

Chapter Nine

THE PROBLEM OF STEWARDSHIP — PART — II (9:1-15)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why is Paul so concerned about “appearances” between the Corinthians and the Macedonians?
2. Are Christians really free to make up their own minds about their giving to the Lord?
3. What is a “cheerful” giver?
4. Is material prosperity the result of a righteous life?
5. What has giving to do with our “acknowledging” the gospel of Christ?

SECTION 4

Compulsion (9:1-7)

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; ⁴lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready we be humiliated — to say nothing of you — for being so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

⁶ The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

9:1-4 Conscientiousness: Chapter nine is clearly a continuation of the subject of chapter eight. The Greek conjunction *gar* is translated

SECOND CORINTHIANS

“Now” (9:1) and connects chapter nine to the subject matter of chapter eight. The most persistent problem of stewardship facing a preacher is the problem of *motivation*. Stewardship is plainly *commanded* by God in the Old Testament and by Christ in the New Testament. But commanding free-willed creatures and getting them to obey commands are two different matters. Man’s freedom to choose will not be violated by a just and righteous God. God will not coerce or exact or force offerings from people (neither should preachers!). Paul calls upon two facts of the human experience to motivate the Corinthians to give: Self-respect and Selectivity.

Paul was “boasting” (Gr. *kauchomai*, sometimes translated “glorying”) of the “readiness” (Gr. *prothumian*, “passionate eagerness”) of the Corinthians (9:2ff) to take up an offering for the saints in Judea to the Macedonians. He boasted of the Macedonians to the Corinthians (8:1-5)! This is true of Paul’s communications to all the churches. He praised one church to another as a motivating factor. While you find Paul criticizing the conduct of one church after another in his epistles to each of them, you never find him criticizing one church *to* another!

Paul says, “It is superfluous (Gr. *perisson*) for me to write to you about the offering for the saints . . .” and then continues to write to them about it! He has already (8:8-15) written that he knows of their readiness and their beginning, but there remains the problem of their “completing” it. He tactfully softens his *lengthy* exhortation on giving by this “superfluous” statement of his “boasting” about them to the Macedonians. Self-respect or conscientiousness is a worthy virtue. Paul was jealous for his own reputation (8:20-24) so he appeals to the Corinthians to be careful to fulfill what he has boasted of them to the Macedonians. An appeal to conscientiousness in a christian is really an appeal to the reputation of Christ! The christian guards Christ’s reputation when he guards his own self-respect. That should be a highly motivating factor in his every action as a christian — and especially in *giving*!

He told the Macedonians that “Achaia” (Roman named province of southern Greece which included the cities of Corinth, Athens, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Thebes and Cenchreae) had planned (Gr. *pareскеuastai*, perfect passive, “had made preparations and was continuing to make preparations”) to give to this special benevolence a

year ago. Information about the “zeal” of the Corinthians “stirred up” (Gr. *erethisen*, “provoked, excited”) “most” of the Macedonians.

But he sends “the brethren” (the three mentioned in 8:16-24) to prod the Corinthians into “completing” what they had begun the year before. The very presence of these “brethren” (two of them specifically chosen by the churches themselves for this purpose) will urge them to finish their collection. Paul is urgent! He wants to spare the Corinthians, himself, and the reputation of Christ of any shame should some Macedonians decide to accompany him to Corinth for the reception of the offering and find no offering to receive! The Greek word *kataischunthomen* is a combination of *kata* and *aischuno*, “shamed-down,” an intensive form of the word for “shame” and is translated, “humiliated.” Paul is definitely appealing to *self-respect* as a motivation.

9:5-7 Choice: The second motivational factor Paul appealed to was the freedom every christian has to choose how, when, and how much he will give in any offering he makes unto the Lord. There is no “legislation” whatsoever in the New Testament as to method, frequency, or amount in the matter of christian giving. We repeat, the emphasis in the N.T. is upon *stewardship* (accountability, wise management, motive, attitude, faithfulness). Of course, since the New Testament is a dispensation of grace, *infinite grace*, it is simply assumed that a christian’s giving will be liberal and *generous*. Paul might be saying (9:5), “I consider it necessary to send these brethren to you in Corinth to arrange the completion of the collection ahead of my arrival there because I do not want my presence to be the reason why you give.” (see I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 1:24). The RSV translates the Greek word *pleonexian* as “exaction;” the word literally is “covetousness or greed.” The RSV also translates *eulogian* as “willing gift;” the word literally is, “well-thinking.” What Paul means is what he wants the Corinthians to give “happily,” and not “grudgingly” *coveting for themselves* what they are giving.

It is imperative that preachers solve the problem of stewardship and giving *without* coercion of any sort. Christians must be left free to choose whether they will give, when they will give, and how much they will give. Even the Lord Jesus, when asked about giving, left the questioners free to decide, when he said, “Render unto Caesar the things

that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." While Paul teaches (I Cor. 16) there should be a congregational consensus about "collections" and some specified time and order as to their being taken, he leaves every saint free to decide for himself about his contribution to the "collections."

