

We generally think about the results of giving in terms of how the recipient is helped. We are often moved by the needs of people. Most appeals to give are based upon either the needs or the manner in which gifts have met those needs. The collection for the believers in Jerusalem was important, but the help given to them is not the emphasis which Paul makes in these closing verses, but rather two other results are the focus of Paul's attention.

### I. The generous giver will be enriched.

#### 1. *The comparison of giving with sowing and reaping is impressive (cf. vv 6, 9, 10).*

The first application of the principle of sowing and reaping (v 6) says that there is a direct correlation between how much one sows and how much is then reaped. What is true physically, is true spiritually. When we give materially or even of our time to help others, we are not throwing it away, but rather sowing seed from which we can expect a harvest of God's blessing. But sow miserly and we can expect a small harvest.

The second application of the principle of sowing and reaping is less obvious in this text but it is the most frequent application of the analogy. What you sow, is also what you will reap. The farmer does not get the same seed back but the same kind of seed. One can also sow according to the sinful nature or according to the Spirit (Galatians 6:7-8). In Corinth generosity should mark how they sowed. But generosity was not measured by the absolute size of the gift, but according to what they had (8:12). It was contrasted to covetousness and greed (9:5). And it concerned a heart attitude (9:7).

When we are considering what we sow, we must remember that we are sowing our attitude as well. The Corinthians were not simply sowing material aid, they were sowing a spiritual attitude of generosity. It is not true generosity to give in order to get. However, true generosity will lead to the enrichment of the giver.

#### 2. *The character of the enrichment is impressive.*

Look at verse 8 and note the frequency of "all" or "every". The sufficiency of God for everything is seen throughout this section.

- We give because of the work of God's grace in us. Cf. 9:8, 10; 8:1.
- When we give generously, we will find that God meets all our needs. Cf. 9:8; Philippians 4:14-19.
- When we give generously, we will be further supplied with all that we need for every good work. Cf. 9:8, 10, 11. More than material blessing is implied.
- When we give generously, we demonstrate trust in God and will have a great harvest of righteousness. Cf 9:9 with Ps 112:9 (& context); 9:10 with Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12.

When we give generously, God in turn assures that we have no need. He will in fact give us more to be able to give more generously.

### II. Through generous giving God will be praised (9:10-15).

#### 1. *God would be thanked/praised for His provision, even though it came through human agency (vv 10-12).*

Paul made the arrangements, his colleagues helped administer it, believers gave, but it was producing thanks to God. God's grace was recognized behind the human agency.

#### 2. *God would be thanked/praised for His grace in truly saving the Corinthians (v 13a).*

Some Jewish believers may have doubted if the Gentile Corinthians had truly been converted from their pagan ways, especially in light of problems reported in 1 Corinthians. But the generous giving of the Corinthians was proof that God had truly changed them.

#### 3. *God would be thanked/praised for the unity of spirit that was demonstrated in their generosity (13b).*

There may also have been doubts concerning the commitment of the Corinthians to the wider body of Christ in light of their sectarian spirit. But this generous gift was proof of their commitment to the Body. The "surpassing grace of God" in the Corinthians (v 14) would move the Jerusalem believers to pray for the Corinthians and desire a deeper unity with them. Our dependence upon God in prayer and our desire for the unity which He has purposed brings praise to Him.

It is proper to consider giving as part of our worship. Two words are used in verse 12 whose distinction are hard to communicate in English. "The ministry of this service" (NASB) refers first to the financial aid or service given to the Jerusalem church. The second term is one used in Biblical Greek for religious service, specifically of priests relative to prayers and sacrifices offered to God. Paul classifies the giving of financial aid to believers as an act of service or worship to God.

#### 4. *God is thanked for the gift of His Son through whom all other graces are made available (v 15).*

Having extolled the grace of God throughout these last verses, it is only appropriate that Paul would thank God for the gift that made His grace to us possible. God gave His Son to pay the price of our sin. Those who believe receive new life in Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. Having not withheld His Son, He does not withhold any other good gift. The wonderful work of grace in the lives of the Corinthians is based upon that one gift of God.

As a result of their generosity, the Corinthians themselves would be enriched and God would be praised through thanksgiving. Some of us may need to be challenged with this broader picture. Being generous goes beyond helping the other person. My generosity will effect my spiritual and material well-being and it will contribute to the worship of God. These truths should broaden and elevate my thinking about being generous to other believers in need.