



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

Summer 2025

"The Liberal Soul"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. A good quote from Bishop Ryle, and one that is a good summary of our text this morning, which is 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 through 15. 2 Corinthians chapter 9, beginning with verse 6;

⁶ Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

(I think that basically summarizes our text, and the lesson. We're to give; we're to be generous; we're to give bountifully, but we're do it according to our heart, not according to what someone tells us to do. And do it before the LORD...and do it with joy; God loves a cheerful giver.)

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written,

"HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR,
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."

¹⁰ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to

God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, ¹⁴ while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

That concludes Paul's instruction to the Corinthians on *giving*. So I think I can say with this sermon you probably have heard your last from me on giving.

What we can say from all that Paul said in this text is that, Christians are to be a giving people, and they are to be giving joyfully. "God loves a cheerful giver", (vs7), because He is a cheerful giver.

Well, let's bow in a word of prayer and ask the LORD to bless our time together.

Father, we do that. We pray Your rich blessings upon us as we continue in this service, as we continue in the Scripture that we have read and we consider the responsibilities that You've placed upon us—and yet responsibilities that You meet for us; and You supply us with all that we need. And as we look to You, You continue to supply us. So Father, give us that, and make us this kind of people, a giving people, a generous people, that it would be glorifying to You and helpful to the saints, as those early Christians were to one another.

Thank You for Your goodness and Your sovereignty over all of our daily life—and the confidence we can put in You, as we understand that, and as we live by faith.

We thank You for Tim and the ministry he gave us this morning in reminding us that we live in a hostile world—and that we can also, at the same time, look to You as the sovereign God over this world and be bold in our witness. Make us that.

We will become that, LORD, as we become men and women of Your Word. As we devote ourselves to the study of Your Word that will transform us, and strengthen us, and fortify our faith—and that's what we pray for this morning, Father.

Bless us as we continue in our study in 2 Corinthians, and build us up in the faith. And bless the Marcys as they are here on this side of the Pacific; and then bless them as they return back to Japan and the ministry that they will have there—and continue to have.

LORD, we pray for those that are facing trials of one kind or another. We pray for those that are sick, those that are recovering, those that are facing the difficulties of life that can discourage; we pray that You would encourage them, strengthen them, and bless them.

LORD, bless us now, as we sing our next hymn. We pray that You would prepare us through that for a time of study together. And then, may the Spirit of God teach us and build us up in the faith, and equip us for the rest of this day and the rest of the week, the week that's before us.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) We live in a day of investment. More people than ever have money in the stock market—if not individually then with company retirement funds. We're all concerned about enlarging our wealth. Of course, it's not fail safe. Proverbs 23, verses 4 and 5 tell us, 'Wealth makes itself wings and flies off to the skies.' And even if it doesn't, we, some day, "will fly away", (Psa 90:10), and we'll leave everything behind.

Investment is wise, don't misunderstand me...but there is an investment that beats Wall Street. It is fail safe, "where neither rust nor moth destroys". (Mat 6:20). It's where Paul invested... and that's his subject in 2 Corinthians chapter 9.

He describes it as 'sowing and reaping'. That's a common metaphor, or picture, in the Bible for the actions and consequences of a person's life. And Paul, being a

student of the Bible, was very familiar with those images and probably had them indelibly impressed on his mind from his daily experiences on his missionary travels.

As he walked along the roads of the ancient world from city to city, he would have seen farmers in their fields, sowing and reaping. And so naturally those pictures found their way into Paul's letters. We find them in the Book of Galatians, we find them here in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, where Paul describes 'Christian giving' in terms of farming. Verse 6, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." In other words, 'the person who gives little will get little.' The farmer who is miserly with his seed will get a measly harvest. If he doesn't sow a lot, he won't reap a lot. That's a principle of life that applies broadly; but here it applies to stewardship, it applies to giving.

'Giving' is *sowing*...it is like planting seed. And what Paul is reassuring the Corinthians of is that, 'What is sown for the LORD and His saints, what is *given* is not lost.' Now sometimes that's the concern that we have, (whether we think about it seriously or not), it's that when we give our money to a cause, or a person, that money is gone—lost to us. And what Paul is saying here is, 'No, our gifts are like seed...they produce a harvest. So give generously; and like the farmer, you will receive bountifully!'

That's what Paul is teaching here; that's his lesson. It's not original with him for the Proverbs teach the same thing. Paul was actually citing Proverbs chapter 11, verses 24 and 25, where Solomon wrote,

"There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more,
And there's one who withholds what is justly due, *and yet it results* only in want.
The generous man will be prosperous."

