

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

Pastor Adam Parker

August 31st, 2025

Sermon Title: The Giving Worshiper

Sermon Text: 2 Cor. 9:7

2Cor. 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Main Point: God's people have received everything we need, body and soul. Therefore giving all of ourselves and all that we have to God is a natural and joyful reflex.

Outline:

1. Give Responsively
2. Give Joyfully
3. Give Intentionally

Introduction

Last week's message was fundamentally about why we should give. This week's passage is about *how* we should do that. This text is part of the longest passage on giving in the Bible. It runs from chapter 8-9 of 2 Corinthians. In this part of 2 Corinthians, Paul begins by focusing on the Macedonians who are evidently living in extreme poverty and yet who were known for giving beyond their means. Paul says that the Macedonians gave "beyond their ability."

He also talks about the overflowing joy that was connected with the Macedonians' generosity. It is these people Paul points to that he wants the Corinthians to draw inspiration from. So the approach here—for Paul—is to find examples of glad-

hearted, big-hearted, open-hearted giving, and to draw attention to it so that the Corinthians can also be inspired and encouraged to give in the same way.

This is the exact same thing that Jesus did if you remember with the poor widow, whom Jesus said put in all that she had. The examples that we often see in Scripture are those who give a pittance from what is already very little.

What you start to see is that someone can give numerically little and yet be more generous than someone who has much and even gives a lot. The point is not really the number that we give, but the impact that it makes on us as we give.

John Chrysostom makes a similar point when he talks about this passage. He says, this is not only about providing for the poor. It's also about God changing the heart of the giver. Here is what Chrysostom says:

“if he was considering only the interest of the poor, he would have commanded merely that the money be given, and he would not have cared about the eagerness of the providers. But now you see the apostle in every way ordering by will first and above all for the givers to be joyful: the suppliers to furnish in a cheerful manner.”

Chrysostom is making this point: giving is about the giver, not just about the receiver. Giving is for the good of the one who gives, too. Why is that? Because God *cares* about the state of our hearts, and there is something about joyful giving that is good for the soul.

You maybe noticed this last week. Last week's sermon was about giving, but it was weird, right? Because the whole sermon wasn't really about us giving, it was about God giving. Why did I do it that way? Because I don't want to persuade you that you have a duty to give. I want you to have such a vision of God as a giver that you are willing and glad and joyful to give. And last week's sermon was the foundation of that: if you know how generous God is, and if it reaches down to the level of your heart, it not only takes the sting out of giving, but it makes giving something you can even be joyful and glad to do. Jesus, and Paul, and John Chrysostom are all saying that when you give, it also matters how you feel about your giving. Your affections matter, and make the difference between joyful worship and worship as a drudgery. God says to us today, “I'm taking the drudgery out of giving.”

I need to say a couple of things about money before we go further. Money is neither good or evil. The *love* of money is a great evil, Paul says. But money itself is neutral. In that sense, we should be aware of our temptation toward materialism and loving things. But we should also be aware that the answer to materialism isn't to shun possessions or to think that money is evil. Both of these are problematic extremes. Scripture tells us that loving the world and the things in the world is a sin. But the way we avoid that is not by shunning material things, either. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:4, "Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving."

Scripture actually gives us a balanced appreciation of possessions. You see this in Proverbs 30:8 when it says,

"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

Both wealth and poverty come with their own temptations.

When God commands us to give, he is commanding us to do something that contains promises of blessing. And the blessing isn't what the health/wealth supposed gospel says. The health/wealth message says, "If you give, God is obligated to make a return to you that is bigger than what you gave." It's a mechanistic and transactional view of God, almost like he is a genie who rewards you for rubbing the lamp.

The blessing that is found in giving is this: God is inviting us to trust him. And giving is stepping out into that trust. It's not just putting our money where our mouth is, but when we give, we're putting our heart where our mouth is, too.

