

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 8:10-15

GETTING FROM GIVING



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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APRIL 10, 2022 (PM)

INTRODUCTION

How does giving to others benefit me? Or to put it another way, **What do I get when I give to others?** Is that a bad question. It sounds awful, doesn't it? What kind of Christian would ask that question? Christians shouldn't give to get. We should give without ever asking, or even thinking, about any benefit that we might get from giving. Right?

Wrong! In 2 Corinthians 8:10-15, Paul motivates Christian giving by listing the benefits to the givers. **And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you** (10). Ideally we should give without a thought about what we might get back in return. However, God knows our weakness and is willing to motivate us to give to others by what we get from giving to others. So, we're not only allowed to ask the question, **What do I get when I give to others?** God also answers us.

BACKGROUND

In 2 Corinthians, Paul is teaching us how to get strength through weakness and how to strengthen the weak. In chapter 8, he's been teaching us how to strengthen the financially weak.

- 8:1-8 Give because the Macedonians gave
- 8:9 Give because Jesus gave
- 8:10-15 Give because you benefit



What's the first benefit I get by giving?



1. GIVING ASSURES OUR HEARTS (10-12)

(10) And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. (11) So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. (12) For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

Our hearts desire to give

There can be doing without desiring to do. We can do things we don't really want to do. For example, our parents ask us to tidy our rooms or do our homework, and we do it, but we have no desire to do it. "Our heart is not in it," we might say.

The Corinthians not only gave, they wanted to give. It was 'work' that they really wanted to do. They were blessed not only with doing but with desiring to do. Their hearts really were in it.

Our hearts are ready to give

We can desire to give but not be ready to give. We can want to do something but not yet. We delay, we procrastinate, we put off, we find other things to do first.

The Corinthians, though, not only wanted to give, they were ready to give. They were primed, prepared, and ready to give. In fact so great was their passion to give and their preparedness to give that Paul said the amount they gave was not that important. **For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have** (12). God wasn't looking for how much they gave but at how much they wanted to give and were ready to give. Willingness increased the value of their gift.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Thank God if you desire to give and are ready to give. These are rare finds in the human heart and an evidence that God has worked in our hearts. It's not natural or normal to want to give what we have to others, especially to strangers that we will never meet.

Ask God for more desire more than more dollars. God is not counting our dollars and cents as much as our desire and readiness. God does not ask "How much are you giving?" but "How much do you want to give?" We may not be able to give any more money but we can give with more desire and readiness. Often, the more we desire to give the more God will give us to give.

GOD DELIGHTS IN DESIRES
MORE THAN DOLLARS



So all that matters is the desire?
No, desires must be backed up with actions.



2. GIVING BOOSTS OUR WITNESS (10-11)

(10) This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. (11) So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

We start our giving

The Corinthians not only started to desire, they started to do. They desired and then they did. A year earlier their desires had translated into doing, their aims had become action.

We continue our giving

It's easy to start giving but not so easy to continue giving. Even non-Christians can give to the needy in response to emotional appeals. But it usually doesn't last. Christian giving continues when others' emotional responses give up and give way. This difference between Christian and non-Christian giving was behind Paul's argument here. Many start giving but Christians continue giving when the emotions have faded.

We complete our giving

Christians not only start giving, and continue giving, they complete giving. They make commitments and keep them. When the feelings fade, the finances don't. When obstacles arise, Christians get up and over them rather than give up before them. When circumstances change the desire and readiness don't. Less income may mean less giving for a time and giving over a longer time until they complete their commitment.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Give to witness. The Church's giving is a large part of the Church's witness. It's a witness to the community that the givers belong to, and especially to the community of the receivers.

Give until needs are met. When the media, the NGO's, and the celebrities have moved on to the next tear-jerking disaster, the Christian community stays, continues, and completes the work even with less resources.

GIVING MONEY IS PART
OF GOING ON MISSION



What if I give and then end up needy myself?
We'll enjoy being receivers from other givers.



3. GIVING UNITES OUR FAMILY (13-15)

(13) For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness (14) your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. (15) As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

Our abundance supplies others' needs

God could arrange things so that all believers and churches get what they need directly from him. Then, no person would need another person and no church would need any other church. We would all exist in our own individual and independent silos. Instead, he's distributed resources unevenly so that churches need other churches and believers need other believers. He calls believers and the church to even things out so that each has enough, just as he did directly with the manna in the wilderness (Ex. 16:18).

Others' abundance supplies our needs

There always comes a time when givers become receivers and receivers become givers. That reciprocity is sometimes financial and often spiritual. For example, many wealthy countries and churches receive spiritual benefit and blessings from poorer churches in poor countries. We give money to them and they give us their prayers, teaching, examples, faithfulness, songs, etc. This unites rich and poor churches, Jewish and Gentile believers, Western and Eastern believers, etc.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

God unites his people through giving. This is more about equity than equality. It's not enforced social justice through excessive taxation or confiscation that only embitters and divides our society further. Rather, it's spiritual justice through the Gospel. It's freewill giving from free grace motives. Pure communism and pure capitalism both destroy individuals and communities. But pure Christianity frees individuals, breaks down walls, reconciles divided people, and builds community through giving.

God unites his people through receiving. Look for opportunities to receive from others. This is one of the reasons why we show videos or have reports during the collection time in our services. It's our way of receiving spiritually from those we give to financially. We're all givers and all receivers so that we're all united.

GIVE AND RECEIVE
TO SHARE AND UNITE



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

- **Gospel:** The Gospel is about receiving alone, but that receiving is never alone. We are saved by receiving, but we prove our salvation by giving. We are saved by faith without works, but we are assured by works out of faith.
- **Jesus:** Christ was motivated to give for the same reasons. His giving assured his heart, boosted his witness, and united his family. He was not only willing to give but to receive as well. He met needs and had his needs met.
- **Prayer:** Fair God, you have been more than fair to me, therefore help me to be more than fair to others.
- **Church:** When we set budgets, we keep them, we meet them, we desire and we do.
- **Monday:** Assure your faith with the desire to give and by keeping your Sunday commitments and promises.
- **Heaven:** In heaven we will fully and forever see how much we gave and its results, and how much we received and its results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What benefits have you had from giving?
2. In what ways has this message increased your assurance of faith?
3. How can you increase the value of your giving without increasing your giving?
4. How have you seen giving help your mission or the church's mission?
5. What's the difference between social justice and the spiritual justice in this passage?
6. How have you received spiritually from those you've supported financially?

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