. Why do we do that?

Because, when we approach God's throne *with thanksgiving*, with thankfulness, we are reminded of the many ways in which God's already helped us and blessed us. And that puts our current trial and difficulty

into a different perspective. It's not so overwhelming. It's not so "giant" that we can't seem to deal with it, because, after all, look at all these ways God has helped us through the years. If I go to God with *thanksgiving*, then I'm reminded: God has the power, and the will, and the faithfulness, and the love to intervene and to help in the trial that I have now. So by doing this, the *abounding through many of thanksgivings to God* strengthens the faith and the confidence of the whole Church. So, he is encouraging those who are giving to realize the impact of their giving.

[46:15]

Verse 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, —

In other words, through our actual giving—the physical evidence that's there.

—*they glorify God for the obedience of your confession (your commitment) to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,*

They're grateful for that. And they see that your commitment to the truth isn't just a surface commitment. You're literally sacrificing to help other people, and they know that, and it is a great appreciation to them.

and (**verse 14**) by their prayer for **you**, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

So the reaction is not only that they're thanking God, but they're asking God to bless you. Now, again, what an amazing thing it is! Do we ever think about that—that those who receive the benefit from our giving literally thank God for **us**? Now they may not know us by name. They may not say it in that way. But, they thank God for us and ask God to bless us. Wow! Isn't it exciting to think that you have brethren around the world who are asking God to bless you? And God hears those prayers. God does intervene. So, we are receiving a great blessing as well.

Now, of course, all of us also receive the benefit. When we go to Sabbath services, those services exist because of the tithes and offerings of others. So again, I would hope that all of us, as we look at the benefits that we receive, that we do ask God to bless those who are givers. Not only does *God love a cheerful giver*, we should too. That should be something we praise and recognize.

[48:12]

So finally here in **verse 15** of this chapter, Paul says: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

Now obviously, we recognize there: what is God's *indescribable gift*? Well, probably the first thing that comes to mind is the *gift* of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God gave his only Son.

The word that's used here for *indescribable*—again, I think it's interesting to see: "that which cannot be fully related or communicated; beyond words; wonder beyond description; impossible to describe the full experience; inexpressible."

It's a good word that Paul has chosen to describe for us, to help us remember, that when we give—and, sometimes we may sacrifice in order to do that—**look** how much God has given to us! What He has given is beyond words to be able to describe, if we truly understand it.

I had a man, one time, come to me—I've never forgotten it—and he was, frankly, not a *cheerful giver*. Let's put it that way. It was during the Days of Unleavened Bread that he had come to me. And he said: "Well, I gave an offering on the first Holy Day, and we're supposed to give according to our blessing." He said: "I don't see why I should give an offering on the last Holy Day because I really haven't been blessed that much in between." And we began to talk about it a little bit. And I asked him a few

PRINCIPLES FOR GODLY GIVING

Indescribable = *anekdiegétō*

- That which cannot be fully related or communicated
- Beyond words
- Wonder beyond description
- Impossible to describe the full experience
- Inexpressible

questions.

I said: “Has your family been healthy this past week?”

“Well, yeah, sure.”

“Did you have any serious accidents where you lost something?”

“No.”

“Are you healthy?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Have you been in need this past week?”

“No.”

“Has God heard your prayers this past week?”

“Well, yeah.”

And the more we talked, he began to realize: “Well, maybe I’m taking for granted a lot of the blessings that I’ve been given.”

I think that’s important for us. We should recognize that we are recipients of tremendous blessings. Do you deserve one more instant of life? Do you deserve one more heartbeat? I don’t. But I’m receiving them. And so are you. God is blessing us tremendously. And we need to be aware of those blessings.

[50:34]

Now we come to **chapter 10**, and sadly, the tone of this particular epistle begins to change.

Paul says: **1** *Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.*

Paul recognizes that while he has been encouraging the congregation—and in these last couple of chapters especially, encouraging the “pick up the mantle” of responsibility and to do their “giving” and to support the Church as a whole, and most of them are doing that—there still remains in Corinth a core of individuals who have hardened their position against Paul. They’re not willing to submit, to yield, to repent and change. And Paul’s going to have to address that.

There is a direct change in tone from this point forward in the rest of the epistle, especially **chapters 10, 11, and 12**. We’ll see a little bit of a softening when we get to **chapter 13**. But, Paul has had to address this in a very difficult way. It’s written to the entire Church, not just to the rebellious group of individuals, because the entire Church needs to understand what he’s saying. It’s not a private message to some. Everybody is going to be impacted by his attempt to deal with the difficulties that remain.

He says he comes in the *meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ*. This word *meekness* is a very important word. Doesn’t mean “weak” in any way. It’s *praótetos* here, and the root word, again, *prautés* describes this particular characteristic. It’s sometimes translated “gentleness”; it’s sometimes “courtesy”; sometimes a “submissiveness”—not a weakness, in that sense. Sometimes people think of meekness as “weakness,” and that’s not true.

