

GIVING MONEY AWAY: THE GOLDEN RULE
(2 Cor 8:1-15, 9:6-9)

[INTRODUCTION]

We're in the third and final week of our series:

On the Money: Making It, Spending It and Giving It Away.

- **First week:** The 10 Commandments of MAKING Money.
- **Last week:** The 7 Deadly Sins of SPENDING Money.
- **Today:** The Golden Rule of GIVING It Away.

I'm sure you know this, but most people don't particularly like going to church...

- Not kind of thing you hear IN church very often—but it's true!
- **WHY?** Lots of reasons.
 - Worth brainstorming in your SS or small group...
 - How can we address the obstacles that stop our friends from coming?

But for many, going to church a bit like going to DENTIST.

- **Go:** 1) Bc a family member made the appointment, 2) you have general sense that it's right thing to do, 3) checking in will hopefully stop something bad from happening in future.
- **When There:** 1) Mildly uncomfortable, 2) get a lecture about something you're doing wrong, 3) can't leave w/o paying more than you want to.

Last point—can't leave w/o paying more than you want to = BIG ONE.

- Many people have hard time with church bc of its approach to money.
- We understand that.
 - TV preachers with private jets and luxury cars.
 - Proclaim a "Prosperity Gospel" to manipulate vulnerable.
- It's nothing like **Jesus**:
 - He was **never rich**—he didn't have anywhere to lay his head.
 - He **never manipulates**—he gives everything freely by grace.

All that to say, if you feel cynical about church/money—I get it.

- Hope this sermon won't be like a filling: *Sit back, wait till it's over...*
- Actually, hope this sermon will give you more than you bargained for...

That you will, in a sense, leave richer...

[Transition]: Before we get into it all—let's **pray**.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF GIVING MONEY AWAY

- What do you think it is? What would your Golden Rule of generosity be?
- This morning, we'll take ours straight from **V9 of 2 Cor 8**—here it is...
- The Golden Rule of Giving Money Away:

Know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I came across a blog a while ago that listed reasons we should give money to charity.

- I can't decide if they're tragic or funny:
 - Generosity **earns respect**.
 - Generosity helps you **publicize yourself**.
 - Generosity gets a **tax deduction**.
- Can you imagine one of those was Golden Rule?! **GOLDEN RULE OF GIVING MONEY: *Thou Shalt Give to Get a Tax Deduction...***
 - Don't get me wrong—there's nothing wrong with that!
 - But surely there's something more—something more **animating**, something more **empowering**.
- Our text answers, YES—there is: ***the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ***.

[Transition]

- Throughout series we've said: ***Inseparable connection bt our FAITH/FINANCES***.
- This morning we see: ***Inseparable connection bt Christ's GRACE and our GIVING***.
- How does this work?
 - What's connection bt grace/generosity?
 - Text highlights 2 things:

[THE CONNECTION BT CHRIST'S GRACE/OUR GIVING]

1. First, it points us to PAST GRACE—here in 2 Cor 8:9:

- **We get our Golden Rule:** **Know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...**
- **Then:** **though he was rich, YET for your sake he became poor, SO THAT you by his poverty might become rich.**
- Our verse points us BACK—back to grace we received in the PAST.
- Do you catch logic of verse? ***Know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...***
 - ***Though he was rich...***
 - Rich beyond riches—enthroned in splendor of heaven.
 - The one who owns *everything* and *everyone*.
 - ***Yet for your sake he became poor...***
 - He left it all...
 - He left everything behind.
 - ***WHY? So that you by his poverty might become rich...***

- It's a summary of the gospel:
 - We are spiritually poor, morally bankrupt...
 - So Jesus exchanged his wealth for our poverty...
 - So that we might exchange our poverty for his wealth...
- He came to earth that we might make it to heaven.
 - He is THE way to eternal riches.
 - We are saved by the radical generosity of God...

[Apply]:

- When calling us to be generous, the Bible...
 - Points back to God's generosity—to PAST grace—bc it **animates** our generosity.
 - ANIMATES IT: Brings it to life, stirs it within us, kindles that giving flame!
- Jesus said those who've been **forgiven** much find it easy to **forgive**.
 - In the same way, those who've been **given** much find it easy to **give**!
 - And NO ONE has been given more than we've been given in the gospel.

[Summary]

- **Randy Alcorn:** "*As thunder follows lightening generosity follows grace.*"
- That's the connection bt Christ's grace/our giving—former animates latter.

Transition: But there's more...

2. After pointing to PAST GRACE, Bible points to FUTURE GRACE—2 Cor 9:8:

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.

