

# Are You Ready to Be Wiser Than the World?

by Tim Conway

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*Tim Conway's sermon emphasizes the importance of generous and cheerful giving as a reflection of genuine love and commitment to God and others.*

**Duration:** 1:02:54

**Scripture:** Psalm 112:9, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6, 2 Corinthians 9:10, Revelation 14:13

**Topics:** "Generous Giving", "Stewardship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of giving generously and sacrificially, drawing insights from 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. It highlights the principle of sowing and reaping, encouraging believers to trust in God's multiplication of their giving for the benefit of others and the eternal harvest of righteousness. The focus is on viewing God as the ultimate Giver, inspiring cheerful and abundant giving to meet needs, glorify God, and store up treasures in heaven.

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## Transcript

Let's open our Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8. I personally come back to 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 over and over and over again when it comes to this matter of money. I recognize if you collectively take everything that's said in say the Proverbs concerning money and wealth and possessions and you snowballed it all together, you may have as much or even more perhaps than you find in these two chapters. 2 Corinthians 8, 2 Corinthians 9. But as far as one specific treatment of money, you're not going to find a more extensive treatment anywhere in your Bibles.

And I think probably what we ought to do is read a bit of Scripture here just to get a feel for what's happening before we actually get to the specific text that I want us to think about. So 2 Corinthians 8, verse 1. Just follow what's happening. We want you to know.

Now remember, Corinth. Paul's writing to Corinth. Now, maybe we don't know or maybe you don't know a whole lot about the financial situation in Corinth, but it's basically understood that it was probably one of the more well-off churches.

There's certainly nothing said to the Corinthian church about being in poverty or being in need. In fact, what Paul says as he's encouraging these people to give is that they actually have more than they need for themselves. There is some idea of a fluency here.

Paul is writing to the Corinthians as we know from the Corinthian letters. To be Corinthian is not necessarily a commendation. They were rather fleshly, carnal.

He could not deal with them as being mature. There were problems. Now, we recognize that by the time we get to the second letter, there has been repentance and a number of these problems have been dealt with.

And yet, for all that, these two chapters have to do with a church that has a fluency but is not giving what they ought to be giving as freely as they ought to be giving it. That's why he needs to write to them the way he writes to them. There were needs.

This isn't a general appeal for giving. But I mean, we can apply it. The principles we find here vary generally to giving.

To the different things that God would have us to give to. But there is a specific issue on the table here. There's need.

Corinth. If you have any idea, you can see in your mind a map. You think about the area of the world where John is.

Or where Syria is. Or where he might go to where Greece is. You get an idea about the lay of the land.

Well, basically Corinth is at the bottom of the Grecian Peninsula. It's somewhat away from Jerusalem. You know what's happened? There's need among the saints back in Palestine.

Judea. There's need there. Whereas, somewhat far away, over in Europe, you have these Corinthian Christians, Gentile Christians by and large, who have an abundance.

They have a surplus. And so what Paul is doing is he's wanting to get the churches to put together funds that he can take and minister to the needs of these poor, needy Christians back in Jerusalem, in Judea. Now, watch what he does here.

We want you to know, Corinthians brothers, Corinthian Christians, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. And you know what's interesting? He doesn't first here go and appeal to the needs of the churches in Judea. You know what he first does? He has them look north up into the northern part of Greece to these Macedonians.

Well, how'd the Macedonians come into play? Who are these folks? Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea. How are they making it into the storyline here? Well, because of their example. He's saying I want you to look north before I want you to look southeast to the need.

I want you to look north to some other Gentile brethren. And I want to put their example before you because it's an example worth imitating. Look at this.

I want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. In other words, you know what? We've got some really poor folks up north of you guys.

Now we've got poor folks down there in Judea. But these folks up here are poor too. And you know what? In all of their poverty, they're reaching deep in their pockets.

In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy, their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. They gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own accord. That's interesting.

