

## Expressing Our Thanks to God

2 Corinthians 9:15

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** In the text for our lesson, Paul expresses his deep thanks to God for the liberal giving of the brethren at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9).
- A. Recall Paul had commanded the brethren concerning this in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”
- B. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul commends the brethren of “the churches of Macedonia” (8:1-7) for their “liberality” in giving this “gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”
- C. Paul praised the Macedonian churches as an example for the brethren at Corinth and urges them to “abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.” (2 Cor. 8:7)
- D. **\*\*** Note Paul describes their opportunity to give as a “grace” (God’s unmerited favor).
- (1) There are so many ways in which this is true (e.g., **Acts 20:35**: “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, **‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”).
  - (2) Paul also reminds them that such giving for needy saints (in this case those in Judea) glorifies God (2 Cor. 8:19).
  - (3) Paul sends Titus to receive their gift which was “proof of your love” (2 Cor. 8:24).
  - (4) Paul commends their liberal giving also “stirred up” the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia to also give liberally (2 Cor. 9:1-2).
  - (5) Paul then encourages the brethren at Corinth to follow through with their giving so that he would not “be ashamed of this confident boasting” (2 Cor. 9:4).
  - (6) Paul reminds them to be liberal, and be “not grudgingly,” (2 Cor. 9:6) in their giving “for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).
  - (7) Paul closes this section of encouragement insofar as giving is concerned by reminding the brethren such giving gives us the grand opportunity to glorify God (2 Cor. 9:13).
- E. **\*\*** And, quite importantly it gives us an occasion to be thankful to God: **2 Cor. 9:15**: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”
- (1) We need to be thankful to God for the opportunity and ability to give to those in need, because when we do, we imitate God (i.e., He has given so much to us!).
  - (2) But, even more importantly, it gives us another reminder and opportunity to thank God for the greatest gift of all: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!
  - (3) The eminent Bible commentator Albert Barnes describes it this way: **\*\***  
“Your benefactions are indeed valuable; and for them, for the disposition which you have manifested, and for all the good which you will be enabled thus to accomplish, we are bound to give thanks to God. All this will excite the gratitude of those who shall be benefitted. But how small is all this compared with the great gift which God has imparted in bestowing a Saviour! That is unspeakable. No words can express it, no language convey an adequate

description of the value of the gift, and of the mercies which result from it.” (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft)

- F. I think it is most significant that when we give joyfully and liberally to others we are imitating the character of God.
2. **3** How much do you give? Data based on 2011 federal tax returns (only includes returns of taxpayers who itemized charitable giving):
- A. Highest AGI: Connecticut (\$83,308), charitable giving (\$3,545) only 4.2% of AGI.
  - B. Lowest AGI: Mississippi (\$40,932), charitable giving (\$4,786) or 11.7% of AGI.
  - C. Indiana: AGI, \$48,893, charitable giving, \$3,511 (7.2% of AGI).
  - D. **\*\*** Data also shows poorer people give a greater percentage of income to charity (data from *The Atlantic*, March 2013). Americans in:
    - (1) The top 20% of earnings donated an average of 1.3% of their income to charity.
    - (2) The bottom 20% of earnings donated an average of 3.2% of their income to charity (over twice as much by percentage).
  - E. **\*\*** We know there are some gifts money cannot buy: e.g., you can't buy time or love.
  - F. We also know the greatest gift we will ever receive was the one who died on a cross nearly two thousand years ago.
    - (1) That gift, from God's grace, was the greatest gift any of us will ever receive.
    - (2) It is the gift that changed our eternity.
    - (3) There is no price that we can put upon that wonderful gift (Matt. 16:26).
    - (4) Paul's words, "*Thanks be to God,*" don't seem adequate for all God has done for us.
  - G. **\*\*** There is a wonderful old hymn whose first verse goes like this:

<b>I Gave My Life For Thee</b> (Frances R. Havergal, 1858) "I gave My life for thee, My precious blood I shed, That thou might ransomed be,	And raised up from the dead; I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou giv'n for Me? I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou giv'n for Me?"
---	---

    - (1) Note the verse ends with a question, "What hast thou giv'n for Me?" Great question!
    - (2) We need to always think about what God has given to us and what it took for God to provide His greatest gift.
    - (3) We need to contemplate where would we be without God's greatest gift.
    - (4) Those thoughts should also lead us to contemplate "What have I given to God?"
3. **4** From one perspective "God doesn't need anything." God is God. He doesn't even need us.
- A. Even though that's true, He did make us and He did so for a reason, for a purpose.
  - B. In response to His marvelous grace there are things we ought to give God. Here's a short list of how we might express our thanks to God.

