

# “Why We Give Things Away”

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**Series:** *Church Planting*

**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 8:9, 9:6-15

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If you have a Bible, you can be making your way to the New Testament book of 2 Corinthians. We're mostly in chapter 9, verses 6-15, but we'll pick up chapter 8, verse 9 as well. We are continuing what Brandon kicked off last week. These are a few sermons specific to the moment that we're at as a church before we launch our first church plant. This will be a little bit of pastoring from the pulpit, if you will. Last week, Brandon from the Psalms preached sort of the big picture, a vision of what God is doing, which is he's making a people for himself to dwell. He's going to dwell with his people in the church. Over the next few weeks, we're going to get a little bit more practical and talk about some of the realities that we're about to face. If you're visiting with us or you're from out of town, this might feel a little bit like an insider sermon, and that's okay, but there'll be things for you too, I suspect. Today's passage is in the middle of a letter from Paul to the Corinthian church, and more than that, it's in the middle of a section of this letter that's on giving, money. Yeah, this is not a sermon on tithing or giving, so let's pay attention, let's read and pay attention to God's word. It is for us. I'm going to start with chapter eight, verse nine,

*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.*

*The point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he's made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver, and 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, he has distributed freely, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. 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 every way for all your generosity, 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 the 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.*

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Would you pray with me?

*Help us now, God the Spirit, to understand what we're reading and not just to understand, but would you apply it for us as a church, communally, collectively? Would you apply it to us individually? Lord only you can make that happen. Lord Jesus, you who have given us everything, would you make us like your very self? Make us people who move forward seeking to give. We pray Jesus in your name, amen.*

December 7th, a couple of weeks from now, is going to be a weird Sunday. About a hundred of you, give or take, between the two services won't be here. You will be called to worship at the Star Theater in downtown Toccoa, and you'll have your first taste of what it's going to be like to worship as Providence Presbyterian Church. It's just a preview service, we'll be all together through the Christmas season, and then on January 18th, the church plant will launch. They'll be on their own, the baby will be birthed. It's going to be a season of strangeness. If you're going, it'll be strange. If you're staying, it'll be strange. On the 7th, at that preview service, we'll all have, for many of us, what will be a first taste of what can only be called the cost of church planting. Because you're going to show up here, and you're going to look around, and you're not going to see those friends, or you're not going to hear those musicians, or your kids aren't going to have those people serving in the nursery, or many other sorts of costs. You won't see some officers, small group attenders, Bible study members, it'll be a little bit of a sobering moment. We are giving something away, and there's always a cost to that, but it's worth it, obviously. It's worth it, right? That's why we're doing this sermon.

Is it worth it? We could say that the Christian life is a series of God calling you and me, collectively and individually, to give good things away, and to believe that it's worth it, to believe that it's actually good for us, and that it's good for whoever is getting. So that's what Paul lays out in this passage today, give good things away for Christ's kingdom, because it's good for everyone. We're going to ask some questions. What are the good things we should give away for the kingdom of Christ? Why? And what do we gain if we do? So let's go through it.

What are the good things that we should give away?

Let's just acknowledge here at the beginning, the early church and our day are very different in many ways. There were no denominations, right? Corinth has one church, Jerusalem has one church, all the little towns in Macedonia where the gospel had gone, one church. And every church is new. And that means that every church has financial need. There are widows and orphans in each church. And it was not a time when the government was particularly open to helping out those who were in great need. Not to mention the fact that Roman historians tell us that when the Romans would put out babies that they didn't want outside to leave them to die exposed, it was the Christians who would come, take those babies, bring them into their homes and raise them. Also the elderly, whom the Romans decided they were tired of feeding. They would leave them outside. Christians would come, take in the elderly and take care of them until their last moments.

So these churches were growing through conversions, through births, through these deeds of compassion and mercy, bringing people in. And with every point of numerical growth came growth in intensive physical needs. And the government wants to kill them all, to kill them all, not to give them money to help them. So there's only one way that this is going to work. And it's if this church over here notices when this church has an intense need and actually moves toward them and gives. It's the only way that it's going to operate.

