

**We Are to Enjoy the Goodness That Comes from the Hand of God
but must Be Careful to Seek to Please Him.**

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, [25] for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? [26] To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Eccles. 2:24-26.¹

All of the good things of life come from God's hand - we are to enjoy his goodness.
A clear and plain statement from God's word. Paul also expressed this thought:

1 Tim. 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Personal wealth - the accumulation of this world's goods is not intrinsically evil. It is clear from His word that He does distribute this world's goods so that He gets the glory when rich, godly men show generosity. The good Samaritan is an example of this. He could not have instructed the innkeeper to "charge it" to his account if he were not blessed with some wealth.² Paul gives some light in the matter of diversity of material gain in II Corinthians 8:14. Paul addresses the inequality of wealth as an opportunity for giving in service to the Lord which results in equality in wealth. By wealth here I am not referring to having a great abundance of money - millions of dollars - but to an adequate income that allows us to share with others who do not.

**The Balance of God's Goodness and the Believer's Generosity
Brings Glory to the Lord and Further Blessing to the Believer.**

Personal wealth is not an accident of life, nor is it the result of personal achievement of the believer. God is sovereign over all believers and that includes his personal wealth. To assume any other viewpoint is unbiblical. Listen to Paul's word of encouragement to the Philippians after they had exercised generosity toward Paul.

I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. [19] And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philip. 4:18-19

It is clear from reading this passage in its context that the Philippians had participated in an act of worship and that it was pleasing to the Lord. Thus we see in this passage and by comparing it to the passage in 1 Timothy 6:17 that there is to be a balance between the

¹ All passages are in NIV unless otherwise noted.

² Luke 10:35.

believers who have been blessed with an abundance and those who are needy. But let us look further in this passage of Philippians. To gain insight we need to read the context as found in verses 14 - 19. Here we see these points in the distribution of wealth from the Philippians to Paul in his need:

- The Philippians had become full partners³ with Paul in his need (called troubles in the NIV, verse 14). This is also reflected by the Macedonian passage in 2 Corinthians 8:5⁴
- The Philippian church, though immature, shared with Paul in the matter of **giving and receiving** (verse 15).
- Here's an important emphasis: Paul was not so much looking for the "nearest 'warm body'" that would give him what he needed, but was looking for the Lord's blessing on the Philippians as the result of their worshipful giving. To illustrate this he uses a bankers phrase here where the Philippians were to receive an overflowing return of interest on their investment (verse 17).
- Verse 18 states the principle of the Lord's equality of wealth among believers. Paul, in his need, super-abounds in receiving the Philippians' gift.⁵ The Philippians have given a sacrifice that is accepted and well-pleasing to the Lord. For which they will receive "credit."
- When these principles are employed God's promise is that he will provide logistical support to the generous giver in all his needs (verse 19).

Another illustration of the generosity of believers.



The believers were destitute and yet gave to the needs of others. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 8, 9 regarding a remarkable gift that the Macedonian church had collected for the poor church at Jerusalem. Macedonia was not wealthy in terms of money. Macedonia had been victimized by several conquests - to the point that they were considered for special status by the Roman government for tax abatement. They did, however, have an abundance of

³ **sugkoinoneo** from **sun** (with)+**koinoneo** (to share,in company with) means to co-participate in resulting in the communication of a mutually fulfilled goal.

⁴ And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 2 Cor. 8:5, KJV. Here the Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord, and then to Paul and his vision and finally to the needs of the church at Jerusalem.

⁵ "I have received full payment..." verse 18.

generosity.⁶ God used their wealth of generosity to help the poor church in Jerusalem by taking up a collection that amazed Paul. Paul mentioned an interesting principle that I would like to call "[The Principal of Inequality of Wealth Being Corrected by Generosity.](#)" Here's how I think God intends generosity to work.

An Old Testament Illustration of Spiritual Generosity.

Please turn with me to Deuteronomy 15 particularly verses 4, 7, 8 and 11. Regarding the poor in Israel God states to the Israelites who were materially blessed by Him:

- It was God's plan that there were to be no poor in Israel because He was going to be the source of their prosperity (verse 4).
- However, there will be poor in the land for various reasons including disobedience to the Lord and those with means (wealth, meaning material blessing from the Lord) should adopt a generous attitude toward these people (verse 7 and context).
- This attitude is illustrated by the command not to be hardhearted and tightfisted. Rather, the Israelite is to be "openhanded" giving to the poor (verses 7, 10 and 11).

This whole section is very interesting because it deals with some dynamic, spiritual principles that I think are still in effect today. Here's what I think the principle is regarding those who are materially blessed versus those who are not. God will provide for his people through this inequality to equality principle by the generous attitude of the materially blessed so that even people who are poor will be provided for. This spiritual service is hinted at in Romans 12:6 - 8. Here, particularly in verse 8, Paul specified the spiritual gift of giving - not so much to the church coffers but **to the needy** "... if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously..."⁷ Can this be applied to the church economy? Yes it can. This is certainly God's way of giving. Not some legalistic way where the poor must contribute a fixed amount to the church in order to fulfill some "spiritual duty" of giving.

Biblical Giving Is a Matter of Spiritual Motivation, Not Legalistic Duty.

First, let us see an example of biblical giving from the Old Testament - The Collection of Materials for the Tabernacle.

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. Exodus 25:2, KJV.

The stated purpose for this collection was so that the Tabernacle could be built and that the presence of God would be among the Israelites. The key here is that it was not based on the obligatory system of tithing but on the basis of **giving spontaneously**⁸ as a soldier would

⁶ Read II Corinthians 8:2.

⁷ Romans 12:8b.

⁸ Heb **nadab** to volunteer as a soldier, to be impelled, to offer freely (without strings attached).

volunteer on a dangerous mission. The Israelites did give and give and give - so much so that Moses told them to *stop* giving:

So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work [5] and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." [6] Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, [7] because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work. Exodus 36:4-7

This principle of spiritual giving was to be carried over to the New Testament church. Paul was to develop this concept in 2 Corinthians and other passages to show that the generous attitude of the believer who is in right relationship with the Lord was the biblical approach to giving.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [7] Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. [8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Cor. 9:6-8

Let's conclude this lesson by observing these points as drawn from this passage:

- There is promise of blessing from giving on the basis of spirituality.
- The heart of the giving believer is to be generous, not stingy.
- It is the inner motivation and planning of each believer that sets the amount and nature of giving - not rules or a fixed amount. Cheerful giving in this passage means that the believer has considered the need, his potential for giving and God's promise of logistical support in his life and is pleased to give what he has determined ***in his heart*** to give.
- The reward by biblical giving is God's gracious reward by causing grace to super-abound in the believer's life in ***all things, at all times, having all that he needs, having super-abundance in every good work (the emphasis here that every believer is to have a life of ministry, of service to the Lord).***

So personal wealth should be used in such a way that it is an opportunity for service to the Lord. Psalm 112 describes the man who is blessed by the Lord in wealth. Verse 9 says that he disperses his wealth abroad to the poor.⁹ In the final analysis the wealth that we might have is not our but is His and we are stewards of it. Yes, we are to enjoy the good that the Lord gives us but, more importantly, part of God's economy in the Christian community is that we are to be generous with the wealth that He gives us so that those who are in need are blessed by Him through us as we serve Him in whole-hearted service (read Romans 12:1, 2, 8 and the context).

⁹ Psalm 112:9 He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor. Also quoted in II Cor. 9:9.