

## **“Intentional Release” 2 Corinthians 9:1-15**

### **Sunday AM 9/8/19 – Jeff Lyle**

Jesus was known to tell others that it is better for His followers to be the givers more so than being the receivers. The Son of God lived a life of intentional release - He gave away all that He had to offer until there was literally nothing else for Him to give. Because His Spirit lives within all of those who commit themselves to Him, we are also given the nature of living as generous givers. We intentionally release our time, our efforts, our skills, our abilities and our money into the Kingdom. The Apostle Paul once wrote a group of believers to exhort them to faithfully accomplish that which they intended previously to do, namely, giving financially to the Kingdom opportunity in front of them. From Paul's words to them, we can gain much wisdom and instruction about what it looks like for us to live today with a spirit of intentional release. It is only in this life that we have the opportunity to sacrifice towards the advance of the Kingdom and store up eternal rewards for ourselves in the age to come. Here is how we can make the most of that opportunity.

#### **I. The Components Of Exemplary Giving (1-4)**

**A. It recognizes others (1) - “Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints...”**

**B. It is planned for & prepared (2a) - “...for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year.”**

**C. It is prioritized (2b) - “And your zeal has stirred up most of them.”**

**D. It is accountable (3) - “But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.”**

**E. It impacts our testimony (4) - “Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated - to say nothing of you - for being so confident.”**

Most church leaders do not love talking to the flock about financial giving. Because there have been numerous historical and public accounts of leaders mismanaging funds given by congregation, there is much skepticism and caution when the topic of financial giving is spoken of in a sermon. Paul was not concerned as much about the potential awkwardness as he was the need for the Christians at Corinth to view their personal money as a tool entrusted to them by God for His own glory in their generation. The Corinthians had been made aware about Paul raising funds for the poorer saints in Jerusalem (see 2 Cor. 8:1-8). In the previous year, the Corinthians had been eagerly committed to

the opportunity to participate in this offering, and they had zealously agreed to follow through. It would seem that their good intentions had not yet translated into full execution. In other words, time was running short and the Corinthians had not followed through in their commitments to give. Paul is writing above to tell them that the time had arrived for the collection of the funds and that they needed to honor their commitments, lest it bring disappointment to the others who had followed through and mar the testimonies of the Church of Corinth.

## II. The Attitude Of Exemplary Giving (5-7)

**A. It is faithfully, willingly offered (5) - “So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.”**

The pattern of new Testament financial giving is that it should become the priority for our finances. Often, Christians establish their lives, standard of living and financial commitments...then they determine what they can dedicate to the Lord from whatever they have left over. This approach is not what God has called us to embrace. We also are to "arrange in advance" what our giving will be. Christians are actually to place their Kingdom giving at the top of their list of financial priorities and then prayerfully seek to determine their standard of living, purchases and commitments on what they have left after their giving. Though this is counter-cultural, it is the only way for believers to live in ongoing faithfulness to the Lord with our finances. God's heart does not want to extract our money from us. He wants us to live in alignment with eternal matters, and to plan our finances accordingly.

**B. It is offered with understanding (6) - “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**

We cannot rush past this statement - this is a Kingdom Key concerning giving. Without debate, the Scriptures promise that we will financially reap to the same proportion that we faithfully release. If we give minimally to the Lord, the return blessing will surely find us, but only in minimal measures. Minimal release requires and exhibits only a small amount of faith. Conversely, for those who employ greater faith and display that faith by giving financially at higher measures of sacrifice, there will be a greater return from God to them. This is not a debatable issue. God's word speaks clearly that the Lord Himself returns our financial sacrifices with financial blessing. While our motive for financial giving should never be so that we might gain a financial blessing to keep to ourselves, the teaching of

the bible makes it clear that God blesses in proportion to what we give. The axiom is true: you cannot out-give God.

**C. It is offered before being required (7a) - “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion...”**

Here is another important aspect of New Testament giving: it is voluntary. That is not meant to say that our giving is optional. It is not. All believers are commanded to give, but the level of our giving is meant to be a prayerful decision that is reached as we continue to grow and mature in relationship with Christ. Paul literally tells his readers to make up their mind. This is a call to inner commitment to God about our giving. We should not do so reluctantly, but with full assurance that God will keep His promises to bless and reward us as we faithfully release. Leaders are not supposed to bring their followers under compulsion to give financially. Guilt, shame, fear and manipulation are sinful modes from leaders to facilitate giving in the flock. As Paul declares below, God wants us to give joyfully with faith-filled enthusiasm. If we give by guilt, obligation or fear, God wants us to grow in our trust and understanding concerning what it means to intentionally release our funds into the Kingdom.

**D. It is joyfully offered (7b) - “...for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

### **III. The Expectation From Exemplary Giving (8-15)**

**A. Expect God to provide (8-10)**

1. Providing sufficiency (8a) - “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times...”
2. Providing opportunity (8b) - “...you may abound in every good work.”
3. Providing bountifully (10) - God “will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

Most Christians who are inconsistent in their financial giving into the Kingdom struggle because of a fear of not having enough for all the practical needs in their lives. While all Christians in America live at a higher level of prosperity than do our brothers and sisters in most of the rest of world, there is still the potential for an unhealthy, unholy fear that we will be negatively impacted if we live in intentional Kingdom release. Paul comes strongly against this fear by teaching that God is going to supply special endowments of grace that result in us having all sufficiency at all times in all things.

That's a comprehensive covering from God! In His provision for our financial sufficiency, there is the joy of being able to abound in every good work that He offers us.

This means that we will not only have enough for our own needs, but we will have enough to faithfully participate in Kingdom opportunities for giving. The money we are entrusted with from God is pictured as seed that we are given to plant in His field. When we intentionally release our funds, it becomes a fruitful harvest within the field of the Kingdom. In turn, we are promised that God will continue to multiply our seed as we continue to plant it. The process is that **1) God gives us seed (money), 2) we release that seed and plant it into the Kingdom through our consistent giving, 3) God turns our giving into a fruitful harvest which 4) produces more seed that God gives us to continue to plant.**

**B. Expect God to bless (11) - “You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity...”**

We just need to let the Bible tell us the truth. We just need to believe it when it speaks so clearly about this issue of giving. What are we being promised here? God says that He will enrich us in every possible way when we live in generous release. This is both a statement of fact and...a test of our faith. We either believe God on this or we don't. If we choose to believe His word, we will be released to be more enthusiastic, intentional and generous givers into the Kingdom.

**C. Expect God to be glorified (12-15) - “For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God...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!”**

Paul closes out his words about giving with an offer to his readers to remember the big picture. Giving "is not only supplying the need", but it also leads to an abundant atmosphere of gratitude to God. Those who are benefitted by our giving will give God the honor and praise for all the benefits they experience from our secret, intentional sacrifice of our money. All the praise and thanksgiving go straight to God! Notice that Paul describes the Christian's giving as an expression of our "submission flowing from our confession of the gospel". Financial giving is the evidence of our submission and trust of Jesus as our Lord. Our intentional release of our money proves that we really do trust and honor Jesus as our provider and protector. This partnership with God in the area of our finances is a revelation that we honor "the surpassing grace of God upon" us. Along with Paul, we can declare, "Thanks be to god for His inexpressible gift!"