

# SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

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2 Corinthians 8:1-21

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# The tensions of faith and generosity

## Key Principle of Review:

God is a person of unfathomable productivity, prosperity and generosity.

We are made to be like him in creation.

Whether we can REMEMBER this will determine our faith and virtue...and salvation. (& happiness)

*Deuteronomy 8*

God curses creation when men become devourers instead of co-creators.



God promises to bless those that regain his way in creation through faith: called "righteousness" and "justice".

Key Principle of Review:

Genesis 4:2-7,  
4:19-24

"sacrifice or recognition"

Offering the **first and best of our increase** is the first principle of worship, faith, justice and humility

**2 Samuel 24:24b** *"I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God...offerings that cost me nothing."*

## First and best of the increase:

- Abel and Cain (Gen 4:2-7)
- Abram tithes to Melchizedek (14:20)
- Jacob promises Tithe at Bethel (28:20-22)
- Tithe of first fruits (Lev 27:30)
- Redemption of firstborn and flock (Lev 27:26)
- Tithe of land's increase (27:30)
- "Unblemished" offerings (Ex 12:5, Lev 1:3, 3:1, 4:3)

## Introduction of worship and ministry:

What is given to remember God is used to remember God.

The tithe was a practical, reliable funding for ministry.

Key Principle of Review:

2 Corinthians 9:6-14

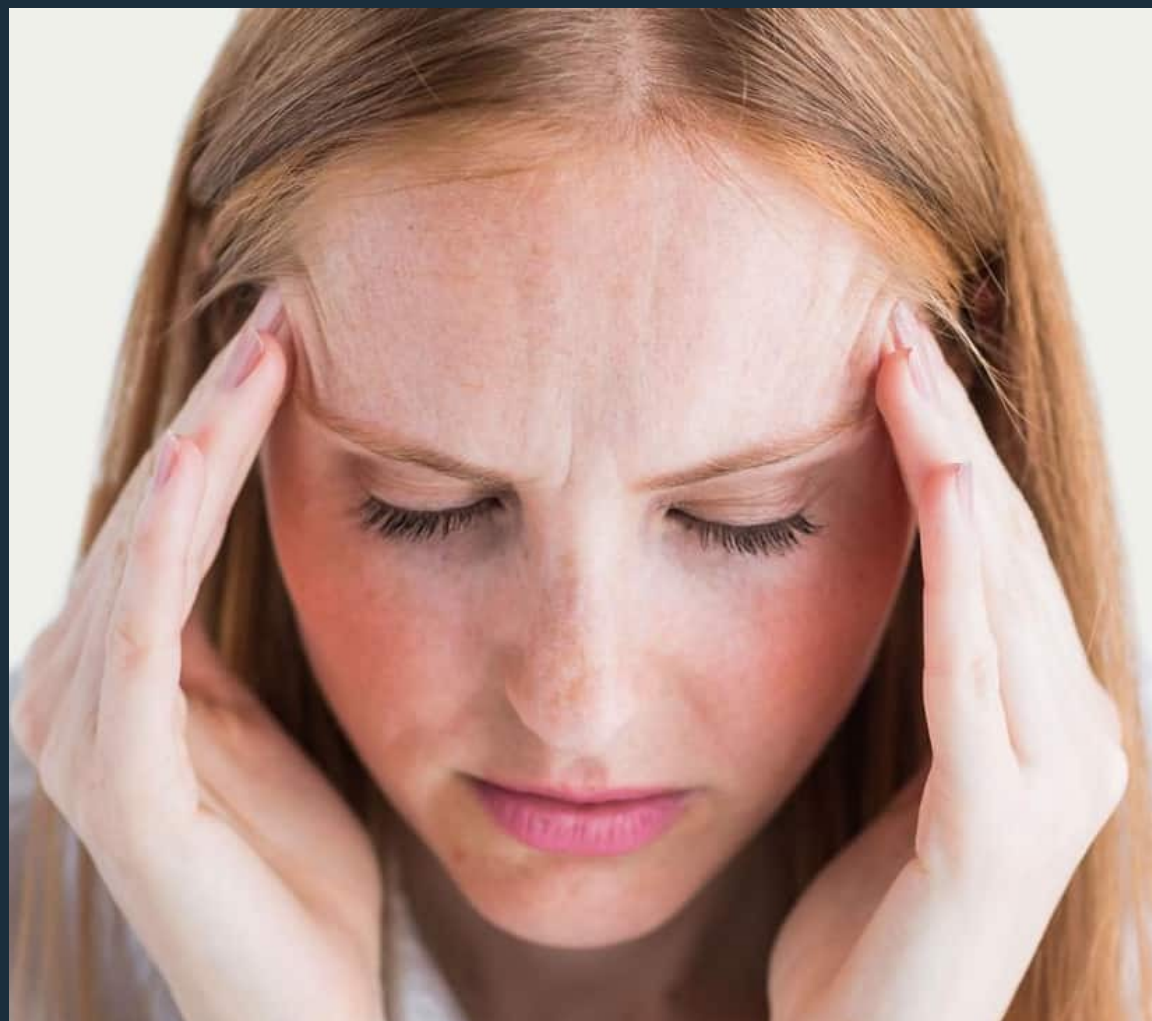
**God makes righteousness  
with generosity an infinite  
feedback loop of joy**

