



8/23/24

I've been trying to limit the time for the podcast, Chosen and Cherished, to run between 30 and 40 minutes...which I did for this week. But I felt like I could have just kept talking and talking, because the subject was all about comfort in our suffering. It's such an important subject to understand. Our understanding of God's role in our suffering can either build our faith or tear it down. I hope and pray what I did share from God's word will be on the side of building our faith. If you'd like to listen, just click on the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

Paul starts Vs. 6 with the words, "The point is this." So I want to go back and see why he's saying it. It's kind of like saying, "Here's the bottom line." Well then, what's the top line leading to the bottom line? Paul was talking to the Corinthian church about a gift they were planning to give to another church in need. He said he had boasted of their "readiness" and their "zeal" about this gift they had promised to give. He said he was sending some of the brothers ahead to arrange for this gift so that it could be ready as "a willing gift, not as an exaction," or a grudging obligation.

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly." That makes sense. If I only plant a few seeds in the ground, I'm not gonna reap near as much as if I had planted a lot of seeds. Giving to others is planting seeds...so that I can bear fruit for the Lord.

Paul went on to say, "Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." The actual Greek says, "The one sowing upon blessings will also reap upon blessings." Hmmm...God wants me to sow with the blessings I've received from Him. To sow sparingly is to think that I OWN the blessing and it comes from me. So I only give a little so that I don't have to LOSE what I have. When I realize that everything I have is a blessing from the Lord, I can give more freely because it belongs to Him and I can trust that He will bless me more...Let me remember, though...this is not about giving to get. The focus is on tangibly loving others by providing for their needs...not

on, "Lord, I'll give to these people. Now You give me a Porsche."

God is so good. He will not force me to give. He wants me to give from my heart. I know the feeling of wishing someone would give to me...and somehow dropping the hints about my wishes...so they give...but it feels empty because I don't know if they gave because they wanted to or because they felt obligated to. Trying to force someone to give cheapens the gift. They may give the gift, but who wants a gift that someone didn't want to give?

So God wants us to decide "in our hearts" what we will give... "not reluctantly or under compulsion." He wants us to give cheerfully. "God loves a cheerful giver" just as He cheerfully gives to us. Let me never forget that Jesus gave His life for me "because of the joy set before Him" and not because he had to (Hebrews 12:2).

The truth is, when I give cheerfully, I receive such a joy of watching the person in need be blessed. I remember years ago, Tim and I had friends who were missionaries. We had some money we wanted to give to someone in need and we decided to give it to them. We had no idea how it would help them...we just knew they, as missionaries, didn't have a lot of money. When we gave it them, they told us it was the exact amount of money they needed to be able to buy plane tickets for something really important and they didn't know where the money was going to come from. How awesome it was to be a part of that blessing for them!!!

And when we started in full time ministry, Tim took a 70% pay cut from what he made as an engineer. During that time, I accidentally turned into a parking lot that had a cement structure sticking out and I didn't see it. I hit it on the passenger side of my van. When I looked at the hole I had made, I could see all the way into the car from the outside! The next day, someone from our church overheard someone else ask me about it, and I talked about being without a van and I wasn't sure what we were gonna do. We didn't have the money to go rent a car. The person walked up to me and said, "You need a car? I've got one you can borrow. Come on over after church." They let us borrow a BMW SUV with seat warmers when those were not a thing! It turned out, the guy who lent to us was leasing it, and he had said he was planning on turning it back in to the dealership but felt the Lord was telling him to wait. And now he knew why. Were we blessed by his generosity? Yes. But I imagine he was blessed big time by seeing how the Lord used him to bless us. God loves a cheerful giver, because HE is a cheerful giver.

Whoa...the Greek word for cheerful is "hilaros." Ummm...that sounds like the word "hilarious." God wants me to give hilariously because He has given to me hilariously. AND the reason I can give hilariously is because "God is able to make ALL grace ABOUND to you." Whatever I give, God gives more grace.

The word for grace is "charis..." Charity. God gives abounding charity to me when I give hilariously. I don't give because I have to. And I don't give because I think I'm awesome for giving. I give because I'm so overwhelmed by the enormous charity God has given me, an undeserving sinner. If I don't recognize the enormous grace of God, I won't give from a grateful heart.

But God is able to give me abounding grace FOR A PURPOSE... "So that having ALL sufficiency...everything I need..in ALL things at ALL times, you may abound in every good work." What does it take for me to give cheerfully, hilariously? I need to be absolutely convinced that God won't leave me hanging out to dry. He will provide His blessing of grace that strengthens and sustains me for everything I need in all situations at all times.

This doesn't mean, I give so that God will make my life comfortable. This is not a health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. Let me not forget who is speaking. It's Paul...who had been imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, persecuted, tortured...but even through all that...God's grace gave him everything he needed. He said in Philippians 4:11-13 that he had learned how to be strengthened by Christ so that he could be content in every situation he faced...whether it be "facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." The blessing is not more STUFF. The blessing is more of God.

Then Paul quotes Psalm 112:9, "He (God) has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." It is a blessing and it is righteous to be a part of God's plan to bless His people. It is a privilege to share with Him in that blessing to others.

Let me not forget...everything I have, even my breath, is a gift from God. He is the one "who supplies seed to the sower (that's me) and bread for food." He will "supply AND multiply my seed for sowing and increase the harvest of my RIGHTEOUSNESS." As a believer in Jesus, my true wealth is not found in how much money I have in my bank account. It is found in my righteousness. O Lord, I need You to change my heart so that I can embrace this!!!

As I give cheerfully, not resenting that I have to give, not feeling forced to give...but recognizing how blessed I am by God's grace...I will be enriched in EVERY way so that I can be even more generous!!! No matter how much I give, God's storehouse of blessings is bigger.

All of this giving is NOT to make a name for myself. It IS to produce even more gratitude to the Lord. Yes, the cheerful giving we do as the body of Christ is a ministry that serves others and supplies their needs AND because we only give from what we've been given, it results in more and more thanksgiving to God...not me.

The Greek translation says that our giving "completely fills up the needs of the saints" because God is able to multiply all that we do and enrich the lives of everyone involved, both the giver and the receiver. It all comes from Him and He deserves all the praise.

Wow. I have always known the verse, "God loves a cheerful giver," but if I don't read this verse in context, I will easily make it all about myself. O Lord, You have blessed me. Please help me to be a blessing to others in any and every way You choose. I don't want to sow sparingly, which is what happens when I do it in my own strength or for my own glory. Please magnify my understanding of Your goodness and generosity to me, so that I will gratefully and hilariously give to others as You have given to me. I can't outgive You. You deserve all the praise.