Look at the end of chapter 8 verses 14 and 15. He lays out the argument that when one church has an abundance, it should supply the need of a church that is in need so that there might be fairness among the people. We hear that phrase and automatically we don't like that because we hear fairness among the people and we think that's wealth redistribution, that's socialism, that's communism. This isn't the government compelling people to redistribute wealth. That's not what we're talking about. This isn't a godless governmental form. This is God's church empowered by God's spirit noticing when they have plenty, noticing the needs of their brothers and sisters and from a heart of love moving toward them to actually give something away to help them. That's how it was supposed to work. It was the only way it was going to work. And so they gave at a minimum money. That's the thrust of this passage. They're trying to gain a collection to give to the church in Jerusalem, which had begun to suffer persecution at this point in history.

These principles exist far beyond money. This passage is talking about not just a mindset, but a heart posture of generosity for the sake of the kingdom. We know this, I suppose, but it's impossible for the church to function like it did in the early days. They had this interconnected system of dependence and supply administrated by the apostles themselves. It's a very different world now. In Habersham County alone, there are hundreds of hundreds of churches, lots of denominations crossing theological lines. And yet there's still this imperative that as individuals and as a church, we are supposed to have eyes open looking for ways to give our life away for the sake of the kingdom. And one way that we can do that in our circle is to give away biblical, faithful churches. This is us trying to follow Jesus' principle that whoever would keep his life will lose it. But whoever gives his life away for Jesus' sake will save it. We're trying to give our lives away. We're not trying to hoard good things for ourselves.

He says, look at verse seven in chapter nine, *each must give as he's made up his mind*. So this is cognitive, *not reluctantly or under compulsion*. Nobody's to have a gun to your head to make you do this. *God loves a cheerful giver*. This is something that happens not just on a ledger, but in the heart. It has to flow out from the heart. God loves it when his people hold his good gifts loosely, hands out and eyes open, looking to say, who needs what I have? And it can include money. It can include your stuff, your food, your time, your emotional energy, maybe the most precious commodity of all. To be practical, it includes all the things that we're about to give as a church. People, servants, leaders, volunteers, pastors, every good thing that God has given Christ Presbyterian Church as a church, he is now calling us to give away freely for the sake of his kingdom and to establish a church in Toccoa.

Let me just get really specific for us for a minute. If CPC is your home, and again, if you're just visiting, then just endure for a moment, but if CPC is your home, here's what God is calling you to give away come January. Three of our musicians, two of which serve almost every week, one of which, as you well know, is the closest approximation to the band Shane and Shane east of the Mississippi, pretty sure. There will be an audible change in January in this room. Are you ready for that?

Sixty regular children's volunteers are what we have. We're about to give 20 of them away, one-third, and April earlier may have been sitting in a corner rocking gently back and forth thinking about how that's going to work. We're going to give away six of 16 Sunday school teachers. Of the 135 kids who call CPC their home, 50 will be gone. Two of six deacons, one of ten elders, one of four pastors, and those are just the things that we know about. These are things we are about to gladly, hands mostly loose, give away.

Kids, God is about to call you, some of you, to give away what your friendships look like right now for the sake of his kingdom. He's going to make a demand of you, and I can't tell you that it's going to be easy. It might not be. It doesn't mean you can't be friends with these people anymore, but it will be different because you won't see them every Sunday morning. Kids in the kingdom will experience the cost of giving good things away, too.

Adults, you will also give away friends, people you like, people you like to see every week. You won't see them every week, and you're going to taste a little bit of the cost of giving away something for the sake of the kingdom.

Some of you, for the sake of the kingdom, are going to find yourself serving in the nursery more.

Some of you are going to find yourself teaching children Sunday school, and you didn't expect that that was going to happen.

Some of you are going to need to take your heretofore unseen musical abilities and let someone know that you actually play the guitar like a rock star, and we didn't know. We need to know that now. It's time for you to tell us.

Some of you are just going to see gaps in the church, and you're going to need to take the initiative to step into the gap. Why? For the sake of the kingdom.

If you are planning to go with the church plan, there's a cost for you, too. You're like the older teenager that's about to leave home for the first time, and there's some real excitement, but if you were sober for a minute, you would feel a little bit of fear.

You're leaving something that's, by God's grace, relatively stable, and you're moving into something that is not as stable. It's stable as it can be, but it's not the same thing.

You're leaving something that is financially on good ground, and you're moving into something that it's on good ground, but it's different ground.

You're moving from something known to something unknown.

You're going to have to do your own laundry.

You're going to have to cook your own food.

You're going to have to do adulting type things. This is what it means to become a church on its own. You'll have to give good things away, too.