Nothing will *intensify* the *problem* of stewardship and giving more than coercive, manipulative, deceitful methods used to motivate it! Paul would not even appear in Corinth until after the offering was completed lest his "apostolic" presence (without any threats or duress) make the brethren there feel compulsion. Ray Stedman writes (pg. 163):

What a contrast to many Christian leaders, evangelists and others today who insist that you wait until they come before any offering is taken. They want to put the squeeze on, to tell emotional stories of deathbed experiences, to hold up pictures of crying children to twist your heart, to use competitiveness and rivalry as a means of extracting more funds. This is a terrible thing. It scorns the spirit of grace in a congregation. So this helpful guideline says, do not give to organizations or people who habitually rely on emotional appeals to get you to give. . . . Now we ought to hear needs, but habitual appeals on that basis are wrong, because it is the wrong basis on which to give. . . . In Poland, I was told of organizations that were actually stockpiling Bibles in warehouses because they could not get them into the Soviet Union. But they were still making appeals to people to give for more Bible purchasing when they actually had warehouses full that they could not move. That is the wrong kind of appeal. When we learn of something like that we should stop giving, because we are responsible for what we do.

Nothing will *solve* the problem of stewardship and giving more than the preaching and practice of "the grace of God." Paul, in fact, *begins* (8:1), and *ends* (9:15) the entire dissertation on giving by appealing to the *GRACE* of God! The apostolic word (and practice) tells us, "more preaching of the grace of God equals more willing, cheerful and generous giving"! So when will the church "restore" the apostolic doctrine about stewardship and giving?

The apostle says, "The *point* is this: he who sows sparingly (Gr. *pheidomenos*, "thriftily, forbearingly") will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully (Gr. *eulogiais*, "well-speaking, praising, blessing, benevolently, frankly, liberally") will also reap bountifully." Stedman explains (pg. 164):

The closest analogy to giving that we have in life is the farmer going out to sow his crop. Giving is more than distributing your funds or resources, it is a process that will return something to you as well, like a farmer who sows seeds in the spring. He scatters seed out upon the ground, and he cannot gather it up again. It looks as though it is lost to him, and it is. He actually has to give up control of it and the use of it. He throws it away into the ground where it deteriorates, rots and is seemingly lost. . . . But it is not lost; it is not gone. Let it fulfill its appointed process and the farmer will have it back again and much more besides. That is what God designed. The return is proportionate to the sowing. If a farmer sows a little amount of seed, that is what he will get back, a small and niggardly harvest. If he sows bountifully and scatters prodigally, he will receive a prodigal harvest in return. The analogy is clear. If you give just a little bit, then what you get will be a little bit, too. But if you give abundantly, what you will get will be abundant also.

But the rewards that the New Testament promises are never ultimately material rewards. The Bible promises not the wealth of things, but spiritual wealth — the wealth of character. The man who is generous in giving to the Lord and to others will be loved, respected, sought after for advice, honored, helped when he himself is in need; free of the character-shriveling vices of envy, covetousness, anxiety, and loneliness. People who do not give liberally and cheerfully are self-centered. The boundaries of their experience are extremely limited. They are never satisfied. They have no purpose beyond themselves. Self is the highest goal to which they aspire or shall ever attain.

Paul uses the Greek word *hekastos* signifying specifically, “each one.” No man is to decide for another what he is to give! The Greek word *proeretai* is from *pro* and *haireo*. *Haireo* is the word from which we get the English words *heresy* and *heretic*, and means, “a self-willed choice.” Add the prepositional prefix *pro* and add the phrase, *te kardia*, then we have an emphatic statement that “each one *must* do as he has *made up* (purposed) *his* mind. . . .” Paul expects *every* christian to make up his mind to give *something*; but only what he, himself, has *decided* to give. No other person is to make any decision for him in this matter. It is, in fact, unwarranted for one christian to even “suggest” (unless requested to do so by the individual) to another how much he should be giving. The New Testament course to follow is to teach the unsearchable grace of God and suggest that giving *must* be decided in each person’s heart according to his appreciation of that Infinite grace.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Any approach to motivate people to give that would cause "reluctance" (Gr. *ek lupes*, "out of sorrow or regret") would be hypocritical. It would destroy the giver! This passage *condemns forever the heathen pragmatism* in the philosophy of so many preachers and religious leaders today who practice any kind of "gimmick" or emotional coercion "because it works"! "Works" for whom? Reluctant, coerced, giving does *not* work for the giver. And God does not need that kind of money! God doesn't need any money! God wants willing, cheerful, liberal givers who give because they have made up their own "hearts" to give. God does not need our money, but we *need* to give!