Because you know what's happening here? Paul's having to twist the arm of the Corinthians. He's saying, I didn't have to do that to the Macedonians. They begged us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

Brethren, God help us not to have to have our arms twisted. And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. And you see basically their disposition in life.

Gave themselves to the Lord. We're the Lord's. All of our money is His.

Does He have some needy children over there? Palestine? We're His. V. 6, "...Accordingly, we urge Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace." You see what he's saying? The grace that's been demonstrated up there in the Macedonian churches, we trust that that grace is being expressed among you too. That it's being operative.

That it's real. It's tangible. And we sent Titus there to help encourage you to have this same grace work out.

V. 7, "...But as you excel in everything in faith and speech, in knowledge and all earnestness, and in our love for you, see that you excel in this act of grace also." And you remember the first letter? How many different spiritual gifts were operative there in Corinth? And he's saying with all the ways that grace is demonstrating itself, may it demonstrate itself among you in this way. When he says this, v. 8, I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. You know, that's such an issue of giving.

Is your love genuine? What you do with your money proves it. Isn't that what we have in Scripture? How can you say your love is genuine? How can you say the love of God is in you if you look over and you see need over here and you so harden your heart as to not give to it? Especially when they're brothers and sisters in Christ. How could you do that? It's an expression of love.

Genuine. Brethren, you find churches like the Macedonians who proportionately give a huge amount. You may be like the widow.

It may be two mites. When you stack it up against what the Corinthians can give, it may not seem like a lot, but I'll tell you it's the proportion of what you give. God's looking at that.

God's looking at the sacrifice involved. And as always, the level of sacrifice is proportionate to the level of love. You love your children.

The level of sacrifice most people would make for their children exceeds the level of sacrifice they would make for others. Why? Because they love their children more. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't it interesting? Here's the Macedonians. Now He's going to take us higher. Corinthians, I'm really wanting to encourage you to show the genuineness of your love.

There's some really radical, genuine love being shown by the Macedonians. But let me take you to the mountaintop of love and sacrifice and giving. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, and He was, set your mind on things above.

Have you ever thought about what are the things that are above? There in Colossians it tells us Christ is above. The Father is above. He prayed that the glory that He had with His Father before the foundations of the world would be restored unto Him.

He's rich beyond imagination. We don't really perceive the sacrifice that Christ made because He's God. To us, it doesn't seem like so much of a sacrifice on His part sometimes.

Because He's God. He can endure that. He's bigger than us.

He's way beyond us. When He suffered, when He was man of sorrows, well, He's made of different stuff than we are. Brethren, He humbled Himself and He became man.

And He became a man of sorrows. And He set aside a glory. He emptied Himself, Scripture says, and it's real.

Yet for your sake, for your sake, I know we can talk about God's glory and His sake and why He has chose to save man. But you never want to miss the reality that yes, it's for the glory of God. It is.

And it's for your sake. He gave the degree, the extent, the magnitude, the riches. He gave of Himself for your sake.

He became poor so that you, by His poverty, might become rich. That should encourage you. When you pull out your checkbook, there's realities in that truth that ought to control you.

The love of Christ should control. The love of Christ should constrain as it said somewhere else in this very letter. And in this matter, I give my judgment.

This benefits you. What does it benefit you giving to those saints who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it? Now you notice this. You notice what's happening.

A year ago, you Corinthians, just follow this, it's a year later now and He's having to encourage them to do what they committed to do a year before. You bring up some new project with people and they get excited. But it seems like over a year, maybe somewhat of the excitement that the Corinthians has has kind of waned.

So now finish doing it as well. In other words, carry through. You know what happens? We can get excited.

We can get all lathered up. An appeal is made. You hear the story about Lebanon.

You see, we could have had John come up and we could have had him give a little bit more detail in such a way as to really go after your emotions. And then before John hits that seat, we could say, let's take an offering. Let's pass the bucket.

And I'm not looking for you to put money in it necessarily. Just put in over the next year what you're going to be committed to give. See, you can get all lathered up with that.