I have said that both asceticism and materialism are serious errors. But I need to say this as well: in our own day, we experience far greater darkness and temptation from materialism than we do from asceticism. They are both errors, but materialism is by far the gripping problem of our own day.

In giving, God is allowing us to let go of things that do have a hold on us. He is giving us an escape from materialism. But to experience that escape, we do have to give.

Giving has a powerful spiritual and worshipful element to it. One Reformer (Wolfgang Musculus) said it like this: “Now the reason is evident why God loves a cheerful giver. God observes the gift itself as *well* as the heart of the giver.” You see, giving is a form of worship, because in it we are placing God above ourselves and above our priorities.

God is concerned with how we give. Last week God was motivating our giving by showing us what he is like... that he is a giver first and foremost. Last week’s text was God telling us why we should give, and why he’s liberating us to give. This week’s passage tells us how we should give. This week I’d like us to see three things which will help us to worship God with what he has given to us.

Three points. First, God says to give responsively. Second, God says to give joyfully. And third, God says to give intentionally.

1. Give Responsively

First today, God tells us to give responsively.

We saw last week that God is a giving God. He overflows with provision and kindness. He takes care of us. He gives us everything that we need in Christ. It is only in light of what God has already done that we give.

We do not give in order to be loved. We’re already loved.

We do not give in order to be accepted by God. In Christ, we are accepted, regardless of how we give.

We do not give so that he will give to us. He’s already given.

Look at 2 Corinthians 8:9:

“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.”

Of course, Paul is talking here about a different kind of giving and riches than worldly money. But this is where our giving starts. Jesus gave up his riches. Jesus became poor. Jesus is the prototypical giver. He gave first. And that makes our

giving responsive, not transactional. We're not giving to get; we're giving because we got. That's what Paul is telling us.

In Deuteronomy 15:10, Israel is told how to give. Listen to this: "You shall give to him freely... You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you..." Look at what God did. He could have just said "give" and not cared about why we give, or how we give. But he cares how we give.

In light of what God has done, he calls on us to give responsively. God has acted, now we act. God shows grace, now we respond. That is the movement of generosity. It flows from the heart of God, to our own hearts.

In Matthew 10:8 Jesus says, "Freely you have received; freely give." Here he is, echoing the Law of Moses. "Give like God gave." Again, you see it. God gave —> We respond.

Psalm 116:12: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" Are you getting the picture here? God renders the benefits, and then as his children we think, "How can I respond to the grace that I am surrounded by, and that I walk in each and every day?"

Unlike God and his giving, everything we will ever give as Christians is always responsive. God's giving is always preemptive, and ours is always responsive.

JC Ryle put it this way: "A giving savior should have giving disciples." Give responsively.

2. Give Joyfully

Second this morning, God tells us to give joyfully.

"God loves a cheerful giver," Paul says.

In Deut. 15:10 we are told, "You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you."

Now, you might think, “Hey you just said we don’t give in order to get. Isn’t that passage saying that we do get something when we give? That sounds transactional after all.”

At first glance, you might think that. But remember: this command rests on His prior redemption and provision. Their generosity was not a way to earn God’s blessing, but a grateful response to grace already given.

So when God promises a blessing here, he’s promising the kind of joy that can really only come from giving in a way that doesn’t begrudge. If you give unbegrudgingly, you don’t get some sort of material reward, but you get something even better: the experience of yielding yourself with a glad and generous heart. God frees us from grudging, calculating giving and blesses us with joy as we reflect His own generosity.

So this isn’t transactional, but it is a recognition that there is gladness in giving rightly.

So you see not only are we *not* supposed to have a heart attitude of resistance or begrudgingness, but God desires above all else that when we give, we have a heart of joy.

Now, this is counter-intuitive, isn’t it? At least from the world’s perspective. It flies in the face of our intuition about the relationship of joy and money, doesn’t it? Because the world would have us think that if we give, we have less. And if we have less we are less joyful and happy. Because the world thinks, money is freedom, money is choice, money is liberation. But God knows what a prison the love of money is. He is fundamentally presenting us with the key that opens the cage of materialism when he invites us to give joyfully.