This is what the church is called to do corporately. It's what all of us are called to do individually. All of us, every single day, are called to figure out what are the things that I need to hold loosely. Good things that God is calling me to give away for the sake of the kingdom. Are you open-handed in that way?

Well, why should we, right? Why should we? Why shouldn't we just protect and keep all of these good things that we like? There better be a good reason for it. So let's talk about that.

Why?

Back to chapter eight, verse nine. I included this verse because it's the driver for the entire discussion in chapters eight and nine. Paul says,

*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.*

So notice what Paul is saying about Jesus. He's talking about Jesus before He took on a body, before the incarnation. Jesus as the eternal God the Son, second person of the Trinity, in eternity past was rich. And not rich like we think, meaning He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. The cattle on a thousand hills hadn't even been created yet for what we're talking about. There are no hills even. So what this is saying is that before Jesus ever created anything, He in and of Himself along with the Father and the Son was rich. This is what Steve was talking about earlier.

We talked about this in the confession class. It says, *God is alone in and unto Himself, all sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made.*

What does He need? Nothing. He's completely satisfied in Himself. For eternity past, God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit existed in a communion of perfect love and satisfied fulfillment, needing nothing.

Paul says this in Acts 17. He's preaching that sermon to the folks who made the statue to the invisible God. And he says, no, no, no, let me tell you who this God is. He's not served by human

hands as if He needed anything since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. So that's the status of God the Son from eternity past. Super, super rich. He has everything.

*Yet for your sake He became poor.* How does He become poor? Not by giving up His divinity and somehow ceasing to become God. No, no, no. Paul tells us in the letter to the Philippians that while remaining fully divine, He becomes poor by taking on humanity, by taking on a body like ours, by entering into our world. That's how He becomes poor. And in His incarnation throughout His life, which was physically full of poverty, culminating in His unjust death, Jesus becomes the full measure of poor.

You know what we fear out of poverty? What do we say? We say things like, this is going to ruin me. My life will be over. It's all going to come tumbling down. Well, the most intense expression of that is death and God casting you off. And what did Jesus experience? Death and in His humanity, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The Lord Jesus experienced what we fear most about poverty. That's what He endured when He came.

At the center of this is so that He can provide for our forgiveness.

We heard a song that said it this way, that I drew the fire that was aimed at me until He stepped into its path. It's a pretty good visual that the poverty that that Paul's talking about here, he says that we're poor. He's not just talking about financially. He's saying that we are so spiritually poor that that we actually have drawn the wrath of God toward us. We have merited it. We have rebelled against the Creator and He ought to come at us. And Jesus steps into the path of the wrath of God so that we can be forgiven, so that we can be accepted. And that's why He starts to talk about how we are rich. He's not saying you're going to become super wealthy in this life. He's saying that if you come to Jesus, you will be rich in being forgiven by the God who made you.

You will be rich in having your sin imputed to Jesus on the cross and His righteousness imputed to your account. And you are righteous now.

You'll be rich in that you're united with Jesus to such a level that wherever He is, wherever you are, that whatever He has, you have.

And what does He have now? Everything. He is the heir. He has the inheritance. All things are being subjected to His feet and we're in a union with Him that makes it so that we have everything, everything that we could possibly imagine.

If that starts to get into you, this whole talk about giving starts to sound real normal. If we have been given that, then for me to hold all things loosely and open-handedly and look for where I can give things away just becomes, yeah, that sounds like what we should do today. This is the kind of thing. This gospel has changed people, individuals, communities, churches, the trajectories of civilizations over history. It's changed nations and kings. It's changed the poor and

lowly. And what it does is it changes us from this base mentality that whatever I get, I have to get it myself and I have to protect it. It's that miser, hoarder, dragon mentality that comes out of us from the heart. That's our natural tendency outside of Christ.

I remembered for some strange reason that in 10th grade, I think I was supposed to read the legend of Beowulf. I bet I read the Cliffs Notes, maybe, but some of you remember that or were supposed to read it. But I remembered a part of it that I had forgotten that he doesn't just fight this monster named Grendel. At the end of the story, he fights a dragon. And this was the part that I had forgotten. The dragon that Beowulf fights is guarding a golden horde as dragons want to do, as you well know. The dragon's golden horde was buried in a graveyard. So literally, the dragon has all of his stuff and is laying on top of it in the tomb.