But then what happens? Well, kind of reality sets in. The fervor of it kind of passes away. The level of sacrifice that you were willing to make at that time kind of drops off.

And that's the kind of thing that can happen. That's what's happening with these people. Finish doing it.

Verse 11, so that your readiness and desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. Verse 12, for if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. Now that's an important principle.

God doesn't expect any of us to give more than we have. Even if you're poor, even if you're like the widow with her two mites, God doesn't expect. If you're these Macedonians, Paul's saying, well, they gave more than they should have.

But you know, God knows what we have according to what a person has. There's a good principle there. That means if you look across the aisle, you don't really have a whole lot of aisles, but you look at somebody else and you say, I mean, look at them.

Brother David's a lawyer. Man, lawyers make so much money. Live in this fancy neighborhood.

Think about how much David can give. You can slap me around later. But I mean, we can think that way.

Well, they have the ability to give. Look at the job they have. Look at the income they have.

Listen, God is not concerned with whether you have Donald Trump's billions. You notice when Jesus is watching the widow what He's concerned with. She gave more than all the rest.

How can that be? Because brethren, the way God measures isn't just in how many zeros there are in how much you give. That's not the issue. The issue is when you're Macedonians and there's generosity and there's love and you're really thinking about what Christ has done for you.

You're one of the redeemed. And why do you have wealth? Well, He's given you the wealth for a reason. Well, let's keep reading here.

He says, according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased. You notice that.

He's not saying, look, I want you to make real sacrifices so that you can sit by a pool in Lebanon. I guarantee you, you would not sit by a pool in Lebanon. But there have been some missionaries throughout the ages who have and are even now.

God does not want us to sacrificially give so that we can simply set other people at ease. That's not it. He doesn't want them burdened so that other people are eased.

But that is a matter of fairness. Well, how does fairness work? Fairness is they lack. I have more than I need.

That's the issue. God does expect us to use our money to feed our family. If you don't take care of your family, Scripture has some things to say to you.

But do you have more than you need? Isn't it interesting that a widow with only two mites felt that both mites was more than she needed? How we evaluate what we need might need some rethinking. We tend to think we need more than we need because we measure ourself by this American standard. You know, I have heard people say short-term missions.

I have heard long-term missionaries, maybe even elders, talk about how short-term missions really accomplishes very little. That's true when you think about what it does for the people out on the mission field. You pop in.

You pop out. But I think what it does for us can do worlds of good. You throw yourself off in a third world situation and you see the poverty, you come back here thinking different.

He says a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need so that their abundance may supply your need. Isn't that interesting? What does he mean there? Well, how can they have abundance? They're poor. Does he mean, well, that's the way it is today, but at another day, it may be they have more and you'll be in need.

Now it could mean that. Or it may mean they have had an abundance of spiritual wealth which they have shared and has flowed out of Jerusalem and Judea by way of the first missionaries Jewish, Paul, Barnabas. They have come to you and shared their riches with you.

But he says, again, fairness. That there may be fairness as it is written. And he's going to go back to the manna.

Whoever gathered much had nothing left over. Whoever gathered little had no lack. Good principle here.

What does God expect you to do with the extra? Hoard it up? Save it away? Brethren, if that's the conclusion you've come to, again, you're studying an American model far more than you're studying a biblical one. Look, if a guy comes to me and says, hey, my company matches. This 401 matches 100%.

They match dollar for dollar. The first 3% or 6% of my paycheck that I put into that 401k. Now the way I'm looking at it is that's a pretty good return on my money.

And you know what? When the day comes when that cash is out, at that point in my life, I will have more to give. You know what? We need to be frugal. We need to be wise.

If that's the way God has led you, more power to you. So be it. But I'm just saying this, that when you look at what you have, when you look at what you need, not what you need to live like the Jones next door.

When you have what you need to meet your needs, real needs. Take care of your family. Take care of your parents.

Take care of your children. Yes. But that which is left over, Dave Ramsey may tell you to put it away.

