

The Joy of Giving

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 9:7

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I want you to pull your chair up there and listen carefully to me today as I bring you a message that I think is very, very important. I think all of the messages from God's Word are very important, but this is one that is so needful in this day, so needful. And that is the subject "The Joy of Giving, The Joy of Giving."

Now, I want you to listen to me. It says...here s the text, 2 Corinthians nine, verse seven. iAnd I am going to go through these verses and I want you to follow with me if you will, 2 Corinthians nine. It says in verse seven, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give not grudgingly, not of necessity. For God loveth a cheerful, a joyful giver."

Now giving is a subject that all believers understand and they love and they rejoice in the subject of giving because they know everything they have, everything I have physically, materially, spiritually, is God's gift to me. I know that. You know that. Everything I have is God's gift.

Our Lord said that in John three, verse 27. He said, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." And then in 1 Corinthians four, verse seven, Paul wrote, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? What do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you received it why do you boast as if you didn't receive it? Every thing we have is the gift of God. And then James said in James one, verse 17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and it comes down form the Father."

So giving is a subject all believers understand. We have received so much from our God, blessings innumerable.

And then, secondly, giving is a subject our Lord taught his disciples. In Acts chapter 20 Paul said, "Do you remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive?'" Giving is a greater blessing than getting. It is more blessed to give than to receive. That's what our Lord said.

And then in Luke 6:25 he said to his disciples, "Love your enemies, do good and lend hoping for nothing in return. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it shall be given to you. For with what measure you meat, with what measure you give to another, it shall be measured to you."

So now if a person is really interested in the subject of giving—and I am and I'm sure you are—if we are interested in our what our Lord says about giving, if you will study two chapters in 2 Corinthians, chapter eight and chapter nine of 2 Corinthians, these chapters teach all we need to know on the subject of giving, that's right, two chapters. It's all about giving; chapter eight, chapter nine of 2 Corinthians.

Now, ok, here. Let's start in chapter eight. Paul begins chapter eight of 2 Corinthians telling the people of Corinth about the generosity of the churches in Macedonia. He tells the church in Corinth about how generous those people are, how they give. He says this. "Although they were all poor people themselves, all of them were poor." He talks about their poverty. "The brought gifts and money to the apostles to help other Christians, other believers. They had little themselves, but they still gave. All of them gave. They had little, but they gave."

You know I have heard people say this: "Well, that person is more able to give than I am."

No he is not. He may be able to give more, but he is not more able to give. Do you see what I'm saying?

You say, "Well, he is more able to give."

No, he is not either. He is able to give more, but he is not more able to give. Everybody has something to give. It may be a sack of apples. It may be a day's work. It may be a meal prepared. It may be a smile. But everybody has got something to give. "Let every one of you, every man, according as he purposes in his heart so let him give." There is nobody excluded. And these people down in Macedonia they were poor, but they gave.

Listen to verse three. Paul says, "The gave according to their ability, according to their power," that's the word ability, "but some of them gave beyond their ability, beyond their ability." In other words, according to what God had given them, they shared it. And even beyond their ability some of them sacrificed. And watch this. "And they did it willingly." They weren't commanded to give. They weren't coerced to give. They weren't bribed. They weren't promised rewards. "They gave—watch this...these next two words—of themselves." It was motivated from their own hearts out of love for others. They chose to give. They gave, every one of them, though they were poor, they still gave according to their ability, beyond their ability. They were willing of themselves.

Paul said, "I didn't command it. I didn't command it. They gave of themselves. It was their idea to send this offering down to help these poor people."

You know, today, now listen to me. Listen carefully. Preachers and churches today have robbed people of the joy of giving by making giving an act of law, by coercing people and browbeating people and always preaching on tithing and giving and forcing them to

give and bribing them to give. They have just made giving an act of law, an act of duty instead of an act of love.

Many preachers and churches insist that their members are under law to pay 10% of their income to the church. That's right. It is widespread in this day that the people are under law to pay 10% of their income to the Church. They call it a tithe.

Well, now you listen to me and you listen carefully. I'm not a novice. I've been in the Word of God a lot of years and studied it. I'm a pastor and I want to teach our people the joy of giving, the joy of giving. I want them to give because they want to, because they like, love to do, because they are motivated willing of themselves to give. And tithing is an Old Testament law.