The Greek words *ex anagkes* are translated "under compulsion" in the RSV and NASV and "necessity" in the KJV. The words mean, "out of distress, constraint, what must needs be." If christian work, benevolent, educational, evangelistic, missionary or any other, must be supported by bringing people (christian and non-christian) under "distress" or "compulsion," it is *not* christian work! So, while christians *need* to give, being coerced to give out of gimmickry or manipulation or circumventing the mind by appealing to the emotions does nothing but *spiritual harm* to the giver. It is altogether possible this is the reason Paul was so reluctant to take financial support (I Cor. 9:12b, 15, 18; I Thess. 2:9; II Thess. 3:7ff) for his ministry. He would "burden" no one. He was careful that no man be pressured into giving out of "compulsion" or "necessity." He made no pleadings for money. He coerced no one. He had every right to be supported financially (see our comments, First Corinthians, chapter nine) but forfeited his rights for the sake of others. This does not mean, of course, that preachers, missionaries and other full-time workers in para-church activities should not be salaried and supported by those who benefit from their ministries (see Gal. 6:6, etc.). But it does focus the searching light of apostolic doctrine and example upon modern religious excesses in coercing and cajoling money from people. It does strip the facade of false spirituality from all the manipulative schemes in today's religious-financial flim flam! Much modern religious fund-raising methodology is justified under the umbrella of "public relations." But "public relations" is often merely a euphemism for deceit, manipulation, self-serving pragmatism, and ethical relativism! "If it works, it must be righteous" is from the devil, not from God!

Finally, Paul says, *hilaron gar doten agapa ho theos* — “for a cheerful giver God loves.” The Greek word *hilaron* is translated “cheerful” and is the word from which we get the English word, *hilarity*, *hilarious*. In the Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew O.T.), the word *hilaruno* translates a Hebrew word *lehatshiyi*, “to cause to shine.” “Cheerful” giving makes the soul and the spirit of a man “shine” with the image of the Infinite Giver! Paul is evidently borrowing from Proverbs 22:8 as it appears in the Septuagint (LXX) when he says, “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Greek word *hilaron* is used by the LXX in Prov. 22:8 where the phrase is, “God loves a cheerful and liberal man...” That phrase does *not* appear in the Hebrew text in Prov. 22:8 or in any of our English versions. But since the phrase is here confirmed as inspired from the pen of an apostle, and since the principle is taught in other Biblical injunctions about giving, its absence in the Hebrew text in Proverbs 22:8 poses no problem. In the LXX the Greek word *eulogei* is literally, “thinks well,” whereas Paul uses the Greek word *agapa* literally, “loves,” in II Corinthians 9:7. The word *hilaron* is used only one other time in the N.T., Romans 12:8, enjoining the “one showing mercy to do so with cheerfulness” (*hilarity*). It is also interesting that the Greek word *dotēs*, translated, “giver” appears in Prov. 22:8 in the LXX and in the N.T. only here in II Corinthians 9:7. Deuteronomy 15:7-11 warns God’s people not to harden their heart against giving to the poor — begrudging any help to the needy. Israelites were expected to give “freely” and “open handedly” because there would always be poor people in the land. William Barclay notes an ancient rabbinical saying which goes “to receive a friend with a cheerful countenance and to give him nothing is better than to give him everything with a gloomy countenance.” The people gave with *hilarity* to build the Tabernacle (Exod. 36:2-7) and to build the Temple (I Chron. 29:1-30). There were undoubtedly many other times when Israelites gave cheerfully (such as the widow observed by Jesus in the temple treasury, Mark 12:41-44). Zacchaeus, upon conversion and repentance, gave “half” of his goods to the poor and was ready to make restitution four-fold to anyone whom he might have defrauded (Luke 19:8-10). The Macedonians (II Cor. 8:4) clearly were “cheerful” givers, “begging” Paul for the “favor” of giving to help the Judeans. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, “It is more *blessed* (Gr. *makarion*, “happiness”) to give than to

SECOND CORINTHIANS

receive" (Acts 20:35).

How many people have you observed "happy" to give — giving "hilariously" — "begging" for the "favor" of giving? Most give grudgingly! Most hang on to their money until they are pressured or manipulated through their emotions to give to some "emergency" need. When the offering is taken in your congregation are people stumbling over one another for the opportunity to put something in the plate? Are they laughing or smiling — are they enjoying it? Do members of your congregation ever ask the elders, "May we have the privilege of giving beyond our means"? Do most people in your church conceive of their giving as done "to support the preacher" or "pay the bills of the church"?

There is a reason human beings are reluctant to give their money to the Lord. But it is very subtle. It is hinted at in II Corinthians 8:5. Money, itself, is merely a medium of exchange. But that for which it is exchanged is *life*! Each person who works, expends his time, energies and talents — himself — a large portion of his life. In exchange he receives money (coins and currency or other material properties). So when a person gives his money, he is actually *giving* just that much of *himself*! Those unwilling to give *themselves* to the Lord, are unwilling to give their *money* to the Lord. To pretend that one has given himself to the Lord and then to be unwilling to give his money to the Lord (or to give grudgingly) is rank hypocrisy. Only those who have *first* given *themselves* (first, in priority) will be those who give "hilariously." At the same time, some will give their money (grudgingly) having never given themselves. Paul said, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (I Cor. 13:3). *Why* we give is so *important*, *what* we give becomes almost *irrelevant*! (see Matt. 6:1-4).