But if you follow this principle, basically what it's saying is God gives you more than you need. More wealth so that you might share it with those who are in need. You say, I don't know anybody who has needs like that.

Yes, you do. These Syrian refugees don't have heat. They don't have clothes.

Doesn't have enough. Can scratch the surface. There are needs in Nicaragua.

There are needs in Nepal. There are needs in India. There are needs in China.

There are needs in Lebanon. There are needs in Indonesia. We know about all of them.

Or at least you can know if you want to open your eyes and look. We are surrounded by a world. We are Americans.

We are wealthy by comparison. Let's jump down to v. 1 of chapter 9. Now, it's superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints. For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia.

Now, it's obvious that Paul's writing the way he's writing because he has some concerns. He's being charitable. He's being encouraging to them.

He's playing on their past readiness. And he's saying, you know, that readiness you had a year ago, I've been boasting about you. Wanting to encourage them to really fire them up again to this need.

I've been boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, the people that I'm telling you about that are such good examples. I've been telling them how ready you guys have been too. Come on, Corinthians, don't let me down.

Don't embarrass me here. It just is what he's saying here. Saying that Achaia, that's where Corinth is, down in the southern part of the Grecian Peninsula, which was Achaia, has been ready since last year.

And your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I'm sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter. Can you imagine? He's been boasting to the Macedonians.

They and all their poverty have given. Can you imagine now if some of Paul and Paul and his company and some of these folks from Macedonia come down to the southern part of Achaia and they visit Corinth? And all he's been boasting about, and they're not ready, they haven't... You know what he doesn't want to have happen? He doesn't want to come and find out that over the last year they haven't been storing up. And now, he puts pressure on them and it becomes an exaction and they're no longer able to cheerfully give.

They're being forced. He doesn't want that. He doesn't want to bring Macedonians with him and find the Corinthians aren't ready after all the boasting he's done.

So, I'm sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter. So that you may be ready as I said you would be. Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and I find that you're not ready, we would be humiliated to say nothing of you.

You guys would be humiliated too to say nothing of you for being so confident. So, I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift, the blessing that you have promised. He wants them to go and arrange for it.

In other words, to get the people they're giving so that when he comes with the Macedonians, like he says, he's not humiliated. So that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. You see what's happening there.

Willing. I want this to be willing, guys. You promised a year ago wanting to encourage them by the example of Macedonians, the example of Jesus Christ, the example of the manna in the wilderness.

Generous love. The point is this, verse 6, whoever sows sparingly... Now, this is interesting. He's going to throw kind of a proverb at them.

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one of you must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

And Paul doesn't want that. He doesn't want to come and say, come on, guys, you said a year ago, and now their arm's being twisted. He doesn't want them giving out a shame.

Exaction. He wants them to be cheerful. And he doesn't just want it.

That's what God wants. God loves a cheerful giver. What a statement.

Oftentimes, people are looking for churches wherever they are. They say we can't find a good one. What should we be looking for in a church? Well, you know what you want to look for? What is it that defines a good church? A good church is a good church if it's good by God's standard of what good is.

And if God loves a cheerful giver, then I would say this, churches that are giving cheerfully, not exaction. You know what? The churches where they talk about money every single Sunday and just make you feel guilty and tell you that if you don't tithe, the devourer is coming, and if you don't do this, that doesn't make for cheerful givers. And God loves that.

God doesn't love a bunch of people that give from exaction and duty. God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work as it is written. Now, the He here is you.

And all you have to do is go back and look at Psalm 112.9 to see that. This is speaking about the righteous person. This is speaking about a Christian.

The Christian has distributed freely. He's given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever.

And that's an interesting saying. His righteousness endures forever. We'll come back and look at that in just a second.

Now this He in v. 10 is God. God who supplies seed to the sower. We're the sower.

God is supplying. And bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. See, that goes back to v. 9. The righteousness of the one who gives endures forever.