God's makes the riches of righteousness with  
wealth the mutual fruit of generosity.



# Faith and Generosity

**4 tensions** that soften us, deepen us and strengthen us through practicing generosity



Destructive Tension



Productive Tension





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## Tension 1

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**Generosity is both a work  
of faith and an evidence  
of grace**

It is an act of our will for salvation, and evidence that  
God's saving will is acting on us.

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

*"And now, brothers, we want you to know about **the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches**. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion **this act of grace on your part**. But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in **this grace of giving**."*

2 Corinthians 9:14-15

*"And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"*

# Philippians 2:12-13

*"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed...continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."*







When:

- We desire something

But:

- Key dynamics are out of our control



Grace is the assuring source of vigor, not laziness!



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## Tension 2

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Giving is both **personal**  
**and private** while being  
**public and social**

We “decide in our hearts” what to Give, AND our  
eagerness is compared to others

Generosity is a “personal” decision.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

*“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Our generosity is public and social

2 Corinthians 9:1-4

*"There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians..."*

# Our generosity is public and social

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-4

*"And now, brothers, **we want you to know about the** grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints."*

## Application:

We are supposed to make our own private decision,  
AND

We are supposed to stir each other up.

- We must leave people to their own call on giving
- We should talk about generosity together
- We should pursue generous goals together
- We should celebrate evidence of grace



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## Tension 3

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**Giving must be deeply  
emotional, yet firmly  
disciplined**

Caring and doing are the two arms/wings of real  
faith and virtue

## 2 Corinthians 8:11-12

*"Now finish the work, so that **your eager willingness** to do it may be **matched by your completion of it**, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."*

Word "eager desire": 4 of 5 uses in NT are in 2 Corinthians 8-9

# Generosity must be a work of the whole heart.

**Reason-** seeing what is good

**Emotion-** caring and being eager to help

**Will-** mastering fear and vice to complete virtue

Generosity unites the reason, emotions and will to make the heart whole, and our spirit live by truth.

"The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel."

— The Devil Screwtape (C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters)

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## Tension 4

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**We should aspire to equality  
of provision while expecting  
strict supervision**

The soft heartedness of generosity must be accompanied by  
the hard mindedness of integrity

## 2 Corinthians 8:19-24

*"What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it."*



## Application:

1. **Every** dynamic of **generosity** (giver-administrator-recipient) **has corruption on some level** at some time
2. **This should not undermine our generosity**
3. This should **invigorate our attention** to administrative **integrity**

# HPC Core Value #4: Sacrificial Service

Sacrifice, service and generosity are  
the proof of authentic love  
and the price of earned influence

Aside from miraculous signs, generous sacrifice is the most powerful sign of God's existence. It is the most power indicator of the character of the God that does exist: Sacrificially and mercifully generous.

1. God is productive, prosperous and generous
2. Faith gives him our first and our best
3. Righteousness and generosity are a loop for joy
4. God uses generosity to test us and free us
5. God reckons gifts by proportion
6. Eagerness to give is a work and grace
7. Generosity glorifies God and creates worship
8. God is the generous one

Jesus is the generosity of God, and the Gospel is the message of that generosity.