There's a reason why that sticks. There's a reason why when we feel like I have to take care of myself and I have to protect and I have to lay on top of it and make sure nobody else gets it, there's a reason why that smells like death. It is death. It's evidence of spiritual death. It's evidence that we don't know what we've been given. We forgot. We're rich. Why would we not give everything away? We can't guard our stuff and our life and act like dead people.

If you're here and you don't yet know Jesus, we're glad you're here. And this is my question for you is, have you grappled with your real condition? Because you're probably here and you're saying, I'm doing okay. I'm making it. I'm functioning. That's okay. And the scriptures beg you to identify yourself as this level of poor, not just financially, but spiritually bankrupt. A dead dragon guarding a dead treasure trove with the smell of rotting bones. That's everybody in this room. That's who we really are. And it's Jesus who comes and gives us life and breaks the spell of the dragon and frees us up so that we know what we have in him and we start being people who give freely.

We all have to be taught to share stuff. I'm the third born and I don't think that I've learned it yet. I don't think I've learned how to share. I did imagine this week, what if you heard a story about a kid who, you know, late one, early two years old, went up to another, let's say, two-year-old at, you know, the nursery and said, friend, look, all my toys, they're yours. Keep them. Bring them back. Don't bring them back. It doesn't matter. What I have, I freely give to you. It's yours. You need to call the police because you have a sociopath in the room with you. That's what you need to do if that's what you find. We don't learn this naturally. We have to be taught from birth how to share, how to give things away. We can't do it.

And it's true for adults, too. When I love my comfort and my routine and when I love having my house, my way, I will be very slow to give my space and my time and my energy to show hospitality to anyone. I won't do it because I am clutching on to something so tightly. We've got to become people who learn to hold things loosely, and the only way it can happen is when we realize exactly what we have in Christ.

We can do this in the church, too. I don't know if you've ever felt this way, but maybe here or some other church you've thought, how can we just keep things like they are? We've got a good

thing going. How do we make sure that it stays this way? I feel that way sometimes. If you're in a good church, if you feel like you've got friendships and the Word is preached and God is at work and there are so many good things, why would I ever want to give that away? And why would we not want to give that away? Why would we not want other people to have that? In fact, the irony is that when our hearts turn and say, I have to protect this and keep it just the way I want, that's when we start hurting the very thing that we love. And if you want to murder a church, the best thing you can do is clamp down and try to keep it exactly like it is.

Jesus has given us everything. He made what we have. He's the one that's calling us to give it away. He'll restore whatever He calls us to give. He'll build whatever we're giving. He's in charge of it anyway. It's not as though we were ever in charge of this thing. We never were and we never will be. It's Jesus' church and that is so refreshing. It's such good news. We're called to all the right manners of stewardship and faithfulness and to focus on the things that matter. There are some things that really never should change. We better focus on the Word. We better be faithful in all the things that He's called us to. But if He's asking us to give things away, let's give them.

What level of dragon sickness, to use a line from Tolkien, what level of dragon sickness do you have when it comes to how you think about the church? What level of dragon sickness do you have when it comes to the way you think about your own stuff? That's the place to fight. That's the place to bring that news of the gospel and be reminded, I'm only rich in Him, but in Him, I am crazy rich.

Let's say we did it. What if we did this? What if we became people who give good things away as a church, as individuals?

What do we gain? What do we get out of it?

Let's talk about that. To say it simply, good things for us and good things for others.

Look at verse six. We're going to lock in here on six through 15 for a second. *If we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully.*

This is a proverbial statement, not a formulaic statement. This doesn't work on a ledger. Sometimes we try to take proverbial things and make them formulaically true, and it just doesn't work that way. The principle is, if you're someone who gives, you should be somebody who expects to receive. He says in verse eight, it's because God is able to make all grace abound to you, such that you'll have all sufficiency in all things at all times. Not for your material wealth, but for every good work.

It only works because there's a God. You understand that, right? If you take everything that you have and you put it on a ledger sheet, and you say, okay, I'm going to give every good thing that I have away, at the end of the day, what are you going to have? Nothing. That's how it works if it's a material universe. His point is, it works because there's a God. Don't live like a materialist.

There's a God who takes care of everything. There's a God who gives everything that you need. He's going to supply the things that you need, and more than that, as you learn to give, He's going to make you the righteous person, which is who He quotes in verse nine. That's a quote from Psalm 112, which you read earlier. It's the righteous person who distributes freely and gives to the poor. We're righteous in our union with Christ when we become Christians. We will begin to display righteousness to the world around us. We become in this life what we already are in Him, and that will manifest itself as we learn to be generous like our Savior.