And here's God increasing the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the Gospel of Christ and the generosity of your contribution for them and

for all others. While they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift. Now, I took a lot of time in the introduction there, but I want you to look at something. I want your eyeballs to go back up to v. 6 of chapter 9. The point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.

Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So, this is a proverb. It's a proverb, the illustration.

The illustration takes us where? Very often, what we have in Scripture is something from common life, something that's known to us, something that's observable in this earthly realm, and God teaches us spiritual truths through it. So what's the picture? Farm. Agricultural.

Now, this has everything to do with giving. He takes an agricultural picture. Look, He is not here to teach us about farming.

That is not His agenda. But He takes a picture from farming to teach us a spiritual truth about giving. It's a proverb.

Look at it again. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Now, here's the thing. God moves upon Paul to give us this proverb because He does. I think it's well worth stopping and thinking about.

Well worth. We don't want to quickly pass over it. Think with me.

Sow. Not S-E-W. Not S-O.

S-O-W. Sow. It's the idea of planting.

It's the idea of broadcasting seed. You plant seed. Sowing seed.

It's what you do at the beginning of the season. And what do you do at the end? You harvest. That's what reaping is.

Reaping, you bring in the fruit. You bring in the crops. You harvest.

That's reap. Sow. Reap.

That's the picture you have. It simply means put the seed out. And then there's an expectation at the end of the year, something's going to be brought in.

And what you see here is basically this. Put out a lot of seed at the beginning of the season. There's a bountiful harvest at the end.

Sow sparingly. Not so much at the end. That's the picture.

Think about wheat. I did a little research on wheat. Did you know? Because I didn't know.

One grain of wheat. One. Throw it in the soil.

That can come up and produce eight heads. Each head can have 40 grains. Do your math.

One grain. 320. There's multiplication.

Now, from my understanding is, that's an exceptional multiplier to use with wheat. In other words, that's not the average. That can happen.

The average is about 75. One seed produces 75 kernels or 75 seeds. That's normative.

You know what that means? That means if you've got a 100 pound sack of wheat seed, and you go and spread it, if you've got a 75 multiplier, what's 75 times 100? 7,500 maybe? You've got 100 pounds? That's less than most of us weigh. In the end, you have almost 4 tons of wheat. Right? Anybody doing the math? Anyways, that's what God does in nature.

That's the kind of picture that we have here. So you have two farmers. Two farmers.

Consider them. They both have 100 bags of wheat in their barn. Now one guy looks and says, if I can get 75 for every one, I'm planting the whole, I want all of them.

He says to his laborers, all 100 bags. Let's get them out on the field. Planting time.

But there's another guy, he wants to be a bit more frugal. Well, I think we ought to only put 10 bags on that field. Why? He's afraid.

Well, you know what? I don't know what might happen to it when it gets out there. There might be hail. There might be locusts.

There might not be enough rain. There might be too much rain. And I know this, I've got them in my barn right now, and for my own safety and for my own security, I'm going to be very careful about how many I put out there.

So laborers, you put 10 bags out there. I'm going to keep 90 in here because I can turn those 90 into wheat and I can take care of myself. And so he sows sparingly.

Why? Fear. Distrust of what the weather might bring. One sows sparingly.

One sows bountifully. Now, if everything comes to pass the way we've been talking about, you get one seed, produces 75. You know what's going to happen? The guy that planted 10, 10 times 75, 750 bags are going to come back in that barn.

The other, he put all 100 bags out there, 7,500 bags. And this is multiplication. And these figures are not outlandish.

I got these from reputable agricultural sites off the Internet. This is how it works. This is the picture.

This is exactly the picture. This doesn't have to do with farming. This has everything to do with money.

Paul's using the proverb to encourage the Corinthians to be wiser in their farming practices. He's giving this. He's using this proverb to press home a spiritual truth pertaining to what we do with our money and how much we give.

Brethren, this shows up in Scripture because this is a principle that applies to us when we give. Are we all ready for a bit of humbling news? There was a day, oh, I hope you feel this, because I feel it. There was a

day when our Lord Jesus Christ told a story.