Now, let me tell you this. It is an Old Testament law given by God to a nation, the nation Israel to support the tribe of Levi. There were 12 tribes in Israel. Eleven tribes had an inheritance, had lot, had land, had ownership of these things. One tribe was the Levi tribe, the tribe of Levi. They were the priests. They took care of the tabernacle. They took care of the sacrifices. They took care of all these things. And God gave Israel the tithe, 10% of everything, of their herbs and of their crops and of their money and of everything, 10%, to support that tribe of Levi. That's the reason he said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, into the temple, into the tabernacle, that there may be meat in my house for the tribe of Levi, for these people who have no jobs, have no land, have no inheritance, have nothing."

But that is not a New Testament teaching. There is no tribe of Levi now. There is no tribe. All of God's people work and have jobs and we support our pastors and those who preach the gospel, but that's their work. That's their job. They are called of God. We support them. But neither—now listen—neither are Lord nor his apostles taught the Church to tithe, taught believers to tithe.

No, the word tithe, tithes and tithing is in the New Testament only four times, only four times. Now, listen. You write this down. It's only in the New Testament four times. I'll give you each time and you write it down or you follow me and listen to it. In Matthew 23 our Lord is speaking to the Pharisees. He says, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees. You are hypocrites for you pay your tithes and you ignore the weightier matters of the law which are judgment and mercy and faith. Now these you ought to have done."

What ought to they have done? Paid their tithes. Why? They were under the law. They were under the law of Moses. Christ hadn't died on that cross. The Church hadn't been founded. It hadn't been begun. Christ hadn't died on the cross. These men were under the law. They were supposed to tithe. All the way through the Old Testament they were ordered to. "These ye ought to have done," he said.

And the second time it is mentioned in the New Testament is the same words in Luke 11:42. Christ said the same thing. He condemned the Pharisees because they were so

careful about their tithing and should have been. But they neglected mercy and judgment and faith.

Now, the next time it is in the Word of God is Luke 18:11. “The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself.” You remember two men went to the temple to pray, a publican and a Pharisee. The publican smote upon his breast and cried, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” What did the Pharisee, what did the religious man say?

“I thank you, God, I’m not like other men. I fast twice a week and I pay my tithes of all I possess.”

That is the third time tithing is mentioned. Every time there is a Pharisee involved. Every time there is a hypocrite involved. Every time there is a man under law laboring for acceptance with God, every time.

Now, look at Hebrews seven. Here is the next time and last time. In Hebrews seven, verses five through nine, one other time tithing is mentioned. And it tells how the sons of Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in the loins of their father Abraham and how these same priests, the tribe of Levi, how they had a commandment to take tithes from Israel, to take them now, take them. And how that the people of Israel paid tithes to these priests.

Now, listen to me. The office of the priesthood—Hebrews 7:5—have a commandment to take tithes of the people. You don’t take a gift. A gift is given. But these people had their tithes taken from them just like the government takes your taxes. They take it out of your payroll. They take a certain percentage for Social Security. They take a certain percentage of payroll tax. They take it. And that’s the way these fellows took the tithe. They took it. The people didn’t give it willingly. They didn’t bring it willingly. They took it.

And another thing he said in verse nine, “Levi paid tithes.” He didn’t give them. He paid them.

I get the idea of a tax. I know we are willing to pay our tax to the government so we can have highways and police protection and firemen and school teachers and all these things, but still the government takes the taxes. They take it. It’s not a volunteer thing. It’s not a cheerful thing. It’s not a joyful thing. And people pay their taxes. We pay them on time. And that’s the way the tithe was.

And I’ll tell pastors and preachers today: If you insist on your church operating under that principle that you take tithes from them, take it, that you bring them to church and they pay tithes, there is no joy there. There is no joy.” And if you go back to the Old Testament law on tithing—now write this down. It’s only in the New Testament four times. And nowhere in the all of the 21 epistles of the apostles to the Church is the word tithing mentioned at all for New Testament believers, the New Testament Church.

