

SERMON FOR DISCUSSION: Principles of Christian giving

2 Corinthians 9 v6-15

I have been asked by the PCC to preach on the principles of Christian giving.

FIRST, let me tell you about the Vicar who visited his church members at the time of the year he preached about giving.

When he met up with a farmer he said to him: "If you won £1 million on the Lottery would you give the church 10%?"
"YES, said the Farmer, if I won the Lottery I would give the church £100,000."

And, said the Vicar, if a Developer bought some of your land at residential rather than agricultural prices would you give 10% to the Church? *"YES, said the Farmer, if I got a premium price I would give the church 10% "*

Then the Vicar said, And if you had 10 pigs would you give 10% to the church? *"Hang on a minute, said the Farmer, you **know** I have 10 pigs!"*

The truth is: many people make imaginary promises and many people will give out of their surplus -**BUT-** **many are reluctant to give regularly week-in, week-out, from normal income.**

*"Hang on a minute, you **know** I have 10 pigs!"* said the Farmer because he obviously did not expect to give regularly or seriously.

BUT A CHRISTIAN must be different. The truth is: "Giving is GOOD for you!" We are NOT MEANT to spend all our money on ourselves.

Giving is something the world doesn't understand. Like the husband who, when asked by his wife, for 'a little money' replied, **"How Little, Dear?"**

The world wants to give as little as possible and keep as much as possible, because the world puts SELF first.

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THE ANSWER is: **2 Corinthians 9 v6-15 gives us some helpful principles about the way Christians should give:**

- FIRST v7 says *"as each has made up their mind"*

This means giving must be PLANNED & PURPOSEFUL. It must be thought about. *"As each makes up their mind."* Not haphazard. Not "Oh dear, here is the Collection!"

"As each makes up their mind" implies that we think about our giving as we are paid. 1 Corinthians 16 v2 says, **"On the first day of every week"** each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income."

Whether we are paid weekly or monthly or yearly, the principle is that we work out our giving **AT THE BEGINNING**, not at the end. **WE GIVE FIRST – then live.**

NOT live and then give the few scraps that are left over at the end of the week or the end of month or the end of the year.

Giving should be planned and purposeful and thought about. This MAY mean that we have to get our giving on track IN STAGES.

It might TAKE TIME to sort our finances out so we can give as we think is right.

- SECOND v7 also says *"not reluctantly, not under compulsion"*
Giving must be GIVEN FREELY
Every giver must be at peace about their giving.

The Church is NOT in the business of telling you how much to give, or worse, pressurising people to give.

Giving must be given freely and if your circumstances change, then change your giving. You are under no obligation to the Church.

Each must make up their own mind with Gods help and each must give freely.

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Though many Christians do tithe and give a tenth of their income, **NOWHERE is tithing taught in the New Testament.**

This is partly because tithing can lead to a **sense of compulsion** (*Giving as a duty*) and Paul rules out compulsion;

And partly because it can lead to a **sense of complacency** (*I've met my target*) and one should never be complacent with God;

And partly because it can lead **to pride** (*I'm a better Christian because I tithe*) and pride, as we all know, is a deadly sin.

- Instead, the **THIRD** principle Paul teaches is **CHEERFUL GIVING.**

v 7 says *"God loves a cheerful giver"*

A cheerful giver plans their giving and does not give reluctantly or under a sense of compulsion.

So here are the principles of Christian giving:

-Done out of GRATITUDE

-PLANNED & PURPOSEFUL & DONE FIRST

-Done FREELY & WILLINGLY

In our passage from 2 Corinthians 9 St Paul goes on to show some of the blessings which come from giving and I expect others will touch on these in future sermons.

But there is ONE FINAL PRINCIPLE

v6 says *"Whoever sows sparingly, will also reap sparingly."*

What God is saying behind this is **PUT ME TO THE TEST.**

IF a farmer sows no seed in the autumn HE CANNOT expect a harvest the following summer.

And what is true in agriculture **is also true spiritually.**

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God wants to bless us, particularly wants to bless us spiritually,
but the law of Scripture is THIS:

Just as harvest follows sowing
GIVING follows GIVING. As we give, so *GOD* gives.

Giving produces a rich harvest.
v6 *"Whoever sows generously will reap generously"*

Of course, we don't give to get. If our motivation is selfish, if our attitudes are all wrong, then it doesn't work.

But if we are giving out of gratitude,
if we are giving in a planned and purposeful way,
if we are giving freely and willingly THEN God says:

PUT ME TO THE TEST and see for yourselves.

We cannot out-give God.

BUT HE can do wonderful things for us!

I end asking you to ponder the meaning of verse 11

*"You will be enriched in every way
so that you can be generous on every occasion"*

Put me to the test! Says the Lord.

Preached by Martin Tanner on Sunday 4th October 2015
in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton at 10.30am