And He said, you know what I want to tell you about a wise steward. Unjust, we often think, but Jesus says He's shrewd. You know the story I'm talking about? Anybody have any idea about this? You know what our Lord said? Do you know what our Lord said? He said those lost people out there are wiser and shrewder in the way they use their money to accomplish their ends than the children of light are.

You know what He's saying? Isn't it interesting? He doesn't give any exceptions. You say, couldn't there be? There could be. But He's given us a basic picture of the children of light.

And what He's saying is by and large, the children of light are not as wise. He doesn't say we're foolish. He doesn't say that there aren't Christians who aren't wise.

He's just saying this, when you compare how the people out there use their money to how the people in here use their money, they're trying to accomplish certain things in the way they use their money. They're trying to gratify their pleasures, their lusts. You know because we come from that stock.

But He's saying the way they use their money to accomplish their ends, they do it better than we do. Why do I bring that up? Because you know what, when you've got a proverb here that's given to instruct us about giving, based on what Jesus is telling us, every one of us need to sit up and take notice because we're not doing this as well as we might. As a general rule, that's what He's saying.

Most of us here are not doing this as well as we could. So, to our text, what does it teach us? V. 6, what does it teach us? What do you glean from this? Doesn't it definitely teach us that there's something to be gotten from giving? Does anybody see that here? You know, a lot of people get nervous. Oh, rewards.

You know, people are afraid because we've got this whole sow your seed. Your thousand dollar seed. Michael Murdoch, you ever seen that guy? Just sow your thousand dollar seed.

We're so afraid of that. Don't let these shysters commandeer Scriptural truth. Listen, we may not like it when these guys are out there saying, you know, give and God will make you rich.

If you don't see that in these verses, you're not reading them right. Is there anything in these verses that seems to indicate that if you give, God will increase your riches? You better believe it. What do you want me to do? Put a different spin on it? What do you want me to do? Do you think Paul's coming along to the Corinthians and saying whether you sow bountifully or sow sparingly, it has no influence, no impact, it doesn't make any difference on what you're going to reap.

What you are going to reap. That's not what he teaches here. He simply doesn't.

And you know what? You don't have to look far in Scripture all over the place to find promises made to people who give. I mean, it's everywhere. You go to Isaiah 58.

What promises do you have there? You give to the needy. You give to the homeless. You give to the naked.

You give to the hungry. And what are the promises? Answered prayer. Again, promises there about your righteousness.

Promises there about how you shine in the world. Promises there about repairing the breach. Promises there about you crying and God says, here I am.

All manner of promises. Or how about this? Jesus says, go sell your possessions, money bags in heaven. Spiritual treasure.

Or how about this? Give, and it will be given to you pressed down, shaken together, overflowing, as the KJV says, will men give into your bosom. Now, most of the translations don't put men in there. But you know what's interesting? The verb is plural.

That's why the KJV goes the way it does. It's plural. Who? It doesn't specify.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But it's plural. It's basically the idea that if you give, it's going to be given to you.

Listen to that. What is that? Luke 6.38. Give, and it will be given to you pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will they. Who's the they? He's not really even specific.

But the King James translators put men because men are plural. Some have said, well, maybe it should be angels. But I can tell you this, there will be a plurality of giving to you if you give.

And will it be meager? What is pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing? Have you ever seen those vibrating machines when they put some kind of stuff and they put them on these vibrators? And why? Because it packs it all down. It all settles down. Do you ever get the bag of cereal and you open it up and you say, hey, it's not even half full! Why? Because in shipping, it's pressed down, shaken together, but not overflowing.

Just pressed down, shaken together, and now it's gone down. The whole idea is what God's doing is He keeps putting it in and shaking it until it's overflowing, but it's so shaken, it's packed all in there. Look, whether you say it's men or angels or whoever, I'll tell you who's in charge of making sure that these principles actually carry through, what promises there are.

What promises. All manner of promises. But we don't want to stop there.