And I'll tell you this, if you are going to go back to the Old Testament law of tithing, you are going to have to go back to the Old Testament law of circumcision and the Old Testament law of sabbath keeping, no recreation and no work on Saturday. You have to go back to the laws of the priesthood and the sacrifice because if we go to one law you have got to go to the rest of it. If we put our people under the law, that's what Christ said through Paul the apostle in Galatians. "You are obligated to keep every law."

But we are not under the law of Moses. We are under grace, the grace of Christ Jesus who fulfilled the law. And here is what Paul teaches about giving. Now, listen. In 2 Corinthians eight, verse seven, he said to the Church at Corinth, "Therefore as you abound in everything..." This church was a great church at Corinth and Paul said, "As you abound in everything, first in faith," these people believed God. Oh, they believed the gospel. They believed that we have a good hope through grace. They are bounded in faith. They grew in faith. He said, "As you abound in utterance." They had some good preachers. We talked about, "I'm of Paul and I'm of Apollos and I'm of Cephas." They had some great preachers, abounded in utterance. "As you abound in knowledge." They knew the Word of God. They knew it and loved the Word of God, preached the Word of God. "You abound in diligence." They were faithful in service and worshiped in prayer. "You abound in love to Christ." His apostles, his people. "See that you are bound in this grace also, the grace of giving."

You grow in faith. You grow in love. You grow in knowledge. You grow in patience. You grow in diligence. You grow in wisdom. Every grace grows. Tithing doesn't grow. It's set at 10%. You don't grow in tithing. You pay your debts. You pay your tax. They take it away from you. But you grow in giving. You learn to give more graciously. You learn to give more generously. You grow in giving like you grow in faith. You grow in giving like you grow in love. See that you grow in this grace also.

Now, look at the next verse. "I speak not by commandment. I speak not by commandment." You cannot command generosity. You can command the tithe. You can make them pay it. You can scare them to death. You can say, "If you don't bring your tithe in God will take it out in a coffin." Don't do that. That's not so. Don't command people to be generous. You can't legislate generosity. You can't legislate love. When you do that it ceases to be giving. It becomes a debt. "I speak not by commandment." That's what Paul said.

I can't command you...the amount for you to give. That's for you to purpose in your heart. That's not for anybody to command that.

"I speak not by commandment, but listen. I speak by the example of others to prove the sincerity of your love."

The chief motive in giving is love. That's the reason you give your wife and anniversary present. You love her. Anybody tell you how much to spend on it? Ten percent, five percent? You give your children a graduation present. You love them. You give your pastor a salary. You love him. You appreciate him. You give to the people who are in

need because you love them. That's the only motive God almighty will accept is giving based on love, love.

What is love? Love is a principle in a person's heart put there by God which wishes to bestow the best that it can on the object of its affection. That is the basis for giving. That is the basis for worship. That is the basis for giving. That is the basis for witnessing. That is the basis for preaching. That is the basis for anything you do in the name of God. Anything that is done out of a duty because a law commands you to do so is unacceptable to the living God. And tithing is unacceptable for a believer.

The chief example of love and giving is Christ. Listen to this next verse. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich for your sake he became poor that through his poverty you might be rich. God so loved he gave. God so loved he gave." His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power has no boundary known unto men. For out of his infinite riches in Jesus he giveth and giveth and giveth and giveth again.

How can I be so loved of God and not love others? How can I be the object of God's mercy and not be merciful? How can I be blessed with so much from God and not be generous to others? Must I be forced by law to be gracious? Must I be forced and commanded by law to be generous? Giving is a grace born in the heart. Giving is an act of love not an act of law, not of necessity. Giving is a joy. Our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Giving is a willing, cheerful act.

Now, let me ask you to look at verse 12. This is so important. He says, "For if there be first a willing mind the gift is accepted according to what a man has not according to what he has not. For God loves a cheerful giver."

The Old Testament tithe was pressed upon an unbelieving, unwilling people for the support of a religious system in which they didn't even believe. Most of them died in unbelief. The believer has no such law. In the matter of worship and service and giving God makes him, first, willing. That's right. There must be, first, a willing mind; willing to believe, willing to worship, willing to obey and willing to give.

And that is what David wrote in Psalm 110. "They people shall be willing. They shall be willing in the day of they power. And the beauty..."

How are you going to get people to give if you don't give it to...? They will be made willing. "They people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning." That has to do with the youth. "For it is God that works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure." God makes us willing to do his good pleasure.