That's the New American Standard Bible. The King James version translates, "The generous man", "The liberal soul" ...(and that is a true liberal; he doesn't give away your money; he, 'gives away his own, liberally'. [Laughter])

On the face of it, the Proverb is a paradox, isn't it? 'By giving we gain, by losing we receive.' There is great reward in being generous. God delights in that, and He blesses the giver. Proverbs 22, verse 9, "He who is generous will be blessed." How will we be blessed? How will we increase when we give? Financially? Yes...I think that's what the Proverbs, and Paul are saying. God is absolutely sovereign; He knows everything; He's in control of everything; and He is watching His people. He's watching you and me, and all of us carefully, closely. He watches after the generous person.

I don't believe God will allow us to bankrupt ourselves by being obedient to Him, and taking care of those in need. He takes care of His people, and He blesses, "the liberal soul". I'll remind you that this is what George Müller set out to prove through his ministry to orphans. From the beginning he had two purposes in that ministry; before he ever began he had two purposes...*First*, to relieve the plight of orphans in England. And *secondly*, (and chiefly), to prove to Christians the reality of the things of God.

He was struck, as a young Christian, by the lack of faith that he saw in the Christians around him—many his Christian friends...and how they lived by their wits and did not, 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and trust Him to add these things to them.' (Luk 12:31). So Müller wanted to prove to the church that God is able and ready to bless all those who do that...who 'look to Him'.

And he did that. He did that by carrying on an orphan house by faith, by praying and not asking any individual for money or for help. He looked to the LORD in order to strengthen the faith of God's children—to prove that God can, and will, take care of His people. He can be taken at His Word to supply our needs and bless abundantly.

If you remember from last week, over a period of 50 years, God gave him, (*Müller*), a literal fortune. And it has been estimated to be something like \$150,000,000 that was entrusted to him over that period of time. Yet he didn't use any of it to buy a private jet, (he didn't have those, but the equivalent of that). He didn't spend it on himself, he scattered it all over the world.

But this principle has been turned into a, 'get rich scheme' by some ministers, (so called 'ministers'). Unscrupulous ministers today, (they call it 'seed faith', with the

promise that God will prosper them), 'Give and He will make you rich!' It is 'Name It, Claim It' nonsense. It is presumption; it's blasphemy!

And with 'giving to some', there is generally a selfish motive... 'Give to get something out of it, personally'. God doesn't bless that. He doesn't work that way.

The motive for 'giving' is not 'getting'...it is being a blessing to others, helping where there is a need. And that has its own reward, its own blessing spiritually. When we give, and give sacrificially, we are behaving like Christ; and that can only increase our likeness to Him.

Those who live for self and their money are not blessed; they are ruined by it. The Proverbs speak of that. Proverbs 11, verse 28, "He who trusts in his riches will fall..." That gives the picture of a house that's built on a faulty foundation, falling down, collapsing on all of those within it—or that of a person being on a peak somewhere and falling off.

But there is great blessing in giving generously, sowing bountifully, liberally. Not everyone has a lot to sow a lot. Not everyone has riches out of which to give...and certainly in the early church, they did not have that. The point here is not giving large gifts. And I'll remind you again of what we studied in the past few weeks, the widow in Mark chapter 12, who gave only two mites; she shows the importance of the gift in terms of *quality*, not quantity. Her gift was the smallest in the temple, and yet to Christ it was the greatest. He marveled at that woman, and He honored her. She gave everything she had in this world, two small mites...two pennies! But she gave more that day than any of the rich people there put together.

We're not told what happened to her, but we can be sure, (I think, on the basis of our knowledge of God, His character), that He provided for her, and He increased her two pennies far beyond what they were worth. He does that.

The Christian life is a life of faith. We walk by faith, trusting that the LORD is walking with us, watching everything we do, guiding us, protecting us, and blessing our

obedience. And really, if we are walking with the LORD, obeying Him, there are no risks involved. The men of this world will risk everything they have to make a fortune, and will put everything they have into some ruinous speculation. But there's no speculation in 'scattering', and no uncertainty; God says, 'Liberality is the way to plenty'. That's certain. (see Pro 11:24-25).

Now, maybe not plenty of money. God doesn't promise to make us wealthy, but He will make us rich in other ways, so much so that we won't miss our money, and we won't regret giving it away. So give as the LORD leads...and give joyfully.