But listen: The joy of the Christian is not like the world’s joy. You see, God assumes that the thing which drives our happiness is not the same as what drives the world’s happiness. We run off of a different fuel, as disciples of Jesus, than the world does. In the overflow of gratitude, in the security Jesus provides, we can give in a way we never could before. We give gladly, joyfully, willingly. We aren’t compelled to it, we’re not begrudging. God has taken care of all of the things that

we might think we need this money for. We're transformed from unwilling to willing because God has taken the initiative and shown such love to us.

Now, this is actually true of all worship. If we worship in a way that is begrudging, it's not worship. You cannot tell God that he is glorious, either in song, or in living out holiness, or in your giving, all the while grinding your teeth, and in bitter resistance. The Princeton theologian Charles Hodge reminds us of this: "Unless we feel it is an honor and a joy to give, God does not accept the offering."

Here is a grand example of this. In Luke 19, we hear about Zaccheus, who gets converted. And Zaccheus announces to Jesus a plan to give away half of his possessions. Notice that Zaccheus is not pressed to do this by Jesus. Jesus doesn't say, "Well you can't be saved until you do this or that." It is in the overflow of what Christ does for him that Zaccheus suddenly has a heart change. This is a man who now thinks, "I have everything I need. Of course I can give this money up." He comes up with the plan to give, he does it willingly, not under compulsion (like Paul talks about), and at every step he has the appearance of someone who has had a fundamental change of heart when it comes to his relationship to money.

This is a man who extorted money from people. Everything he could get he fought for. And now he's saying, "This money no longer has a hold on me."

No wonder God loves a cheerful giver. Give joyfully.

3. Give Intentionally

Third, God tells us to give intentionally.

Notice Paul's language. What we give is what we have "decided in our heart." In spite of the fact that we're meant to give gladly and joyfully, he doesn't seem to leave a lot of room for spontaneity. Which is fine.

Instead there is intentionality and planning. Giving, according to Paul, is not really spontaneous. Or at least it doesn't have to be. I am sure that it can be spontaneous, but that doesn't seem to be the norm that Paul assumes. Paul seems to be saying that our normal way of giving ought to be intentional and planned and premeditated. Something we decide before we do it. At the end of 1 Corinthians,

Paul has a very practical instruction on how the Corinthians should give. He says, “On the first day of the week, each of you is to put aside and save as he may prosper, so that no collections need to be made when I come.”

In this particular situation Paul doesn't want his visit to be occupied with the practicalities so that it's done by the time he arrives. But look: first, the giving happens on Sunday, the Lord's Day. Second, they put it aside and plan their giving. It's done with planning and intention. That lines up with what Paul says here. Here he says, we give as we have decided.

God gives like this, too. God *also* gives with intention and foresight. He blesses us. He showers us with grace. Every good thing in your life, down to the smallest thing is a blessing that God gave you with intention, with planning, and with a goal.

He has an end in sight, and a purpose for which he gives.

And this means that our attitude toward money needs be shaped by this core commitment: it is God's money, not ours. And God calls the shots with how we use it. Money is not our God. God must be our God.

Randy Alcorn, whose book *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* is incredibly valuable on this topic says the following. This can be very convicting, so prepare yourself:

“Money must not call the shots. [I]f we believe God is leading us to go to the mission field or to help a brother in need, we do not say, ‘There's no money, so I can't.’ That... would be serving Money. If God is our master, all money is at his disposal. We must concern ourselves not with what Money says, but with what God says. The need for money may be a factor in our decisions, but it is never *the* factor. God, not Money, is sovereign. Money—whether by its presence or absence—must never rule our lives.”

And if I can give you an insight here from C.S. Lewis, he addresses this question of how generous we should be, and how we should think of how much we give.

