



## ***Lesson Four – This Moment In Time***

**1 Corinthians 16:1-4**

Churches Working Together For This Moment In Time

### **Brief Introduction and Review of the Introduction Video:**

Over the previous three weeks, we have told the stories of Anna, Dylan, and Carlos & Shelby and answered some of their questions in the context of churches working together on One Mission, as One Family, and in One Cooperative Effort. These concepts not only exemplify priorities in Paul's work with the Corinthians, Macedonians, and Jews in Israel, but they also highlight priorities in the work of the South Carolina Baptist Convention in our state and around the world.

With the most powerful teaching in the New Testament on the concept of generous giving and the believers' heart, Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:6 serve as a focal point for today's study, and for the entire series. "The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously." (CSB)

- *How does Paul's statement apply to your church?*

### **THE POINT IS THIS: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15**

#### **The Heart of God's Invitation – 2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

In verses 6-7, Paul not only focuses on how to give, but even more importantly he highlights the proper manner and motivation for giving. It is important for us to remember the many "boundaries" Paul is crossing as he talks about the heart of giving. Paul is keenly aware of the social/economic differences, geographical separation challenges, and travel and safety concerns that are present. Even with these difficulties he uses this moment in time to invite the Corinthians to give bountifully and cheerfully, meeting a need that is far more significant than simply a financial concern. He knows the impact will have eternal implications.

The process Paul outlined, established throughout the teachings of our previous three Bible studies, gives the Corinthians the practical knowledge they needed, in very simple instructions, to collect and send a financial gift. Now Paul penetrates the very heart of giving that should drive a lifestyle of generosity. There are two primary areas of content he focuses on in verses 6-7. The first issue is bountiful generosity and the second is cheerful generosity. Let's explore each of these concepts as we consider not only the Corinthian gift to the saints in Jerusalem, but also how our generosity can impact our local church and global Great Commission ministry.

It is beneficial to remember that in the context of 2 Corinthians 9, Paul focuses on generosity as it relates to financial gifts. However, the heart of generosity extends well beyond finances. A true heart of generosity spills over into all areas of a person's lifestyle.

The principle of sowing and reaping is also found in the Old Testament when the author of Proverbs wrote: "One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor" (Proverbs 11:24). Paul encourages the Corinthians and today's church to sow bountifully with abundant generosity in all forms of giving.

- *In addition to financial gifts, what are some other ways we have given and/or received generosity from others?*

Let's look now at Paul's invitation to give bountifully and cheerfully in verses 6-7. The larger truth in sowing bountifully involves giving as a way of life . . . and not just giving but giving even more than we have planned to give or more than we may have anticipated giving. This level of commitment to giving is not for our own praise or benefit, but because we realize sowing bountifully naturally results in a bountiful harvest. This is far from a superficial expectation that if I give, then I will receive even more in terms of finances. It values a heart of giving that trusts God to use our generosity to bring abundant blessings to us and to those who receive the gift. Many can affirm an occasion where we gave of our time, finances, talents, etc. in a service-oriented opportunity and then the blessings we experienced far exceeded what we gave.

Not only do we give bountifully, but we must also give cheerfully. Paul's invitation is to give with abundant joy and cheerfulness in terms of our motives and attitude. To help the Corinthians understand this, he'll offer a couple of contrasting motives to avoid. The heart of faithful giving cannot exist alongside giving reluctantly or under compulsion. "Reluctantly" is a word that includes giving with a heavy or sad heart that grieves the process of giving. "Under compulsion" points to a giver who feels pressured to give. God's desire is that believers simply give cheerfully out of the overflow of a generous heart. Warren Weirsbe once wrote, "We must not be 'sad givers' who give grudgingly, or 'mad givers' who give because we must; but we should be 'glad givers' who cheerfully share what we have because we have experienced the grace of God."