That's the next point. The Corinthians may not have been doing that. Paul sensed that there was some reluctance on their part, so in verse 7, he encourages them to give 'gladly and freely', give 'voluntarily'; "Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." We are to give as we have, 'purposed in our heart'.

That is a principle of giving. It's not the size of the gift that is important, but the condition of the giver's heart. Christian giving is based on freedom. No one can tell us how to give; no one can tell us how much to give, or who to give to....that is for you to decide. And you do that only through prayer and wisdom; it's a matter of the heart. We wonder, 'How much should I give?' Well, the LORD will make that known. Give everything?...I don't think He requires that of us. It's something that the Macedonians did, but that was *beyond* anything Paul expected of them, or expects of us, or was expecting of the Corinthians.

We have other responsibilities we need to look after. We need to make enough and save enough that we are self-sufficient, and not dependent upon others. But how much we give, that's something that is something 'within the heart'. And Paul was very concerned that the Corinthians knew that. He didn't want them to give because, 'They felt they had to give.' And he didn't want them to give grudgingly. It's better that a person not give if he or she is reluctant or under pressure. That kind of gift is worthless to God...and it has no reward.

"God loves a cheerful giver," Paul said. (vs7). He didn't say, 'God loves givers, and it's best to be cheerful in giving, but He'll take your gift anyway, regardless of whether you're cheerful or not.'

Now that's the way of men today. That's the bottom line with the world. It's the gift that's important, not the heart. So they use all kinds of methods to pressure people into giving, because it's the gift that's most important. That's not God's way. And I don't think people, for the most part, like that...like the pressure tactics that are often applied.

Mark Twain told a story, (you've probably heard it). He was in church, (which was unusual for him), but he was in church, (according to his story), and he heard the preacher tell about, 'a worthy cause'. And he was so moved by what the preacher described and said that he pledged within his mind and his heart to give \$400, (which in that day was quite a lot).

But the preacher kept droning on, and kept pressing the people to give...so much so that the \$400 went down to \$200. And he kept going on and on until the \$200 went down to \$100. And when the plate finally came by he ended up taking 10 cents out.

[Laughter]

God loves a cheerful giver. He doesn't need our money. Christ said, "I will build my church." He's doing that, and He'll raise up givers. Just as He put an "earnestness" for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus, (as Paul mentioned back in chapter 8, verse 16), He will put generosity in someone's heart. He can lay a concern on the heart of some for a person or a ministry. He knows what's going on...(knows better than what we know)... knows what's going on, and knows what we need, and knows so much better than we do. And He supplies what we need, personally. After all, in Romans 8, verse 32, Paul wrote, "He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" So we're to look to Him.

There have been ministries that did that who looked to Him alone and made no appeals to funds, George Müller for one. But also Hudson Taylor is another; he started the China Inland Mission. He never asked for money. He wrote, "I do beg that never an

appeal for funds be put forward, save to God in prayer. When our work becomes begging work, it dies. God is faithful...must be so."

Now that's true. He is a faithful God and He must be faithful—and He will be faithful. If we put Him to the test by looking to Him, He will prove that to us. And I think we've seen that here at Believers Chapel for the past, what, 50 plus years...more than half a century. When we stop doing that, the work dies.

Giving should be done freely, apart from pressure...and gladly, with joy, without reluctance. The two go together: 'Freely and gladly!' And that's what God likes. He loves a cheerful giver.

And He rewards that kind of giving. He replenishes the giver so that he or she is able to give again. That's a point that was very important to make, and he makes it here in verse 8. He replenishes the giver, not so the giver can live well, but so the giver can continue giving; "And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." (vs8).

"Every good deed", isn't limited to giving to the needy, (it's all righteous deeds, but it includes that), and that's the main idea here in this context, that of giving our possessions in support of the LORD's work.

'God is able', Paul is saying, 'to bless the liberal soul with not only enough for his own needs, or her own needs, but also with something more to give.' That's the assurance he gives here, and through the rest of the text, at least through verse 11. God is able to make His grace abound to us. He is powerful; there's no power equal to His. It is unlimited; and it is at work for us, and provides for the obedient.

He can't fail. People of faith understand that. That's the reason we are able to obey and walk by faith—and walk by faith in spite of the circumstances which might seem to deny everything that we're doing. Christians live in a supernatural realm. God governs our lives, and He keeps His promises. Those who know that believe, as Charles Hodge put it, that "God is able to make the paradox, 'He that scattereth, increaseth', proved true."

And Paul proved that to be true from Scripture: In verse 9 he quotes Psalm 112, verse 9,

"He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor.

His righteousness endures forever."

