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The Path to Prosperity
9: 6-15

The path to prosperity DIG: Does Paul specify an amount or percentage of income that believers should give? What does he say about this in terms of "plants" and "harvesting?" What does Paul say is more important in giving than just the amount? In what ways does giving demonstrate faith and trust in God? How do these verses support the idea that you can't out-give God? What does Paul say is the result of generous giving? Who does it affect?

REFLECT: How do you move from greediness to generosity? How would you describe your current giving habits? How do you determine what churches, ministries, or missions to support? How do you determine how much you will give? Why is it possible to give too much or to an unwise degree? Why do some believers get unexpected money and automatically think of giving, while others get unanticipated windfalls and immediately think of spending?

The more one gives, the more God gives back in return.

Think for just a moment about the things you own. Think about the house you have, the car you drive, the money you've saved. Think about the jewelry you've inherited and the stocks you've traded and the clothes you've purchased. Envision all your stuff, and let me remind you of **two biblical truths**. First, **your stuff isn't yours**. Ask any coroner. Ask an embalmer. Ask any funeral-director. No one takes anything with them. You don't see U-haul's behind the hearses. The wisest man who ever lived declared: **Naked we come from our mother's womb, and naked we will depart. We take nothing from our labor that we can carry with us (Ecclesiastes 5:15).**

All that stuff – it's not yours. And you know what else about that stuff? **It's not you.** Who you are has nothing to do with the clothes you wear or the car you drive. **Yeshua** said: **Life is not defined by what you have, even if you have a lot**

(Luke 12:15 The Message). Heaven does not know you as the fellow with the nice suit or the woman with the big house or the kid with the new bike. Heaven knows your heart. **ADONAI doesn't see the way humans see – humans look at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7).**

When **God** thinks of you, he may see your compassion, your devotion, your tenderness or quick mind, but he doesn't think of your things. And when you think of you, you shouldn't either. Define yourself by your stuff, and you'll feel good when you have a lot and bad when you don't. Contentment comes when we can honestly say with **Paul, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty" (Philippians 4:11-12).** You have a **God** who hears you, the power to **love** behind you, **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** inside of you, and all of heaven ahead of you. If you have **the Shepherd**, you have grace for every sin, direction for every turn, a candle for every corner, and an anchor for every storm. You have everything you need.[192]



Here's the point: the one who plants sparingly also harvests sparingly, but the one who plants bountifully will also harvest bountifully (9:6). Every farmer recognizes that the size of **the harvest** is directly proportional to the amount of the seed **planted**. The farmer who **plants sparingly** will only see a meager **harvest**; but the one who **plants bountifully** will **harvest** a great crop. In the spiritual realm, the principle is that **giving** to **God** results in blessing from **God**. **Generous givers** will **harvest generous** blessings from **ADONAI**, while those who hold back selfishly fearing loss will forfeit gain. To motivate **the Corinthians** to **give, Paul** gave **a fivefold description** of **the harvest** that would result.

1. Love from God (9:7): While **Paul** was not passive in expecting **the Corinthians** to **give** to **the Jerusalem collection**, the provision was something which they ultimately had to decide to contribute individually.[193] **Each should give according to what he has decided in his heart, not grudgingly or under**

compulsion, for God loves a cheerful (Greek: *hilaros*, from which we get the English word *hilarious*) **giver (2 Cor 9:7; Prov 22:9** from the Septuagint**).** It's hard to imagine a more precious promise than to be the personal object of **God's love**. Yet that is what **He** promises the **cheerful giver. Cheerful giving** is an internal thing. It comes from **the heart**; not from external coercion. But though it is not forced, neither is it casual, careless, or a mere afterthought. Though there is a spontaneous joy in **giving**, it is still to be planned and systematic **(1 Cor 16:2)**, not impulsive or sporadic. And it is certainly not done to impress others (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Do – When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**).

2. Generosity from God (9:8-11a): While it is possible to **give** without loving, it is not possible to **love** without **giving**. **Moreover, God has the power to provide you with every gracious gift in abundance, so that always in every way you will have all you need yourselves and be able to provide abundantly for every good cause (9:8) – as the TaNaKh** says: **He gave generously to the poor; his tzedakah** (meaning both righteousness and charity) **lasts forever (2 Cor 9:9; Psalm 112:9).** Human wisdom teaches that prosperity comes from grasping for wealth, not from **giving** it away. But faith trusts in **God's** promise to bless **the giver** and to **do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (Eph 3:20).** The reason God **gives** back to those who **give** is not, as prosperity teachers falsely imply, so that people can buy bigger cars, homes, and jewels. **God** supplies them so that they will **be able to provide abundantly for every good cause,** in other words, for **the Lord's** work.[194]

Paul reinforced **his** point that **generous giving** will impoverish no one is evident since **He who provides both seed for the planter and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. God** is the one who provides, scatters, and multiplies. **He** is the source of **the seed (Isaiah 55:10-11),** which is likened to **righteousness (Hosea 10:12),** and **God** produces the crop. The principle **Paul** lays out is similar to the crass economic principle that the rich get richer and **poor** get **poorer**. **The generous** get richer; the miserly **poor** grow **poorer**. The problem with being tight-fisted is that the closed fist prevents us from receiving anything more from **God**. When we are open handed with others, our hands are also open to receive more from **God**. **He** will provide the means for us to be **generous, "You will be enriched in every way, so that you can be generous in everything" (9:10-11a).** We will not **be enriched** so that we can become like the rich fool who

sits back in comfort and says to himself: **You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry (Luke 12:19).** We are **enriched** so that we have the opportunity to be **generous** with others. In other words, what we do with our money becomes a litmus test for our relationship with **ADONAI**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** great generosity in **Your** gift of **love**! It is a joy to receive a **gift** from a **loved** one, but sometimes we forget that **Your** wonderful **gift** is an offer of **love** that requires us to give a response back. The best response that we can give back to **You** is to **love You with all our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37-38).** That means we make time in our busy schedule to read **Your** Word and meditate on what it says so we can **be conformed into Your image (Romans 8:29b)**.*