SECTION 5

Confidence (9:8-11)

⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. ⁹As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.” ¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God;

9:8-9 Ability of God: A most important motivation for giving is the christian’s trust in the ability and willingness of God to supply everything the human being needs to live and serve his Maker to the best of his capacities. Jesus dealt extensively with this factor in the Sermon on the Mount. The Heavenly Father knows what his children need *before* they ask! (Matt. 6:8). The Heavenly Father stores and protects eternally every “treasure” his children lay up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). The Heavenly Father provides abundantly and gloriously for all the lesser beings of his creation — are not his human children of more value than these? (Matt. 6:25-34). Jesus proved that God is not only able, but passionately eager, to provide whatever is necessary to fulfill God’s purpose in every person who asks! But what God is able and willing to do, and what human beings expect him to do, may be as different as daylight and darkness. Jesus fed *some* hungry people, but not all. He healed *some* ill people, but not all. He restored *some* dead to their loved one’s on earth, but not all. God makes *some* people rich, but not all. God gives *some* people multiple talents, but not all. Paul’s point in this passage is that God is able to provide every *believer* with every blessing in abundance, *so that* the trusting child may always have *enough* of everything to accomplish every good work God wants *him* to accomplish. Wealthy people are rich not because they are more righteous or “fortunate” than others, but in order that they may administer those riches as wise and faithful stewards in the service of God. Poor people are not poor because they are unpleasing to God or less talented than others, but in order that they may administer their poverty as wise and faithful stewards in the service of God. *Every* child of God has been given *enough of everything* that he may do every good work God has for *him* to do. It is not what the child of God *could* do *if he had more* — it is what *he* is doing with what *he* has *now*!

Verse 8, in the Greek text is literally, “And is able, the God, *all*

SECOND CORINTHIANS

grace (charin) to cause to abound (perisseusai, aorist, infinitive) unto you, in order that. . . ." Again, Paul uses the word "grace" as a synonym of the material (and the spiritual) goods or means given by God to human beings for a stewardship. Whatever any human being has he has by the *grace* of God and for the service of God. Whatever any human being has is *all* the grace, at that moment, God has "caused" him to have for holy service. God forgets nothing, omits nothing, and is never incapable of providing *all* the grace needed for his purposes. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God has "blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). Peter writes that christians have been given *all* things that pertain to *life* and *godliness* by the knowledge of Christ through his great and very precious promises (II Pet. 1:3-5). It is not God who is inadequate. "The man with a bountiful heart finds that God supplies him with something to bestow" (Plummer).

The phrase, "enough of everything" is literally, "all self-sufficiency" (Gr. *pasan autarkeian*). The Greek word *autarkeia* is translated "contentment" in I Tim. 6:6, and is the word from which we get the English word *autarchy*, "absolute sovereignty." When God supplies, it is *absolutely* sufficient, and we should be content with it! Too many christians are not giving proportionately (and some not at all) because they think they do not have "enough" to give. *Emphatic* teaching needs to be done on these verses (9:8-11) so believers will understand that whatever they have is "enough" for them to give something which will please God. Notice, Paul says willing, cheerful-hearted men will *always* (Gr. *pantote*) have "enough" to give. "Self-sufficiency" for the believer is caused by God, but the believer must cooperate to make it a reality. It is the believer's responsibility to trust and be content. The less a christian desires for his own hedonistic pleasure (see James 4:1-4) the more he will be content, self-sufficient and able to minister to others. Usually, those who do *not* have "enough" to give for every good work are those who have insisted on too much for themselves! Let every christian be *honest* to himself and to God about this, and the foregoing statement will be correct. The Greek word *perisseuete* is, as earlier in the verse, translated "abound" and means, "overflow, over and above, more than enough, affluence, super-abundance." God is able to give us grace overflowing so that we may always have enough to "overflow" unto every good work. This

does not mean that we are to give only our “overflow” or our “abundance” (this is what the Pharisees did Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). It means that we will be able to “abound,” to “sow bountifully” (see 9:6). Believers do not give “left-overs” to God (see Mal. 1:6-9), they give the best and the most, taking the “left-overs” for their own use — still counting the “left-overs” as a stewardship to God.

