

THE COMMITMENT – NOW WHAT?
Deuteronomy 14:22-29; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

(Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

Intro: We've been looking at the fact that as Christ Followers we are God's first and as that is worked out in us in our care for creation, in are tearing the idols that distract us from true worship, and in our determination to live out the reality that God is God and we are completely in his care. Now what? Well, this is what, going from what we talked about last week where we proclaimed, if he is God then let's live like it – it's a smooth transition into making a commitment to be givers that indicates we are God's first.

In the previous chapter and a half Paul has been talking about the generosity of the Macedonian church in giving to the relief of the saints. The church in the homeland has been suffering persecution and poverty and as Paul presented the need to the Macedonians they had given selflessly and he uses that as motivation to stir the Corinthians to similar joyful giving. His plan is that as he or his associates stop by to visit he would be blessed by what they have collected for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul is really diplomatic as he writes to them, *I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* 2 Corinthians 8:8-9.

Referencing this F. B. Meyer writes, *"Notice, then, that Christian liberality originates in the grace of God, ministers abundant joy to those who give, is not stanchied by deep poverty, begins with the consecration of the giver's soul to God, and does not wait to be entreated, because it demands the privilege of ministering thus to the lack of Christ's body."* In other words, a Christ follower steps up, and gives as he or she sees need regardless of whether they have the resources or not.

Now in the passage I read as I opened this talk from 2 Corinthians 9, Meyer goes on to make this analogy, *"Paul likens money giving to seed sowing. What was placed in the collection box will assuredly return to the giver with large increase. Christians, therefore should not give grudgingly, or of necessity, but freely, spontaneously, generously, as the farmer who does not hesitate to dip his hand deeply into his granaries, expecting, as he does, that every additional item of green scattered we'll come back to him augmented certainly to thirty-fold and perhaps to hundred-fold. You will meet again somewhere and sometime every coin that you have given with a pure heart."*

This is not a get rich quick scheme or a give to get promise from a slick TV preacher, it's simply a promise that . . .

We will never be poorer because of what we give away

- I'll say it again – I hope you don't get tired of it, because it is a truth and a promise – you cannot outgive God! So with that in mind, and taking Paul's words in mind when he says, *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7 which urge us to thoughtful and consistent giving – what is your commitment going to be? This is between you and God – and as you are God's first, he will guide you into what it is.
- And what I've said is very true – giving will not make us poorer – as we give God makes our remaining resources more than adequate. That's why I never miss that chance to remind us that we don't give to get – we give because we are stewarding what is God's anyway. And, for the third Sunday in a row, *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* Matthew 6:33 – God takes care of the rest – he will make sure that we have enough.
- Ask this question . . .

How much of yourself are you giving to God?

- I know, I've been saying we're God's first all month, but how true is it? Listen to this from the Gospel of Mark, *And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."* Mark 12:41-44. This was the final week before the crucifixion. Jesus rode into town on Sunday and now he's doing some final teaching for his disciples. Mike Slaughter points out here that the rich people were putting in a

lot of money but only a fraction of themselves, but the poor widow put in a fraction of the money but all of herself.

- How much of yourself are you giving to God? One indicator is by your giving. One commentator points out that the source of giving is not the purse but the heart. I believe the widow is a perfect example of that.
- Finally . . .

Giving is an enriching experience

- Again, DO NOT HEAR WHAT I'M NOT SAYING! Giving to God is not a path to wealth and endless fortune. Giving to God is not a path to a mansion and a Maserati. That kind of giving is called selfishness, pure and simple. That is not what Paul is calling the Corinthians or anyone else to. Paul is calling us to pass on the goodness of God we ourselves, have experienced. Kenneth Foreman commenting on Paul's call to give to the suffering brothers and sisters in Jerusalem writes that giving ". . . will not only supply the wants of the saints but will overflow in many thanksgivings to God. This gift will glorify God; it will be a public testimony to the Gospel's truth and power; and it will be a source of grace within the givers themselves. Thus Christian giving is not only a part of Christian living; it is also a means and support of the life in Christ. Plain ordinary money can be a seed out of which grow the finest fruits of the Spirit."
- That means that genuine giving is exhilarating and anyone who has done it knows what I mean. There's a rush in knowing that you have had a part in a Kingdom impact. And the cool thing is that you don't need a big announcement with an oversized check and reporters with open notebooks and cameras flashing or video rolling to what a great philanthropist you are. As we give we get a "Well done, good and faithful servant from the One who's funds we have been managing.
- Paul gives a wonderful word picture of a farmer who is planting his field and says, the one who sows just a little will harvest just a little. That's why we never ask "How little will do?" The one who owns . . . *the cattle on a thousand hills*. Psalm 50:10 is our banker – so we ask "When can I begin?"

Conclusion: Now what? Commit again to be a giver who reflects a generous God. You will never be poorer because of it – you cannot outgive God. Don't hold back – if you are God's then live like it. Experience the satisfying and enriching joy of generosity. Amen.