*Doing good deeds to others is OK, but what is also good is to give our money to those who are in need. We cannot just take in **Your love** for ourselves and withhold it from others. **Your love** cost you so much to come from heaven to earth to rescue us from the penalty for our sins **(Philippians 2:5-11).** Giving **love** back to **You** thru giving our money is a joy as we look at it as an opportunity to present to **You** a treasure from our heart. Thank you for the joy of **Your love** and for the joy of returning **love** back to **You**! In **Your** holy **Son Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

3. Glory to God (9:11b-13): Giving to others becomes a kind of thank-offering to **God** that multiplies itself. We thank **God** for what we have received; others thank **God** for what they have received from us. **And through us your generosity will cause people to thank God because rendering this holy service** (Greek: *leitourgia*) **not only provides for the needs of God's people, but it also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God (9:11-12 TEV).** The word *leitourgia* was used in **Paul's** day for public service, such as the contributions of money or services for a specific cause by the wealthy residents of **Corinth**. The rich were expected to spend a portion of their wealth to promote the common good. They received honors in return, such as public praise and inscriptions honoring their service on building and preserving their supposed honor after death. However, participating in the **service** that **Paul** commends is not something that only the very rich could do, but even **the poorest** could be, so to speak, public patrions. Therefore, the purpose of **the collection** was twofold, material and spiritual. It supplied the needs of the believers in **Jerusalem** and also offered thanksgiving to **God**. Their **gift** was not merely a service to **the poor**, it was a service to **God**

because of the thanksgiving that would result in **glory to God**. The recipients of **the gif**t could not help but lift their voices in thanksgiving to **ADONAI**.

In offering this service you prove to these people that you glorify God by actually doing what your acknowledgement of the Good News of the Messiah requires, namely, sharing generously with them and with everyone (9:13). This recalls **Paul's** description of the **Macedonians** in **8:2. They proved themselves** in severe affliction. However, **God** does not always test us through affliction. Some of the most difficult tests come when we must prove ourselves obedient to **God** in times of relative prosperity. If **the Corinthians** follow through **generously** on their commitment to **the collection**., they will have passed the test. Their obedience will also bring **glory to God** from the recipients as they praise **God** for it.[195]

4. Friends from God (9:14): And in their prayers for you they will feel a strong affection for you because of how gracious God has been to you (9:14). Some people think that **poor** believers have nothing to offer rich ones, but nothing could be further from the truth. **The prayers** of **the poor** are the reward for the rich, and the believers in **Jerusalem** would repay **the Corinthians generously** by offering prayer on **their** behalf. And not only **the poor** in **Jerusalem**, but also other believers would hear of **the Corinthians'** genuine faith and **pray** for **them** as well. Real unity in the Church is founded on sound doctrine and mutual **prayer**.

5. Likeness to God (9:15): The simple concluding benediction is one of the richest statements in the Bible. **Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift,** which is, of course, **His Son**. **Yeshua Messiah** is the most magnanimous, glorious, wonderful **gift** ever **given**, **the gift** that inspires all other **gifts**.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; dominion will rest on his shoulders, and he will be given the name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but rather so that through him, the world might be saved (John 3:16-17).

He who did not spare even his own Son, but gave him up on behalf of us

all – is it possible that, having given us his Son, he would not give us everything else too (Romans 8:32)?

But when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm (Galatians 4:4).

Here is how God showed his love among us: God sent his only Son into the world, so that through him we might have life. Here is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the sacrifice for our sins (First John 4:9-10).

God's gift of **the Lord Yeshua Messiah** is the basis for all **giving** as believers. **Yeshua** is the **grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies . . . but if it dies, it produces a big harvest (John 12:24). ADONAI,** as it were, planted **Him** as a seed and reaped a harvest of redeemed people. We are called to be **imitators of God, as beloved children (Ephesians 5:1 NASB),** and we are never more like **Him** than when we **give**.

Subsequent history reveals how **the Corinthians** responded to **Paul's** plea in **Chapters 8** and **9** regarding **the collection**. Sometime after writing **Second Corinthians**, **Paul** visited **Corinth** as **he** had planned **(12:14** and **13:1-2)**. **He** remained there about **three months (Acts 20:1-3)**, during which time **he** wrote **Romans**. In that letter, **Paul** revealed that **the Corinthians** had responded positively concerning **the collection:**

But now I am going to Jerusalem with aid for God's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia thought it would be good to make some contribution to the poor among God's people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, but the fact is that they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared with the Jews in spiritual matters, then the Gentiles clearly have a duty to help the Jews in material matters (Romans 15:25-27).[196]

When it comes to money, most folks tend to think, "Woohoo! What can I buy?" Then, if there's anything left over (which is rare), they save or **give** a little bit. There's a more biblical model: **give** first, save second, buy third. Imagine the long-term implications of such a plan. In the here-and-now, your life would be much less stressful if you embarked on a disciplined plan of saving for upcoming expenses,

emergencies, and retirement. But curtailing your spending, you would eliminate the likelihood of piling up consumer debt. And when you arrive in heaven you would find hundreds, if not thousands, are there because you had the ability to use earthly wealth to help people grasp eternal truth. It's not rocket science. Mishandling money will rob your joy. But managing it well can enable you to be more **generous**, which will lead you on a path to prosperity.[197]