Verse 9 is a quotation from Psalm 112:9 and its subject is the believer, the *man* who fears God (Psa. 112:1), not God. The Hebrew text uses the word *pizzair* (“scatter or distribute”) and the LXX translates the Hebrew word into the Greek word (*eskorpisen*, English “scorpion”) the same Greek word Paul uses here in verse 9. The Greek word *penesin* is translated, “poor,” and is the word from which we get the English word, “penury” which means, “last, destitute, abject poverty.” The Greek word *eskorpisen* carries the idea of “dispersing or scattering *abroad*, widely, effusively, as in the sowing of seed, scattering grain by winnowing.” The man who fears the Lord is unrestrained, profuse in his giving. That is because he is content with very little for himself and because God has overflowed divine grace to this man to make him always sufficiently capable of sowing bountifully to all good works. That man’s righteousness (Gr. *dikaiosune*) *remains* (Gr. *menei*) *forever* (Gr. *eis ton aiona*, “unto eternity”). The man who “sows bountifully” is like Cornelius, the Roman centurion, whose liberality (and prayers) went up before God as an abiding “memorial” (see Acts 10:1-4). When such a man dies, his works *follow* him (Rev. 14:13). They have become a part of his character that shall never die. The Psalmist said, “he will be remembered forever” (Psa. 112:6). Now God is able to make that happen in every believer’s life — rich and poor! For, you see, it is not the amount in a comparative sense, but the willingness, cheerfulness and equality of participation that is “very well acceptable” to the Lord.

9:10-11 Aim of God: Confidence (trust) in God’s purpose (aim) for giving is necessary. God’s purpose for believers in giving is the glorifying of his Almighty name! It is as God said so often through the O.T. prophets when he extended his mercy and grace “for the sake of *his* name” (see Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22; Dan. 9:18-19). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed* be *Thy* name. . . .” We are not to give to be seen and rewarded by men

(Matt. 6:1-4).

The God who has never failed to “supply” seed to the sower and bread for food will “supply” and “multiply” the true giver’s “resources.” The word “supply” is a translation of the Greek word *epichoregon*. It is a combined word, *epi*, a prepositional prefix meaning to “intensify or pile upon,” and *choregeo*, the word from which we get the English words, choreography, chorus, choral. In ancient Greece, the *leader (choregeo)* of a chorus, or a dance company (choreography) was charged with the responsibility of supplying *all* the material needs of his group. The group was to devote all its time to perfecting its “performance” and should not have to be anxious about the “necessities” of living. So the word *choregeo* came to be used as a connotation of “all sufficient supplier.” These Greeks at Corinth would especially appreciate Paul’s use of this word from the ancient world of theatrics. God is not only an Almighty Choreographer, he is also an Infinite *Multiplier* (Gr. *plethunei*, the word from which we get the English, “plethora.” God “multiplies” our “resources.” Actually, the Greek word translated “resources” is *sporon* and means literally, “seed,” and the Greek word translated “increase” is the word *auxesei* which means “to grow.” Paul is using these words figuratively. They are words in keeping with the symbolism he has used all through this chapter — words from the vocabulary of the farmer. The growth-cycle in “nature” — from the field of the farmer — is God’s classic lesson on *confidence* in the Creator to choreograph a magnificent harvest from a bountiful scattering of seed. He does it over and over and over in the farmer’s field.

The God who does this in the farmer’s field will also do it through the believer’s pocketbook! The believer must have the same faith as the farmer and scatter seed (dollars) profusely. What the believer cannot forget is that his “harvest” (Gr. *genemata*, “fruits”) is of the Spirit. The believer must have confidence in the aim of God to produce spiritual ends, not material ends. While the believer *uses* material things they are not his ultimate goal. Material things are merely “means” to the spiritual goal he (and God) seeks to produce. God’s goal is *righteousness*, in the giver, in those to whom he gives, and in those who are aware of his giving.

God *enriches* (Gr. *ploutizomenoi*, from the Greek word *Plutus*, god of wealth; the word from which we get the English words,

plutocrat, plutocracy) all believers (wealth is relative) in every way for great generosity (Gr. *pasan haploteta*, lit., "all single-mindedness"). The word *haploteta* originally described the action of spreading cloth flat so that nothing was left hidden in the folds. It connotes "open-handedness, sincerity, liberality, genuineness, guilelessness, healthiness." Paul is aiming at the spiritual foundations of christian giving with this word *haploteta* rather than specific amounts.

God supplies and multiplies, the believer administers his stewardship in a "healthy, open-handed, generous, sincere" way (no matter what amount he is proportionately able to give), and "it produces thanksgiving to God." The Greek word *eucharistian* is translated "thanksgiving." It is the word from which we get the English word, *eucharist*, so often used as a name for the Lord's Supper because of Paul's use of the same word (*eucharistesas*) in I Corinthians 11:24 in his dissertation about the Lord's Supper. The same word is repeated in the Greek text here (9:12). It is significant and indicates that giving and receiving offerings of money in a congregation of christians should be as *worshipful*, as *important*, and as *needful* of total participation as the Lord's Supper! The offering is as much a *eucharist* as is the Lord's Supper.

Paul is emphatic in this verse (9:11) and the following verses that the primary goal of christian giving is to produce thanksgiving to God — to glorify the name of God. This is a major problem preachers face in the matter of christian giving. There is not enough emphasis on God's glory. Too often, when a modern congregation which has produced some extraordinary liberality, the emphasis is put on the faith of the people or their "sacrificial" generosity. The glory goes to God! And if believers are not able to trust God enough to give him the glory for any and all generosity, they are not giving from the right motivation!

SECTION 3

Confessions (9:12-15)

¹²for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God.