Remember, this promise is for the cheerful giver who gives selflessly, because he or she wants to, and expects nothing in return. God will bless that person so that he can continue, (or she can continue), giving. Again, this is not the path to personal wealth, but to greater generosity. This is how God supports His work and keeps it going. It's through faithful, liberal souls.

Secondly, this describes 'a tendency', 'a principle', 'a general truth'. There are people who give faithfully who are not enriched with money in order to give more. But, they are enriched in other ways. The heart is enlarged; the generous person has an enlarged heart as a result of that. Generous people live better than the miser. A person may gain a fortune but lack joy. The generous person may lack some of life's amenities, but is rich in the experiences of God's grace and faithful supply. I'm sure that was the experience of those Macedonians. They must have experienced wonderful things that they hadn't foreseen, but that came to them by the hand of God after they had given so generously.

But this is the way a righteous person lives. Generosity is a sign of his or her righteousness. You remember Zaccheaus, in Luke chapter 19, when he received Christ into his home and into his heart, he was a changed man—"from a miser to a philanthropist", and he gave his money liberally, eagerly, gladly. God always honors that. He always gives an increase to the giver in some way...in the way that is best for that person.

But generally He increases their supply so that they can continue giving. And that's what Paul says in verse 10 that, God will increase the giver with more to give, so

that the harvest will increase: "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness." (vs10).

What Paul wants to instill in the Corinthians' minds, (and in our minds), is that no one is poorer for being generous. Now again, Paul's basis for giving this assurance is two things: *First* of all, the Word of God, the promises of God, and then *secondly* the character of God. Paul has Isaiah 55, verse 10, in mind here which describes how God works in nature through the rain to, as Isaiah said, "...furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater." (ibid.) He gives the seed crop for sowing...and that's how God works in the natural realm. It's His character to faithfully provide; and He will certainly do that for His people when they obey His instruction.

If He faithfully supplies seed for the farmer so that people can have bread and live, then He will certainly make ample provision for the church, so that there will be, 'a harvest of righteousness', so that the church can function and move forward, supply its need so that as the Gospel is preached, righteousness is established in the hearts of people.

And the spiritual harvest is great. Paul indicates that here with the word "increase", (vs10), but it is also indicated by the analogy that he has used of the farmer. Think of the abundance of wheat that grows from one small seed. One small seed is planted, and there's an abundance of wheat that follows. Or the fruit that grows from a tree, and that tree is produced by one seed.

The gift that we give is able to, (regardless of its size, whether it's small or not), be adequate for all that God wants to do. And He uses the small gift to produce a great harvest. You see that, for example, in John chapter 6—the feeding of the 5,000. He used a boy's lunch, just five loaves and two fish, just some crackers and sardines, to feed a multitude...and they were filled and satisfied. He can do that with our gifts.

What we give and do is not insignificant. God doesn't need it, but He uses it and increases it, and makes it very useful. What we do counts, and it counts for eternity. And

what we do is an investment in the bank of heaven, which can never go bankrupt...and it's there for eternity.

But all of it, all that we are and do, is of grace, pure grace. It is from God, and it is through God, and it is to God. It is all to His glory, and results in thanksgiving to Him.

Paul says that in the next verses. In verse 11 he tells the Corinthians, "...you will be enriched in everything for all liberality..." Now that verb is passive; it's not what they 'do', it's what's done 'to' them. We are enriched by God. He equips us so that we can give to others. It may also mean He enriches us spiritually; He prepares the heart; He gives the saints the disposition to be a giver—gives him or her the desire to be liberal in his or her giving. But both are true and necessary, and the supplying of the needs of others produces thanksgiving to God.

Gratitude goes to the people who give. But ultimately, God is the source of every blessing. So He above all else, He above all is to be thanked. He looks after His people; He is faithful to do that. And He gets the glory for that. Paul makes this point again in verses 12 and 13. The purpose of ministry, of giving to others, of supplying their material needs is ultimately spiritual. It produces thankfulness, and it produces praise to God.

Paul states that in verse 13. "Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all." The saints in Jerusalem are the individuals he is speaking of here. The saints there in Jerusalem and Judea would glorify God because the gift from Corinth gave proof of the reality of the Corinthians faith—that these Greeks, (these Gentiles), cared about Jews!

Saving faith is active; it is obedient; it helps those in need. Giving doesn't make us righteous. Paul said it is a 'proof' of "your righteousness", (*vs10b*)...the fruit and evidence of a new life. It brings glory to God and thanksgiving to those who receive it. It would be to the Jews of Judea and Jerusalem; it would give them thankful hearts for what they've received.