## II. DISCUSSION:

**Thankfulness toward should motivate us to...**

1. **5** Give God our hearts:

A. He wants us to want Him; we are to love Him with **all** we are.

**Matt. 22:36-38:** *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” 37 Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, and with **all** your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment.”*

B. That’s a relatively easy task when everything in our world is going our way; when we are “on top of the mountain.”

(1) When there’s plenty of money in the check book.

(2) When all the dominoes seem to be falling our way.

(3) When our relationships, our jobs, our health, etc. are “hitting on all cylinders.”

C. But it’s not so easy when everything is going wrong; when everything we touch breaks; when everything we try to do turns into a pile of manure!

(1) But, even in these times God expects us to love Him “with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, and with **all** your mind.”

(2) In such times it can be very hard to summon the strength and courage of heart to love Him, but it is even more important to do so in tough times!

(3) We especially need to remind ourselves of His great gifts during our hard times.

D. **\*\*** We should never put God on the back burner or in second place in our thoughts or decisions.

(1) Every decision, every action, every thought ought to be made based upon God.

(2) Paul said, “...we also have as our ambition...to be pleasing to Him.” (2 Cor. 5:9; NASV)

E. So, whether we are:

(1) On a “high” (e.g., As when Job was restored (“*the LORD increased all that Job had twofold...The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning*”; Job 42:10, 12).

(2) Or as low as a “snake’s belly” (e.g., When Job had lost his family and his wealth and was “*sore with boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head...and took potsherd to scrape himself...*”; Job 2:7-8).

F. Let us do as Job: Don’t “*Curse God and die!*” and “*not sin with his lips*” (Job 2:9-10).

G. Let us give God **all** ourselves **all** the time!

### **Thankfulness toward should motivate us to...**

#### 2. **6** Give our talents back to God:

A. We ought to give back to God the talent He has given us; with interest! Matt. 25:14-30

B. We all have some talent, something to contribute to the good of all.

☛ Some can sing wonderfully.

☛ Some can preach.

☛ Some can teach.

☛ Some are good at encouraging others.

☛ Some can write, some can draw, some can decorate, some can figure out electronics.

- ☛ Some are gifted at conversation, some have gone to school, some have years of experience and have become very good at what they do.
- C. \*\* The question isn't if we have talents, but if we are willing to give them back to the Lord?
- (1) We all need to be asking ourselves, "How can I take my talents and use them for the good of the Lord and His kingdom?"
  - (2) Many bury their talent in their secular work, fail to use their abilities for the kingdom.
  - (3) Don't simply use your abilities to make a living; use them to make a life, an eternal life.
  - (4) Find ways to do what we do well for the glory of God!
- ☛ Five talent and two talent men (used their talents): *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" (Matt 25:23).*
  - ☛ One talent man (hid his talent): *"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant,' ...cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matt 25:26, 30).*

### **Thankfulness toward should motivate us to...**

#### **3. 7 Give God some of the time He's given us:**

- A. Many of the gifts God has given us, we all do not have, or don't have in equal measure (e.g., My preaching, writing, debating skills versus Larry Hafley's; scope of my work as an evangelist versus Rody Gumpad's.).
- B. But there is one gift all of us are given in equal measure: **time**.
  - (1) You and I both have 7 days each week, 24 hours each day, and 365 days each year.
  - (2) In that regard, time is the great "equalizer" among men.
- C. \*\* In reality, my time is never truly "my time," and "your time" is never truly "your time."
  - (1) My time and your time are always God's time.
  - (2) Each second, each minute, each hour, each day, each year is a gift from God.
  - (3) We can spend the day making a living, watching TV, doing what we want to do, or we can spend some of that time strengthening ourselves and others, praying, sharing the Gospel, growing in the faith, etc.
  - (4) No wonder Paul wrote: **Eph. 5:15-16:** *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time [NASV: "making the most of your time"], because the days are evil."*
- D. Days seem to fly by; we are on the last day of 2017; tomorrow we'll have to get used to writing "2018" instead of "2017."
  - (1) Where has the year gone? (Talk about my filing system for my sermons.)
  - (2) It's moved along just the same "speed" as all the other years.
- E. It's us and our schedules that seem to make things so busy and packed.
  - (1) We need to take an inventory of 2017: How much time did we devote to Bible study? Prayer? Sharing the gospel with our family? Sharing it with others? Visiting the sick and spiritually weak?