¹³Under the rest of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

9:12-13 Proclaimed Clearly: In this text the apostle states categorically that giving (stewardship) is a "test" of "obedience" by which "we acknowledge the gospel of Christ." It is not the *only* test of obedience for acknowledging the gospel of Christ — but it is clearly a part of our christian "confession."

In verse 12 the Greek word *diakonia* (the word from which we have the English, "deacon") is translated "rendering." But the word would be better translated "ministry." Then, the Greek word *leitourgias* is translated "service." *Leitourgias* is literally, "public service." In the LXX it is almost exclusively for the priestly service in the Temple, the offering of sacrifices. Christian giving is a "ministry" and a "liturgy" (worship). It should *never* be done frivolously, as simply a matter of course, or apologetically. Those who give should consider themselves performing a ministry and participating in the priesthood of believers. They should *never* look upon their offerings as "dues," as "spectator's admission fee," or as some sort of "holy tax."

Paul says when christians exercise their "believers-priesthood" and "minister" through giving, they *not only* "supply" (Gr. *prosanaplerousa*, lit. "fill up by addition") the "wants" (Gr. *husteremata*, "things lacking," not merely wants, but needs) of the saints, such a ministry also "overflows in many thanksgivings to God." The Greek word *eucharistion* is again used (9:12) and translated "thanksgivings." *Christian giving is worship* — it is not just to pay bills. It is an integral, indispensable factor in christian worship whether bills *get* paid or not, whether there are any bills to be paid or not.

Preachers will inevitably have all kinds of problems if they hint that a believer's giving is a "test" of his profession as a christian. Yet that is precisely what the inspired apostle *clearly* states in verse 13! Paul uses some interesting and significant Greek words in this verse. The RSV translation does not do them justice; the NASV is better.

First, he used the Greek word *dia* to start the sentence. *Dia* means, "through," or "by this agency." Thus the believer's giving is the "instrumentality" by which he proves his confession of Christ. Second, he uses the word *dokimes*; RSV translates it "test," the KJV translates it "experiment" and the NASV translates it "proof." It means "to prove by putting to test and experience." It is a word from the scientific and judicial vocabulary of the Greeks (confirmed by the Greek papyri). Third, Paul used the Greek word *diakonias*, translated "service." Fourth, is the word *hupotage*, translated "obedience;" that is what it literally means, but it is sometimes translated "submission" (Eph. 5:21, 24). Fifth, is the word *homologias*, translated "acknowledging" in the RSV; it literally means, "say the same as . . ." and is often translated "confession." Finally, the Greek word *koinonias*, appears and is translated "contribution" in the RSV; it is the word from which we get the English word "communion" and would be better translated "participation," "fellowship," "partnership," or "sharing." Christian giving is not disinterested, disconnected "contribution" but personal "participation" and "partnership" with those whom the giving helps. And, Paul adds, the gospel profession of the Corinthians was *proved* not only by the one-time offering for Judea, but in their giving "toward all men" (Gr. *eis pantas*).

Again, Paul is saying Christians are to "put their money where their mouths are!" They are to prove their love (8:8, 24) and their gospel profession (9:13) by their giving. While Paul has been emphatic throughout this entire dissertation (chapters 8 and 9) that Christian giving is "not as an exaction" and "each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion," he definitely makes it a matter of "obedience" and "confession" to the gospel of Christ. Christian giving as Paul has outlined it in these two chapters is fundamentally "saying the same as" (confessing) the gospel of Christ says! Any stewardship short of Paul's instruction here is a denial of the Gospel. Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Constant, repeated, in-depth teaching from these two chapters is really the only divine solution to the preacher's problem of convincing his congregation that *giving* is *proof* of the believer's love and obedience to the gospel of Christ. The world will never see a clear confession (or "profession") of Christ un-

til christian people give as Paul instructed the Corinthian church. What we *say* about our love for, our trust in, and our obedience to Christ must be *proved* by our *giving* (Gen. 22:12; Matt. 25:31-46; John 13:1-35; I John 3:16-18).

9:14-15 Produces Community: Total participation (“equality”) and proportionate (“as a man has been prospered”) giving by christians produces a compassionate, caring “community.” It does not produce communism (at least not as communism is practiced ideologically in the nations of the world today). It does not produce a “commune” where every member throws *all* his possessions into one large treasury. It is a “community” of loving, caring, helping christians of differing “gifts” — all giving proportionate to their “means,” and when called upon, “beyond their means.” All persons in this christian “community” do not have the same resources or amounts of abilities or accouterments. Some have much, some have little, but what each has is enough for him to participate in “every good work.”

Everyone participating (“equality”) according to what they have, is what makes it a community. Those who need it are helped and long for and pray for those who are helping. Those who are helping long for and pray for those who are being helped. This longing for and praying for one another is “because” (Gr. *dia ten*, “on account of”) the *surpassing* (Gr. *huperballousan*, “cast beyond”) grace of God in one another. Such giving as Paul documents here by the Macedonians and Corinthians manifests that these christians so thoroughly appreciated the *grace* of God, it made them *excel* (“surpass”) all expectations in giving for the Lord’s work in Judea. Thus Paul begins (8:1) and ends (9:14) his discussion of the problem of christian giving (stewardship) appealing to the *grace of God* as a *solution*.