- This verse points us FORWARD—to grace we're promised in the FUTURE.
- Do you catch logic again?
 - **God is able to make all grace abound to you**—We're saved by grace, yes; but he still gives grace for day-to-day life!
 - **So that having all sufficiency in all things at all times**—He provides everything we need in every situation.
 - **You may abound in every good work**—He'll equip us for whatever life demands.

[Apply]: When calling us to be generous, the Bible...

- Points forward to this coming generosity—to FUTURE grace—bc it **empowers** our generosity.
- EMPOWERS IT: Emboldens, equips, and enables us to be generous.
- You see how this works?
 - If you trust God's promise—that he will give you all you need for whatever life holds—you no longer feel the need to build your own security.
 - If he's going to provide **tomorrow**, I can give away my resources **today**.

[Summary]: You see connection bt Christ's grace/our giving?

- PAST grace **animates** it—makes us alive to generosity.
- FUTURE grace **empowers** it—enabling us to follow through today.
*If you've received riches in PAST and are promised provision for FUTURE—
you can be radically generous in the PRESENT.
That's grace-filled, gospel-centered giving!*
- Generosity is driven not by guilt—but by grace...

[Transition]: That's why The Golden Rule is to: **Know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- But what does that look like in day-to-day-life?
- Well, here at Cedar Springs, we've taken this Golden Rule and developed what you could call a **philosophy of generosity**—HOW we want to give in light of this gospel.
 - Four parts to it—and each part comes from this text.
 - Let's look at each of them to see how grace changes the way we give...

1. When we know the grace of Jesus—we give **CHEERFULLY**.

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

- Generosity flows as a **happy response** to the PAST GRACE we've been given...
- And as a **happy trust** in the FUTURE GRACE we're sure to receive...

[Illustrate]: Bc of this, there's a BIG difference bt way we give to the Lord and the way we pay our taxes.

- **At tax time:** We all do the necessary paperwork to pay as little as possible!
 - Give to Caesar what is Caesar's...
 - But don't feel need to give him any more...
- **But Generosity:** That's something we're eager to do:
 - Aware of his lavish generosity—we give cheerfully!
 - Reap eternal dividends by stewarding our resources in a way we'll never regret!

[Apply]: Last year 193 people gave to work of our church for first time.

- Thank you for jumping in!
 - God is on the move...
 - You're not crazy for investing here...
- If not started yet, maybe it's time to jump in with a cheerful heart—is it the moment for you to become a **first-time giver**?

[Transition]: In response to God's grace—give **CHEERFULLY**.

2. When we know the grace of Jesus—we give PROPORTIONALLY.

[State]: 8:12: For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable [to give] ACCORDING TO WHAT A PERSON HAS not according to what he does not have.

- If ready to give—give in accordance w/ what you have!
- Generosity not specific \$ amount—give proportionately:
 - If blessed with much—give much.
 - If blessed with a little—give a little.

[Illustrate]: Two sides on this point...

- On one hand—it's a **challenge**:
 - On the scale of history, America is the 1%.
 - If we're to give in proportion to what we have—we should be generous.
- But on the other hand—it's an **encouragement**:
 - We don't underestimate the financial hardship some face in this congregation.
 - If you're unemployed, underemployed, low income, single parent, health challenges—FEEL NO GUILT!!!
 - Remember that the most generous person in Bible is widow who gave a penny.
 - Remember how Jesus commended her?
 - **Mk 14:43-44:** Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴For 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.
 - Jesus will take your penny and multiply it like loaves/fish.

[Apply]: Here's the point: Give in proportion to what you have.

- Do you know what proportion of your income you give?
- OT tithe (10%) is a good starting point...
- If you've started to give, maybe now is the time for you to become a **proportional giver**.

[Transition]: In response to God's grace—give cheerfully and PROPORTIONALLY.

3. When we know the grace of Jesus—we give SACRIFICIALLY.

State: 8:3-4: For they [the churches in Macedonia] gave ACCORDING TO THEIR MEANS, as I can testify, and BEYOND THEIR MEANS, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

- Churches in Macedonia are commended for giving:
 - Proportionally—**according to their means**.
 - And sacrificially—**beyond their means**.
- And they're set before us as example to follow: We must reflect and evaluate—Am I giving all I can?