- (2) We carved out plenty of time for TV, surfing the net, video games, etc., etc. Why didn't we carve out time for the things that echo down through all eternity? Priorities!
- F. Don't make the lame excuse, "I didn't have enough time." Others, with the same exact amount of time, took the time for these more important things.
- G. **\*\*** Let us therefore, make it our most important goal to give back a greater measure of the time God has given us.
  - (1) Carve out more of our time for God and for working in His kingdom.
  - (2) You won't regret it! 1 Cor. 15:58: "...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

**Thankfulness toward should motivate us to...**

4. **8** Give ourselves to His kingdom:

- A. We ought to give ourselves to the kingdom before all else: **Matt. 6:33**: "But seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
  - (1) Where are the next generation of preachers going to come from? From us.
  - (2) Where's the next batch of elders and deacons going to come from? From us. Next batch of Bible class teachers? From us.
- B. Success at this requires a conscious effort on our part; a conscious use of our time, energy, and devotion.
  - (1) Things of this importance and magnitude don't "just happen."
  - (2) I cringe when I hear parents boast of their sons/daughters graduating and new job in some big city with a big salary. But no mention of their spiritual condition or growth.
  - (3) I wonder if we ever talk to our sons about preaching; our daughters and sons about the importance of spiritual growth over career and size of their salary.
  - (4) There are many great preachers in the kingdom today, but who will replace them?
  - (5) If it's a question of money and ease of work, ease of life; few will seek to be a preacher, or an elder or a deacon; or a preacher's wife (elder or deacon's wife too!).
- C. But if we see the great value of helping people out spiritually and changing lives for eternity, then this is something we ought to be talking about around the dinner table.
  - (1) We should put our sons/daughter around good preachers (gospel meetings!).
  - (2) We don't need "programs" and "entertainment" for our "young people" (e.g., trips to King's Island, Reds baseball games, picnics at McCormick's Creek).
  - (3) We need to put them in situations where they rub shoulders w/faithful preachers, solid elders, with mature Christians who truly "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."
  - (4) Even more importantly, they desperately need to see their parents "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:4; e.g., parents that put attending services and serving God above all else.)
  - (5) Parents with the attitude a team of wild horses won't keep them from services!
  - (6) Parents that serve when and where they can.
  - (6) Parents teaching classes; parents singing with all their might, etc.

- D. It won't be long till we'll be handing over the "keys" to the next generation.
  - (1) It drives much of my preaching!
  - (2) It won't be long until our "nests are empty"!
  - (3) It won't be long till our influence on our children will be greatly diluted.
- E. Are we giving them an adequate foundation on which to build their lives spiritually?
  - (1) Are we making the church better than how we found it?
  - (2) What are **you** doing to make this church strong, faithful and growing? What spiritual legacy are you leaving the next generation?
  - (3) **\*\*** Or, are we handing over a mess to the next generation? As the song says, "What hast thou giv'n me?"

**Thankfulness toward should motivate us to...**

5. **9** Be thankful to Him:

- A. We ought to give God a continual "thank you," for all He's done for us.

**1 Thess. 5:18:** "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

**Col. 3:17:** "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

**Phil. 4:6-7:** "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

**Psa. 100:4-5:** "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations."

**Rom. 1:20-21:** "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

- B. **\*\*** Just think of how much richer, better, and hopeful our lives are because of God!

- (1) He "choose us in Him...that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4).
- (2) We have "through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7).
- (3) He has made us "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).
- (4) We will be raised one day and He "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body..." (Phil. 3:21).

**Rev. 22:1-5:** "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

C. \*\* Express our thanks to God:

- (1) By saying it to Him (**Heb. 13:15**: "...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.>").
- (2) By striving each day to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).
- (3) By living righteously ("cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."; 2 Cor. 7:1).

D. The best way we express our thanks is by shaping our hearts and our character to the heart and character of the Savior! Matt. 6:33

E. Is that the top priority in your life? Is that at your life's center or just on the periphery?

### III. CONCLUSION: 10

1. God gave us the very best; He gave all (**Rom. 8:32**: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?").
2. What have we given to God?
3. If we are not giving back to Him with all our might, we will ultimately regret it for all eternity!
4. But, if we do give back to Him with all our might, we will never regret it!  
**I Cor. 15:58**: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."
5. What will it be for you? Eternal regret? Or, eternal satisfaction? Only you can make the choice.
6. It's "decision time"! What's your decision?

Adapted from an article (**Jump Start # 2002**) by Roger Shouse.