Christian churches do not really have a problem with stewardship; their problem is with the *grace of God*. Grace is not preached enough! Grace is not discussed enough! Human works have been stressed too much! Christians have lost touch with the reality that *everything* they have, *everything* they are, *every* circumstance of their existence, past, present and future, is absolutely by the grace of God. Too many, while paying lip service to “grace,” reserve a secret smugness in their hearts that they aren’t such bad people, after all, and what they have and what they are, they have earned (at least a part of it) by their own

hard work and skill. Until christian people become possessed and obsessed with the absoluteness of the grace of God in their very existence, they will never have the power to give or exercise the "excellent" (8:7) stewardship according to the apostolic standards of these two chapters.

The infinite grace of God brought forth this paean of praise, this emotional postscript to Paul's discussion of giving, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" The Greek word *anekdiegeto* means "indescribable." Human language is inadequate to give *full* expression to infinite grace. There is nothing in the human experience by which to *compare* (see II Cor. 4:17) *absolute* goodness and graciousness, hence there is no word for it! The best word by which to symbolize infinite grace would be "Jesus"! He was Infinite Grace incarnated. He displayed it as absolutely as it could be displayed to the finite mind of humankind. There was no lack in his manifestation (John 1:14-18), the lack was in the sin-tainted minds of people keeping them from apprehending it. Surely, the extent to which we are willing to let the Spirit of Christ control us and live in us will be the extent to which we apprehend the "indescribable" grace of God! Paul finds himself a number of times unable to find human words to express divine realities (see Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:8; II Cor. 12:4). Peter also experienced this frustration (I Pet. 1:8). But we rejoice that the "Spirit himself interceded for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26-27). While we may be unable to find *words* to express our joy for the infinite grace of God, we certainly need not flounder for actions which will express our gratitude for God's grace and be "very favorably acceptable" to the Lord; passionate, participating, proportionate, careful, chosen and cheerful GIVING. Such giving will multiply itself in multitudes of people worshiping and serving with "thanksgiving" to the Lord by words and deeds. Not even a cup of cold water given because of the grace of Christ (in his name) will go unrewarded. While a christian's efforts by words and by giving to fully express his thanks for God's grace may fall short in this world, every sincere attempt will be "memorialized" before the God who knows all, loves infinitely, and is absolutely faithful (Acts 10:4; II Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8; I Pet. 1:4; Rev. 14:13). The obsession to express "thanks" for the inexpressible grace of God is the solution to the problem of giving or stewardship.

APPREHENSION:

1. How do we know chapter nine is a continuation of the discussion of chapter 8?
2. Who are the "brethren" Paul is sending to Corinth? Why?
3. Why was Paul uneasy about Macedonians accompanying him to Corinth?
4. What is an "exaction"?
5. Why would Paul use the symbolism of "sowing and reaping" to teach about giving?
6. What does the word "cheerful" mean?
7. What does the word "enough" mean?
8. Who "scatters" abroad?
9. How does a giver's righteousness "endure forever"?
10. What is the significance of the Greek word *eucharist*, translated "thanksgiving"?
11. Why is the word "test" used in this discussion about giving?
12. What does the word "acknowledge" mean in connection with giving?
13. What does the word "contribution" mean?
14. How does one have the grace of God "in" him?
15. Why is thanks for God's gift "inexpressible"?

APPLICATIONS:

1. Do believers in your congregation consider their giving as a factor in upholding the reputation of Christ and the Christian faith? Do you?
2. What do you think the community's evaluation of your church's giving is?
3. How do the leaders of your congregation get people to give?
4. Do you think people ought to be told how much to give? Why?
5. How much emphasis is placed on the grace of God in your preacher's sermons and Sunday School lessons?
6. Do you think the grace of God can be emphasized too much? Why?
7. Is each christian really free to decide for himself what he shall

give?

8. Why do christians need to give?
9. Do you give most cheerfully when a need to give is presented, or when you are made aware of God's goodness to you?
10. Are ways to get people to give alright as long as they work?
11. Are all the givers in your church "cheerful" givers? Do you think the church could get along without the giving of grudging givers?
12. Have you ever had so little that you could not afford to give to the church?
13. Do you believe God will always give every believer enough so that he may participate in the offerings given to the Lord?
14. Should the poor give? Why?
15. If God never needs what we give, why do we give?
16. What if someone told you that a christian proves his profession of Christ and his obedience to the gospel by his giving?
17. Does your giving testify that you believe the gospel, and that you are obeying it?
18. Is the grace of God in you? How do you know? Do others know? How?
19. How would you express thanks to God for his "inexpressible" gift?

Special Study

WHY GIVE MONEY TO GOD? Bible Teachings On Giving

by Seth Wilson and Boyce Mouton

The Bible is filled with admonitions for God's people to give. It says that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. We are told that we should not give by necessity or requirement, but willingly, because the Lord loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). A thinking person will want to know why?