Listen to Lewis here:

“The only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. Our charities should pinch and hamper us. If we live at the same level of affluence, as other people who have our level of income, we are probably giving away too little.”

I think what Lewis says is a good rule of thumb. Notice that he's not dealing here in specifics, in numbers and all that. He's speaking more broadly in a way that allows us to question our own hearts.

Now, here is the fear that can paralyze us when it comes to this. The fear is, if we step out and give, if we're intentional and purposeful in our giving, we're afraid that we're going to find ourselves in financial trouble. And Paul does anticipate this. In verse 7 he tells us to give cheerfully, and then he says this beginning in verse 8:

“And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written: “HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.”

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.” (2 Cor. 9:8–12)

Paul is not preaching a health and wealth Gospel here. He seems to be saying that when we purpose to do good with God's finances, he makes sure we have enough to do that good. “that...you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

The grace that *you* are planning to show by means of your possessions is something that comes from God in the first place. God will supply. He doesn't give to make you rich, he gives to make you gracious.

Do you look at your current finances, not as your possession, but as a means of grace to use as a blessing?

Calvin, in his commentary in 2 Corinthians makes this point. He says that Paul describes true generosity as a kind of cheerful freedom: we gladly use what we have because we trust God to provide for us. The real wealth of a believer, Calvin says, is not in hoarding possessions but in relying on God's care, being content with what we have, and being ready to do good. It's not abundance of stuff that

makes us rich—it's a heart that's free from fear and full of trust that makes us rich. In fact, those who don't trust God are the ones who feel most empty; they're always anxious, always needing more.

But Paul says that the believer is so different. God has enriched us in Christ so that when we give of our time, our talent, and our treasure, we are never giving away the thing that is most precious for us. And that is because Jesus Christ has given himself to us, and in him we have all things necessary for life and godliness. God is telling us to give intentionally.

Conclusion

Now, as I conclude I want to say that there may be another point to this sermon. Consider it a hidden point. Here it is: "Also give theologically." Think of what Paul does at the end of this verse. He says, "For *God* loves a cheerful giver." Think of what Paul's saying here: when we give, our eye should not be on ourselves, on our neighbor, on our pastor, on the deacons, or on anyone else... our eye should be on God. It is *God's* attitude toward us as givers that we live for. He is the audience that we live for. He is the one we are serving, and seeking to please. That is the heart attitude of God's child. Our eyes are on him.

Do you see the theological center of giving? It's all about what God has done, what God is doing, and what regard God has for us. We know that in Christ we are his adopted children. He loves us with an everlasting love. When I ask what God thinks of us, I am not saying that your eternal destiny hangs on giving. The medieval Roman Catholic church would tell people, "Give if you ever want to get out of purgatory." The gospel regards that as complete nonsense. We do not give so that we can have peace with God.

I am asking, though, what does God think of your giving? What does he think of how you give? What does he think of what you keep for yourself and how you decide to use what you keep? I can't answer that for you. But we need to bring a question like that before God. Are you doing that?

Do you set your eyes on Him? Is it him that you are living for and giving for.

How you give, and what happens when you give changes depending on where your eyes are. If your eyes are on people, you can never give enough, because no one can or will ever pat you on the back hard enough to make your giving feel worth it. When we give the way Paul says, with our eyes on God, with an aim to please him, we have worth in the eyes of the one who already loves us.

Here is my challenge to you: what has a grip on you and your heart? Are you waiting so that you have enough so that you can finally give? I can tell you from experience, your appetite for money will grow along with your wallet. If you don't speak to your wallet and your account balance before it is filled, you will find that you feel like you never have enough so that you can't even begin to give.

Instead, my encouragement is that you look to the Scriptures and ask the question: when God calls me to give, is he offering me something good or something bad? And because you know God and his love, you already know the answer. He's giving you an escape from our materialistic age. He's offering you a ticket to set you free.

Let's pray.