Look at verse 10. *God supplies seed to sowers and bread for food. He'll supply and multiply seed for sowing, and He'll increase not just the harvest of your bread, but your righteousness.*

Verse 11. *You'll be enriched in every way for your generosity.*

So to sum up, it's good for us to give because we receive plenty, and God gives us what's sufficient for us, what we need, and we grow in righteousness, and we're blessed by the people to whom we give. Look at verse 14.

*They will long for you and pray for you because they experience the grace of God through your open-handed giving.*

That's how it's supposed to work. Relationships are knit together as we learn to be giving people. We give freely because it's good for us, but it's good for others too.

Verse 12. It satisfies the actual need. There would be widows and orphans who would eat because they gave freely. There would be ministries that move forward because it had funding. When we give a church in Toccoa, guess what we're giving? We're giving a gospel-preaching, Christ-honoring, scripture-loving church that has ordained and called officers who are called to shepherd a flock in the name of Jesus with His authority. Jesus is extending His authority and reign in another little place, in another part of the world as we plant a church such that, Lord willing, for years to come in Stevens County, there will be people who come to know Christ because in 2026, by God's grace, we gave away some good things.

That's what we're praying for. Verse 12 says *it produces thanksgivings to God*, not just our thanksgivings, not just the thanksgivings of those who were sent, but again, for years to come, people who look at their lives and say, we were nothing, and then my grandparents started going to this little church in Toccoa, and look, our whole family line has been transformed. There's so many people who know Jesus now, and it will be because, humanly speaking, by God's grace, in 2026, we were able to give away some good things. God will be glorified. People will be knit together. It's good for us. It's good for others. God gets glory. And all of it is facilitated by what He says in verse 15.

*It is the inexpressible gift of God, the giving of His own Son for sinners, that makes us rich in Him.*

That's what enables us to do any of this in the first place.

So what do we get? What do they get? What does God get? Well, God gets glory, and we get a lot of good things, and Toccoa gets a flag planted for the kingdom, and more ground is taken for the name of Jesus, and there's another voice of truth in a culture filled with lies, and there will be another vehicle for mercy and compassion to people whose lives have been destroyed by every idol known to man. There will be an island of sanity and hope for all kinds of things, for marriages that are hopeless, for children who are struggling. There will be an embassy of the kingdom that one day takes over everything. That's what we gain, all of that and more, if we give good things away.

Can you see that? We get a vision for that at the corporate level. That's why we're doing what we're doing. Could you imagine what this might mean in your personal life? What might God do in the lives of other people? Because you took your time, and you held it out with loose hands, and you said, it's not mine, Lord, who needs my time? And you took your emotional energy, and you said, all right, this emotional energy, it's not mine, it's not mine to keep. Who needs it? Who needs some of my stuff? Potentially, yeah, who needs money? Who needs friendship? What does it look like for us to, instead of thinking, how can I protect my things, who needs what I have? For us as a church, instead of, how can we keep what we've got going? Who needs what God's doing here?

We'll be called now and hopefully in future moments as a church, and you'll be called in a thousand moments in your life to give good things away for the kingdom of God. And you can, not because you just have so much to give, right? Not because you're good enough and you're smart enough and doggone it people like you. No.

You have good things to give away because we who were poor in sin and death have been made rich by the Lord Jesus who took sin and death for us and was raised and will raise us and will make all things new. We are drawing from an infinite bank. We have an abundance mindset that will never dry up. We never have to go through wondering, how will this happen? No, no, no. We have everything so we can hold it loosely and give. Let's pray and let's trust the Lord to help us do this hard thing to give good things away that will glorify him and be good for everyone. Would you pray with me?

*Lord, you know, this is not automatic for us. It's not automatic for me. I have a tendency to want to protect and provide and keep and measure and secure. And I suspect I'm not alone. As a church lord, I know that there are many here who have the tendency to want to say, how can we keep this going? I feel it too. You are constantly calling us to move forward in faith and to give away good things for your name's sake and to believe there is a God, there is a God who provides and there is a God who has given us everything richly in Christ. So remind us of your abundance in the gospel and let it push us out to be generous in your mission. Show us what that needs to look like in our lives. Show us what that needs to look like as a church and bless us as we experience the cost of it in the coming months. We ask Jesus for your glory. Amen*