We don't want to stop at this point. Something is going on in v. 6 that isn't... You know, if I were to ask you, who do you see in that verse? You would say, well, I see the sower. That's there.

The sower is there. Anything else jump out at you? You say, well, I see the seed. He sows.

I see what is sown. I see what is reaped. But there's something else that really ought to jump off the page at us.

Brethren, we don't want to miss the true Giver in this verse. You can see what I'm saying in the context. Just let your eyes go down to v. 10.

He, God, who supplies seed to the sower. You don't get a feel. If you only look at v. 6 and you think about this principle, you could say, yeah, I see the whoever.

Whoever is sowing sparingly. Whoever is sowing bountifully. And I see that the sowing is either sparing or bountiful.

And I see that the reaping is proportionate. But you know, if you stop there, you're not really seeing what Paul wants you to see. You know what the context tells me? Paul wants you to stop and think.

Because even in the farming, if you just stop and think, you see a tiny little grain of wheat. How does that thing take root and multiply into 50, 75, 320? It's a miracle! What God, what Paul, being carried along by the Lord, what they want us to see is that this whole principle is undergirded by God. You go down there to v. 10.

He who supplies seed to the sower. Who gave the sower the seed to sow with? God gave it. And then you keep reading.

He will supply and multiply your seed for sowing. Who's the multiplier? Brethren, if all we hear when God asks us to give is the fact that we're supposed to give, think with me here. Giving.

What Paul wants us to see is giving has everything to do with how we think about God. When you pull out the checkbook, how do you think about God? What is it that goes behind a sparing giver? What goes behind the person who tries to keep back? Well, because they want it. They want something.

They want to keep something. Because they see if I give away, it reduces what I get. And I want.

And I want more. And so, even though yes, I feel like I'm compelled somehow. I need to give.

Some influences press upon my life that while I need to give, after all, Carlos keeps records and he'll see at the end of the year I don't give very much if I actually write it out by a check. Or I don't want people to think I'm stingy. There's these pressures.

Sparing giver. Why does he even give it all? Well, because he's preached at by preachers that tell him, you don't tithe, you're going to go to hell. If you don't do this, God's going to send the devourer and your refrigerator's going to stop working.

Oh no, I better write out the check. I mean, listen, this isn't that far off. You listen to what these guys say.

They're arm-twisting all the time. But brethren, who's the real giver in v. 6? It's not us. That's what Paul wants us to feel.

Brethren, do you see what's being said? Paul says, He will give the sower seed to sow with. And now catch this. He's going to multiply your seed for what purpose? Not hoarding.

You see, these health, wealth, prosperity guys out there, that's what it's all about. I'm going to give, and I expect to get. Why? So that I can have my own jet and I can have my own mansion.

No, Paul says, he's going to multiply the seed not for hoarding. Not to pack away in your barns. You see the multiplication? You give, and what God's going to do is He's going to seed to it that you do receive.

So that you again might be the channel for channeling the blessing to other people. Not to hoard it for yourself. And look, look with me.

V. 8, as God makes all this abundance, sufficiency, it's that you might abound in every good work. And then he says, as it is written, and he takes us back to Psalm 112, and look what he says. This is speaking of you, the Christian.

The Christian who distributes freely like the Macedonians, given to the poor. And he says this, his righteousness endures forever. Isn't that an interesting statement? What does he mean? Well, he's just talked about good works.

And notice v. 10. He who supplies seed to the sower, bred for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. Have you ever read Revelation 14? Their works shall follow them.

You know what he's saying? He's saying God will so multiply your giving, multiply that which you give into that which you may give all the more, so that the harvest of your righteousness. What does that mean? It means your own righteousness. Your own good works might be multiplied and endure forever.

Their works follow them, Revelation says. Brethren, you know what God is doing? God knows a proper estimation of riches. And He knows that the money bags in heaven and the treasures stored up there is forever.

And what He does, this is the blessing that He blesses you with. He gives you the seed in the beginning. And He says, My son, My daughter, cast that upon the waters and see what happens.