BOLD MEEKNESS

Meekness = *praótetos*

- Gentleness
- Courtesy
- Submissiveness
- Gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with others

I like this one: “gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with

others.” There’s not a weakness here. But it’s a desire to deal with people as gently as possible. Now we all encounter situations where we have to step up and deal with some situation. And we want to do it as gently as we can, **but**, we still have to deal with it.

[53:09]

Barclay says this:

Prautés, gentleness, is an interesting word. Aristotle defined it as the correct mean between being too angry and being never angry at all. It is the quality of the man whose anger is so controlled that he is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time. It describes the man who is never angry at any personal wrong he may receive, but who is capable of righteous anger when he sees others (being) wronged. By using that word Paul is saying at the very beginning of his stern letter that he is not carried away by personal anger, but is speaking with the strong gentleness of Jesus himself.

Paul was apparently accused of being weak and unimpressive in person. And he’s not interested in defending himself from that. But he is determined that people will understand that he is an apostle, and he will use the apostolic authority he’s been given if that’s the only way he can accomplish what needs to be accomplished among God’s people.

So, this final phrase that he uses—*who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you*—is probably a matter of repeating an accusation that had been made about him. “Oh, yeah, when he’s not here, he sounds bold, but when he’s there [here], he’s very unimpressive.” In a way, Paul is saying: “Okay, I know what’s being said behind my back. I know what some are saying. And, okay, they have to give account for what they say.”

Verse 2 *But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold* (Or “courageous,” in a sense, is the word.) *with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.*

In other words: “They look at us, and they see us, and they think: ‘That’s an unimpressive person.’ Okay, that’s true. Most of us are pretty unimpressive in the flesh. But don’t think of us as simply ‘other people,’ just like you might look at someone who doesn’t know anything about God’s way. Don’t think of us in those ways because Jesus Christ is in charge. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. He’s given us responsibility, and we are accountable to Him for making sure that we use that responsibility in a proper way.” He says: “I know that I have the ability to be bold, or courageous, or strong, as I deal with some. And I intend to be. But I really would prefer if you would respond, and we don’t have to deal with it in that way.”

It’s, in a sense, as God told one of the prophets [**Ezekiel 3:9**]: “I’ll give you a *forehead* of *flint* because I know these people want to butt heads with you. So I’ll give you a *forehead* of *flint*. You want to butt heads? Fine, here’s a *forehead* of *flint* to butt against.”

So Paul says: “I can do this if I need to, but I don’t want to.” He says: “Don’t *think of us* just as simply ‘other people’—as you might look at the local constable or something like that.”

He says: [**2 Corinthians 10 verse 3**] *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.*

“We’re not going to conduct ourselves like people in this world do. We will conduct ourselves in a different way because our warfare is not a fleshly warfare.”

[56:36]

He says: **verse 4** *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (not just fleshly things) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,*

If you make the mistake of looking at this individual—Paul, in this case—as nothing more than just another person on the same level that you are, then you’re going to fail to see that, in fact, it is God who is backing him. And, that the *weapons* that he talks about here are not weak. They’re not just physical. They’re not just the same [as] some other human being might use, but instead they are *mighty* because God gives them power.

He goes on to say: **5** *casting down arguments* —

Or “reasonings” is probably a good way to put this because some of these people who were troubling the Church seemed to be really good at arguing, at reasoning back and forth, at trying to prove their position from argument. He says: “*The weapons that God gives us cast down those reasonings.*”

—*and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

You and I are instructed that we need to bring every thought of ours into obedience, to the thought of *the obedience of Jesus Christ*. We are to bring those thoughts *into captivity*. That’s important for us. But he also talks here about the fact that, within the Church of God, the way that we think, and therefore the way that we act, **will be** in *obedience* to *Jesus Christ*. That is a responsibility that we have, and we **will** carry it out. So, he said God gives us the ability to do that.

God gives us as individual Christians the ability to bring our thoughts into *captivity* too. It’s **not enough** to bring our actions into *captivity*. We have to bring our thoughts.

He goes on to say here in **verse 6**: *and being ready to punish all disobedience when your disobedience— (Oh, excuse me.) when your obedience is fulfilled.*

We recognize that it is not our responsibility right now to bring justice in every situation. We would like to do that, but we don’t have that ability now. But we will ultimately have the responsibility before God *when our obedience is fulfilled*. When Jesus Christ returns and we are given the opportunity to be a part of the family of God, then we will be given the ability to bring justice.

Why then and not now? Because right now we’re still human, and, sometimes we see things in the wrong way. But Paul tells us that ultimately—we’re being taught the lessons today; we’re being taught how to deal with things properly—and ultimately, we **will** be given that responsibility.

Well, we could go on here, but I think we’ve used up our time for this particular class. So I’m going to stop here, and we will pick up for the next class in **verse number 7 of 2 Corinthians chapter 10**.

Thanks again for joining us.

You do have, remember, one hour after the class is aired, if you’d like to turn in any questions, and we’ll seek to answer those at the beginning of the next class.

Thanks again for joining us.

[1:00:04]