In turn, Paul says in verse 14, 'They would pray for the Corinthians.' That would be the natural, spontaneous response of receiving a gift. So, you see in this the purpose of Christian giving: Not only does it minister to people materially, and meet a need that they have, but also it ministers to them spiritually. It proves that God is with us; and it leads to gratitude and worship. It's a demonstration that God is involved in these things. We don't see Him, we don't hear Him, (not audibly), but His life, and presence, and work among us is evidence through this kind of thing—through gifts and giving...and it leads to gratitude and worship.

Some people teach about God and His glory, (preachers, really all of us should be doing that), speaking about it in one way or another, communicating that, 'God is great, God is glorious, God is faithful, He is good, He is sovereign' ...all of that. They make known that by what is said...by what is *proclaimed*! But others make it known, His greatness— with their deeds and their material gifts.

What glory men like Müller and Taylor gave to God by their ministries of feeding orphans all over the world, easing the suffering of others, bringing the Gospel to the lost. Great needs were met by men who simply looked to God alone, for help ... didn't try to wring money out of people with various techniques ... simply looked to the LORD and He gave—and gave to them abundantly. That is proof that God is real, that He is alive—and proof of the truth of His Word and the truth of His promises.

Paul ends his encouragement to the Corinthians 'to give' on the great theme of grace. He wrote in verse 15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" That gift is Christ. God the Father gave us the greatest gift, the best that He had, His only begotten Son, so that through Him we might have everlasting life. Now that should move us to be like Him; that should move us to be giving people. How can we withhold our gifts from God's children for whom He sacrificed His Son when they are in need? The obvious implication is, 'We should be giving as God is giving.'

Well, did the Corinthians do that? This is where the instruction and the admonitions of Paul about this gift to the poor saints in Judea and Jerusalem ends. So what happened? Do we know?

Well, I think we have evidence that they did. Assuming the Book of Romans was written in AD 57, (a year after 2 Corinthians was written, we believe, in AD 56)...so it was written later. And in Romans chapter 15, verses 26 and 27, Paul wrote of Macedonia and Achaia ... (Achaia, you remember, is the region of Greece where Corinth was located) ... Macedonia and Achaia made, "a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." So evidently they did.

We would have expected that. But that's what God's people do, because that's what God's people are; we are giving people; we are "liberal souls". We are new creatures in Christ, and we're like Christ. We have that within us—but only by God's grace. We give only because He first gave.

Look, I think it's wise to save and to invest for the future, so that we are able to be self-sufficient, and not be dependent on others, and not be a burden to others. We need to be self-sufficient.

But again, the things, the instruments of finance and all, that we can use, (all of those things), are not fail safe. An article was written in the 1980s in the Washington Post titled, *The Jumpers of '29*, about the great crash that began The Great Depression. It occurred on October 29, 1929, (known as Black Tuesday), when thousands of investors were suddenly wiped out; and there are stories of some jumping out of windows to their deaths.

Those who invest their whole lives and possessions in this world are doomed to disappointment, in this life, or perhaps after...Proverbs 11, verse 28, "He who trusts in his riches will fall."

God has given the greatest gift in His Son to all who believe. And the life we live for Him is an investment in all eternity. So the question I ask is, 'Have you received the gift that God has given in His Son? Have you received eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ?'

He became a man in order to die in our place...and He did that; He paid our debt of sin. Now, at the moment of faith, the believer is forgiven that debt and more; he or she is declared righteous, and made a child of God, and made an heir of the kingdom to come.

So look to Him, if you've not already. Believe in Him, and live for Him. We can't make a better investment in life than doing that...and that investment is, "...where neither rust nor moth can destroy." (Mat 6:20)

May God help us to live in that way...Live by His grace.

(Closing Prayer) Father, Your grace is truly amazing, far more than any of us can realize or will ever be able to fathom in this world. It's only in the next that we'll really begin to understand it—and we will spend all eternity expanding in our understanding and appreciation of Your grace, (there will be no end to it.) We thank You for it, Father. It saved us from a horrible, terrible end; You rescued us from judgment—and we give You thanks and praise for that.

And we pray, LORD, that as we understand that, we would be men and women of grace and that we will be generous people using the funds that You have given us, and the time that You've given us, wisely and well. So, *in our hearts*, may You teach us how we are to distribute what You've given to us. May we be a generous people—as You are our most generous God.

Now,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,

And give you shalom. Peace.

In Christ's name. Amen.

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