Did you hear that? To be accepted of God there must be, first, a willing mind. Anything done or given to God out of necessity is unacceptable, given to God because it is a duty, unacceptable. It must be willing to be accepted.

Think upon this verse again. Let me show you this. There must be, first, a willing mind. It is accepted according to what a person has, not according to what he doesn't have. You see, it is accepted according to what we have, not what we don't have. Our gifts are not measured by somebody...the size of somebody else's gift. Because with God the size and the value of the gift is not important. A gift given out of love in the name of God is measured by the love which gives it rather than the value of the gift. The widow woman brought two pence and our Lord said she gave more than all the rest of them, more, you see.

And this does away with pledges and promises to give later. He says there must be a willing mind. It is accepted according to what a man has, not what he expects to have, what he is going to trust God to give him, what he is going to count on in the future. It is accepted depending on what a man has. That's right. Our children do not have much money, but their little simple loving gifts at Christmas, just a trinket, just a toy, is to the heart of a daddy or mother of more value than the big gifts given by somebody else. That's right. The value of the gift, the size of the gift, is not what is important.

Now, listen to our text again. Here is where we discover and restore to God's people the joy of giving. I say this to you. Don't teach your children to tithe. Teach them to give.

I remember when I was a boy. I was brought up in strict religion and my parents—I had a paper route—my parents insisted that I tithe 10 cents out of every one of my dollars. I didn't like it. I didn't appreciate it. I didn't want to do it, but I had to do it because that was our religion. Don't teach your children to tithe. Teach them to give. Give out of love. Give out of a heart.

“Every man,” listen to this text. “Every man, young and old, rich and poor, male and female, every person according as he purposes in his heart.” That's where everything is done. It's not a tithe. It's not a tax. It's not a law. It's not a percentage. It is as he purposes in his heart. This is what I want to give. This is what God has led me to give. This is what God has laid upon my heart to give. And this is what matters. It is in the heart. That is where all the things pertaining to God are settled, in the heart. “Every man as he purposes in his heart, so let him give, not of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

And verse eight of chapter nine tells us that God will enable people to give who really want to. It says, “God is able to make his grace abound toward that man that he will always have all sufficiency in all things that he may continue his good work.”

We cannot out give God. If God leaves it on our heart to give something, if God leaves us in our heart to give he will supply sufficiency for us to give and to keep giving. There must be a willing...first, a willing heart, a loving heart, a cheerful heart, a joyful heart.

So here is my suggestions. Let's stop begging. Preachers and churches in the whole lot. It is insulting to God. These telethons to raise money, this...David said, "I'm old. I was young, but I have never seen God's seed begging bread." God's seed don't beg. It is insulting to their father. So let's stop begging. Let's stop putting God's people under the law and taxation. We don't tax God's people. They give willingly and lovingly. The joy of giving. We are robbing them from the joy. Stop bribing people in order to give.

"Now, if you will give this, God will give you this. You give in order to receive."

He said, "You lend hoping for nothing in return." You give because you want to, hoping for nothing. Stop money raising projects. I tell you, if God is in a project he will supply the need. I have found that to be true in all these years. God supplies. I don't ever beg for money. We don't ever have a telethon to raise money. If God almighty supplies the funds, we will continue on the air. But we're not...God is not begging. If God is in a project he will supply the need.

That's one way we know he is in it. That's evidence that God is in it if he supplies...if he pays the bill.

My father always, if he wanted me to do something he would pay for it. But if he didn't pay for it I didn't do it. And I'm telling you now with churches, stop borrowing money. Stop begging. Stop raising money. Start praying, asking God to supply your need and he will, but he will, he always has. He always will.

This congregation at 13th Street, for 50 years God supplied all we need.

Now, I've got to close this message with these...with this Scripture. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." He gave the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the greatest, sweetest, most wonderful eternal gift, the gift of God. And he gave him willingly because he loved us. And that better be the motive for everything you and I give because we love, because we love, not because we have to.

God loves a cheerful giver. Do you have the joy of giving?

If you want this tape I have "Election" on one side and "The Joy of Giving" on the other. Write to me. Send two dollars. That will pay for sending it back to you. God bless you until we meet again.