- A. Recognizes God's ownership.
- B. Shows a willingness to depend upon God's faithfulness (Gen. 28:20-22).
- C. Shows faith that God will supply according to His Word (Phil. 4:19).
- D. Expresses love, honor and worship.
- E. Serves God with the resources that we have to work with.

In Psalm 50:12 the Lord reminds us, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." In the same context He affirms His ownership of all the beasts of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills. God does not need our help because He is weak or wanting; but He depends on us because He takes us into His program for the world.

Consider how much time and money the Jews, under the law, were required to devote to God.

Time Given Completely To God In One Year

A. Sabbaths	52 days - Lev. 23:3
B. Passover	6 days - Lev. 23:4-8
C. Feast of Weeks	1 day - Lev. 23:15-21
D. Feast of Tabernacles	6 days - Lev. 23:34-42
E. Day of Atonement	1 day - Lev. 23:22-32
F. Feast of New Moon	11 days - Num. 28:11-15
G. Feast of Trumpets	1 day - Num. 29:1-6

Total 78 days

Really 7 days in Passover, and 7 in the Feast of Tabernacles, and 12 in the monthly Feasts of the New Moon, but we have counted all the

WHY GIVE MONEY TO GOD?

Sabbaths and the Feast of Trumpets (which is one of the new moons). This accounts for our total. Add days of travel and preparation for the feasts, and time used in purification rites and offering sacrifices, and there were more than 78.

Property Given To The Lord By The Jews

- A. The Firstborn of Man and Beast; Exod. 13:2,12-15;
34:19,20
- B. A Tenth of the Products of the Land; Lev. 27:30
- C. A Tenth of Increase of Flocks and Herds; Lev. 2:32-34
- D. A Special tithe every Third year; Deut. 14:28-29
- E. According to ability at Annual Fest; Deut. 16:16-17
- F. Firstfruits of Trees and Land; Deut. 26:1-11; 18:4,5;
Num. 18:12-18
- G. Animals sacrificed; Deut. 26:1-11; 18:4,5; Num. 18:12-18
- H. The Temple-Tax; Exod. 30:13; 38:26
- I. Day by day giving to the poor; Deut. 24:15,21;
15:11,13,14

How did all of these sabbath days help God? What did He do with all of the money and what good to Him were the ashes of burned beasts?

The whole point is this — giving was never intended to benefit God, it was intended to help us. God so loved that He gave . . . this is the very nature of God and it is also the very nature of love. The man who will not give has neither love nor God; and the miserly are inevitably miserable. Love wants to give. Learn the deep joy of giving as an expression of love.

The Grace of Giving

1. The Christian should not consider giving a burden, but a grace or a favor.
2. This is a grace in which we should abound (II Cor. 8:7).
3. If we first give ourselves to the Lord, we will gladly give of our means to Him (II Cor. 8:2-5). They of Macedonia gave out of their deep poverty (II Cor. 8:2). Not only did these people give out of their deep poverty, but they “abounded” in their liberality.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

4. This giving of ourselves and of our means to the Lord is our reasonable, or spiritual service (Rom. 12:1).
5. We are not our own, but are bought with a price; therefore, we should glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:19,20). We can never repay the price that was paid for our redemption, which was the precious blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18-20).
6. If we sow, or give, sparingly, we shall reap sparingly; but if we sow, or give, bountifully, we shall reap bountifully (II Cor. 9:6).
7. Can we not take Jesus at His word when He said "It is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts 20:35) and who has promised that we will receive in proportion to our giving? (Luke 6). Let us cultivate more and more the "grace of giving."

Remember God's promise to the Christian: you will always be rich enough to be generous (II Cor. 9:8 NEB).

How Strong Is Your Faith In God?

How strong is your faith in God? How great is your love for Christ and His Church? Jesus said to Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Peter almost considered it an insult and I am sure many members here would feel the same way if He put the question to them. But the real question is, "Is your faith strong enough to let you love enough to walk by faith in this new year?" In the eyes of the world, walking by faith is the same as throwing logic out the window. How strong is your faith?

Only a small percent of Christians have enough faith and love to give ten percent of their income to the Lord and His kingdom. Does this mean those who don't tithe are afraid God will not help them in their stewardship? Listen, Christian stewardship is a test of logic and faith: How can you believe God will take care of you in the next world if you don't believe He'll take care of you financially in this world? Faith begins now, in this life. (Mark 10:29,30). If we can not believe in God's promises here and now, how can we trust Him there and then? Christian understand how God takes hold of your money matters and improves them. Perhaps you are one of the many who loves and feels

WHY GIVE MONEY TO GOD?

the need of giving more to your church and to missions, but without the faith to undertake tithing. Instead of trying to reason your budget, merely step out on faith. Throw logic out the window in this matter and walk by faith. Christian faith means walking in the dark where you cannot see, but knowing you will be guided.