And then He gives. But He doesn't want you to forget about all the needs that are out there. Now that you have more, He's not saying now improve your standard of living.

You see what it says there in v. 10? He's still going to give you what you need to live with. But it's to increase your generosity. And we don't want to forget that.

Brethren, give. You know what the fastest way to becoming more like a George Miller, more like a Hudson Taylor, is give sacrificially out of what you have. Strive to be like the Macedonians.

Strive to be like the widow. And give. And brethren, I'll tell you this, this all has to do with how you view God.

You know who the sparing people are? Sparing people are people who feel its own exaction. God just wants to bleed me off. He wants to siphon away.

He just wants to take. God is a taker. God comes along and He wants what I have.

If v. 8, v. 10, you tell me, is God the taker here? Or is God the giver? You see, if you see God as a giver, Him giving, giving, giving, Jehovah-Jireh, that may mean God sees. God provides. God gives.

God gives. You see, the whole thing about giving is not that God is coming along and God is needy. And God is exacting.

God is always taking. Paul says do away with all your exaction. Be cheerful givers.

Why? Because God is such a giver in all of this. Brethren, what we do is we enter in to the riches of God's giving when we give. And look, He's a multiplier.

V. 10 says He multiplies. Every translation says that. I'm a math guy.

I like numbers. Multiply. Brethren, live in light of eternity.

Set your mind upon things above, not on things below. Brethren, don't live to have the nicest car in the driveway. Live so as to multiply the righteousness of eternity, the good works.

Seek to multiply that. And you know what's interesting to me here? Just look here. He talks about good works at the end of 8. He talks about your righteousness enduring forever in 9. He talks about the harvest of your righteousness in 10.

Brethren, to me, it feels like there's lots of ways we can do good works. Are they all limited to money and wealth? Isn't it interesting that Paul singles it down to that? Why would he do that? Why not talk about all the ways we could give of our energy and give of our lives that maybe don't have anything to do with money? Brethren, I think one of the reasons is this. Not that there aren't other ways we can do good works, but I think one of the greatest ways that God has given to you to multiply, multiply, multiply the harvest of your righteousness is through the wealth He's given you.

Don't waste that. Don't waste that. This is forever.

Your righteousness endures forever. That means your righteous deeds, your good works follow you off into eternity. And you will reap the benefits of those things forever.

You see how God's giving? You see how He's just lavishing? Brethren, if you prove yourself faithful in that one seed, He's going to throw a multiplier on you and keep doing it and keep giving you more and more and more. It may not come in your time frame. It may not come exactly back in the way that you think it ought to come.

But what God is giving you a promise of here is give and you are going to unleash the very lavishness of God Himself upon you. He is going to pour such things into your lap and upon you as is going to allow your righteousness and the harvest of that righteousness to increase all the more. And look at the other fruits from this.

You know what happens? People praise God. If you go on here, they're giving thanksgiving to God because of your generosity. And you know what happens? The needs of the saints get met.

And you know what else happens? Their affection for you returns back on your head. And they have affection for you and love for you and they pray for you. And in the end, he says, thank God for His inexpressible gift.

And you could say, well, that's His gift to us. I don't believe that. I believe Paul's taking us right to the cross.

Think. Think. Think about God.

God is a giver. God is the giver here. God gives and gives and gives.

And what God is telling you is if you give sparingly, be certain of it, what He gives back to you is going to be sparing. He's in charge of this principle. And He sees to it that it's carried out.

He stands by this. You give sacrificially, God is going to reward you. But not to multiply your riches here.

He gives you seed. He multiplies your seed for sowing. So brethren, give.

Give. Give. And then the more He gives you, give it.

And give and give. And then He'll give you more. And you give and you give.

And He gives you more. And what He's doing is He's preparing you for eternity. He's preparing you for money bags that don't grow old.

He's preparing you for the truest of all riches. You say, what are those? It's good. Father, I pray that You'd help us to live in light of these realities.

I pray it in Christ's name, Amen.

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