- *Why does God focus so much on the "heart" of giving in these verses?*
- *How can we discern whether our giving is motivated by a true desire to be generous or by external pressure?*
- *What are some personal or societal pressures that can lead people to give reluctantly or under compulsion? How can we overcome these pressures?*
- *Have you ever experienced a time when giving your time, resources, or talents resulted in blessings that exceeded what you gave? How did that impact your view of generosity?*

## **The Results of Accepting God's Invitation to Give Bountifully and Cheerfully – 2 Corinthians 9:8-15**

### **An Abundance of God's Grace – 2 Corinthians 9:8-11**

Unlike sowing and reaping in agriculture where there is a gap of time between the two, spiritual generosity results in an abundance of God's grace being poured out as the giving (sowing) is happening. Notice the terms used in verse 8 as Paul says, "all grace" can abound to us in order that we may have "all sufficiency" in "all things" at "all times." Verse 10 encourages the giver with the idea that as the seed is sown, God will use those gifts as a means of pouring out his grace and righteousness to mankind. Again, not in terms of just financial giving, but in all generosity, the idea

is that as we give, God blesses and multiplies the gifts. As a result, there are even more resources from which we can continue to cheerfully give!

### **Thanksgiving to God - 2 Corinthians 9:12**

Verse 12 highlights how worshipful giving will meet specific needs. There is also the added value of thanksgivings to God being poured out from his people. The giver and the receiver of generosity will both be in a position to “overflow in many expressions of thanks to God.”

### **Glorifying God - 2 Corinthians 9:13**

Verse 13 points to God being glorified through the faithful generosity of the churches. Notice the powerful connection building in the relationship between Jewish believers and the Gentile Corinthians. The Corinthians are faithfully supporting and providing for the needs of the saints in Jerusalem. The very same group that, in the not too distant past, hated the Gentiles and excluded them from the faith. These once-hated Gentiles can now testify how their lives are being transformed by the Gospel. Through obedience, this transformation connects two very different people groups for the glory of God.

### **Praise God for His Inexpressible Gift – 2 Corinthians 9:14-15**

This great gift of salvation by grace through faith gives Paul a reason to end this section with a praise and thanksgiving to God for his inexpressible gift of Jesus Christ who brings salvation and unity to all those who repent and believe. The bountiful and cheerful generosity of the Corinthian believers at this specific moment in time is used by God in two important ways. The first is to meet the current needs of the saints in Jerusalem. The second comes through the teaching and example that continues many centuries later.

### **One Final Question - What Harvest Do You Want?**

As we read through 2 Corinthians 8-9 it is easy for us to leave the passage in the first century. We may connect with the story and grow from Paul's teaching but miss how the actions taken by Paul and the Corinthian church live on long past their moment in time. The pattern established in these chapters provides the framework of what we now know as the Cooperative Program. The systematic plan for South Carolina Baptist and Southern Baptist Churches is to “Glorify God *with our* obedient confession of the Gospel of Christ.”

What is the harvest your church would like to see that allows our moment in time to live on long past the current membership? Is it possible for your fellowship to be remembered like the fellowships Paul is writing to? Why not? We believe 2 Corinthians 9:8 is alive and well in South Carolina. What is the “every good work” God would have your church excel in? Studies are telling us that the population in South Carolina may increase by as many as one million people in the next decade. Conservative estimates say that 80% of those coming to our state will not have a saving relationship with Christ. What harvest to you want?

We will close the Give+Go Bible study series with the example of Anna. Anna has a desire to live on mission. She understands the needs are great. She knows there are barriers today related to ethnic/racial tensions and poverty/famine just as in the days of Paul's writing. Lostness in our state, nation, and around the world is massive. The need to stand as one family, on one mission, with one cooperative effort, has never been greater than it is right now. This is our moment in time. Now is the time to take what we've learned from this series of Bible studies, let it permeate our hearts, and,

as the Holy Spirit gives wisdom, allow it to be displayed in our lives as we walk daily on mission just like Anna, Dylan, Carlos & Shelby!