[Illustrate]: John Wesley, was one of the great evangelists of the 18C.¹

- In 1731 he began to limit his expenses so he could give more to the poor.
 - 1st year income = £30. Able to live on £28 so gave £2 away.
 - 2nd year income doubled. Still lived on £28 and gave £32 away!
 - 3rd year income reached = \$90. So he lived on £28 and gave £62 away.
 - Over the years, his income reached £1,400 a year—but he barely let expenses rise.
- 1791 Wesley died aged 87.
 - Only money mentioned in his will = coins to be found in his pockets/dresser.
 - He wrote: *“I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.”*

[Apply]:

- NOT SAYING: We should all do this—though it’s not bad idea!
- WHAT I AM SAYING IS THIS: We should all give sacrificially.
 - Our heart for generosity should compel us to simpler lifestyles than if we w/n Xns.
 - What that looks like will be different for each of us.
 - But for all of us, it should mean that there are things we could do that we don’t do bc given that money away.
 - Test **yourself** on this:
 - Is your life simpler than it would be if you weren’t a Xn?
 - All of us should be generous to the point that it impacts us.
- If you’ve started to give proportionally, maybe now is the time for you to become a **sacrificial giver**.

[Transition]: In response to God’s grace—give cheerfully, proportionally, and SACRIFICIALLY.

4. When we know the grace of Jesus—we give DILIGENTLY.

[State]: 8:10b-11: A year ago [you] started not only to do this work [of giving] but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

- PAST/FUTURE GRACE create more than good intentions!
- They animate/empower us to be DILIGENT—and follow through!

Illustrate: I don’t know the amount anyone gives to our church—but I asked our finance team to pull some stats.²

- Last year 2,069 individuals or families gave to church.
 - An amazing spirit of generosity is part of our story.
 - God is doing a beautiful thing in our hearts.

- But here's the breakdown:

Total Contribution	Percentage of Givers
Under \$2K	52%
\$2K to \$3K	9%
\$3K to \$4K	6%
\$4K to \$5K	5%
\$5K to \$10K	11%
\$10K to \$20K	10%
> \$20K	7%

- Roughly half of those who gave, gave less than \$2K over the course of the year.
 - This is actually better than average—but it still suggests some room for growth.
- Let's be careful to put these stats in the context of this sermon:
 - If that represents cheerful, proportional, sacrificial, diligent giving—feel **NO shame**: generosity is not about the number—it's about our hearts.
 - And if you're not giving cheerfully, proportionately, sacrificially, diligently—still feel **NO shame**: that's NOT how the gospel works!

[Apply]: The point is this...

- Many of us not as generous as we ought to be or would like to be—not bc horrible/selfish people—but simply bc we lack **diligence**: the purposeful intentionality to follow through.
 - As we said last week, no matter how much we earn—spending tends to expand to meet/exceed income.
 - Can't just live and hope we have enough left over to be generous in end!
 - Need to be proactive and diligent—to make sure we flourish in this grace of giving.
- Do you know which range you fall in?
 - Which range would you like to be in?
 - Maybe this is the time for you to become a **diligent** giver?

[Transition]: In response to God's grace—give cheerfully, proportionally, sacrificially, and DILIGENTLY.

[CONCLUSION]

- Which one stands out to you? Is there one you need to grow in?
 - Maybe you're giving diligently but need to grow in cheerfulness?
 - Or maybe you're cheerful but need to be more diligent?
- Pray through it—and see what Jesus has to say.

[THE CLOSE]

- Okay, how are we doing?
- Was that better or worse than the DENTIST?
- Here's a different image...

When I was a wee boy, my dad owned a chain of convenience stores...

- Sometimes he'd take me to work—and I loved it.
- We'd **get up** when it was still dark (which, to a 7-year-old, meant it was *really* early).
- We'd **eat breakfast, get dressed** for work, and **walk** to the nearest store.
- Once there, I'd **follow him around**—ask 1,000 questions and generally get in the way.
- My **favorite part** was when the stock arrived.
 - A huge truck would pull up at street level and unload boxes onto a chute where they'd slide down into the basement of the store.
 - I spent most of my time sliding down the chute myself—having a blast and, once again, generally getting in the way.
- And then I'd go home delighted—bc I got to go to work with dad.

I want you to know that biblical generosity is not like going to the dentist—it's God's invitation to go to work with dad.

- He doesn't need our money:
 - He rules/reigns and in many ways could achieve his purposes faster without us.
 - But it thrills his heart to take us along, let us ask our questions, and stumble around.
- Your life will be richer if you say yes to this invitation—in response to God's grace, be generous.

Endnotes

¹ Quotes from *Mission Frontiers*, Sept./Oct. 1994, nos. 9–10, pp. 23–24.

² All stats represent total giving: General Fund, Global Mission Fund, Capital Campaign, and other.