***Grace Giving and Prosperity  
Romans 15:22-29  
RO189-02***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 15. We have been looking at Romans 15:22-29. Our subject is "To Rome By Way of Jerusalem;" and this is Segment Number 4.

**Grace Age Giving**

As we have indicated, God's work on earth is done under His direction. God's work on earth done under His direction will receive His financial provisions. That is a basic fact of life. God's work on earth, done under His direction, will always receive his financial provision.

This monetary support, however, will come from Christians who are practicing the Doctrine of Grace Giving. The spiritual Christian stores treasures in Heaven for himself through his grace giving to God's work. The financial support of God's work by a church age believer is a spiritual sacrifice, which God says is well pleasing to Him.

Church Age giving, we must understand right up front, is not based upon or related to the tithing system of the Mosaic Law under Judaism. If you find yourself in a church or group of Christians who talk about tithing as the church age way of supporting the work of God, you should flee them. That is a key factor. You can tell a great deal about the spiritual quality of an individual believer by the way he handles his money. You can tell a great deal about a church as a group, a church congregation, a church as an organization, by its principle of giving. If it talks about tithing, that church is going to be wrong in a lot of other things as well. They have not caught the distinctiveness of the Grace Age, and that will cost you a great deal of tears of eternity.

10% of the Jews earnings belong to God. The remaining 90%, however, belong to the Jew to use as he pleases. In the Church Age, a dramatic change has been made. The Word of God makes it clear that 100% of the Christian's earnings belongs to God, who then guides him through the Holy Spirit in the use of that which he possesses legitimately for himself and also for the work of God. That is a great distinction. You talk to the average church member; he's never heard that. He doesn't have the foggiest notion how dramatically different the relationship of a Christian and his money is to God and a Jew and his money was to God. The Jew only had to account for 10%; the rest he was home free with. The Christian has to account for all 100%.

And I can assure you that the computer system of Heaven is always going to be right on target. It's never going to get blown out and it's going to have a completely accurate record of accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ with the massive funds that God gave to you and how you use them relative to yourself and to His work: how you squandered them, how you used it as seed to be sown for multiplied spiritual blessing. You will account for that. It would be grossly unfair and incompetent and derelict of me if I did not alert you to the fact that the records of what God has deposited with you is going to be accounted for by you. Just as when you deposit money in a bank, you make sure that they are accountable to you for what they have done with your money.

So, the Church Age believer is in fact what the Bible calls a steward, or a banker, holding in trust the money which God gives him. Church Age giving is Grace Giving so therefore, it is non-legalistic and it must be completely voluntary. You see, that in itself eliminates the tithing system; it can't be voluntary if there's a percentage that you must produce.

God asks Christians to decide in their own minds in the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit how much they want to invest in God's work. And indeed, you are free to invest zero. That's what "grace" means. "Grace" means you can destroy yourself if you choose to do so. You are free to follow the good course or the bad course. Grace lets you do your own thing. You only have to account, as a priest, to God Himself. So, God's method is for you. In your own mind, in consultation with your dwelling Holy Spirit to decide how much you want to invest in God's work. God does not want any pressures put on Christians to give to the Lord's work.

And that is why we do not even pass an offering plate at Berean Church. It's a non-pressure situation. Passing an offering plate, always out of the corner of your eye, you see the guy who's not giving and you see the one who is giving. I've told you before how I was reared as a child in a denominational system where it was unthinkable for anybody to sit in church and not put something into the offering plate when it came by. It was unthinkable. It just wasn't done.

I remember to this day the traumatic Sunday when I was not sitting with my parents and they had not given me any of the offering. The offering plate came by and I saw these men coming down with these plates, getting closer to me. I'm 8 years old and wringing my hands because I know that you got to do something when that plate comes by. So, very quickly, I devised a plan. And as the plate passed by me, I dip my hand in it like I was pretending to put something in. The usher did a double take. He thought I'd snitched something out I think. But at least I had covered my tracks I felt before God and man to allow that offering plate to go by with no response on my part.

I didn't know the Doctrine of Grace Giving, that it begins with the intention and the desire to give. So, probably I covered myself that way anyhow. Grace Giving is non-pressure all the way. God has a great love, in fact, for the Christian who gives gladly. God always blesses and rewards the non-compulsive giving of a positive believer. God always blesses that.

I do not tell you, like the con men on TV tell you, that if you invest in God's work it will be like seed and you will get more money back. That is not true; the Bible never promises a Christian that he will be wealthy, never. To the Jews, yes, but not to the Christian. All God says to the Christian is, 'I'll keep you from dying. I'll give you enough food and I'll give you the warmth; I'll give you the clothes, give you the shelter, so that you can serve me. I'll supply your essentials. I'll give you logistical grace. I'll keep you supplied. And for some of you, I may even give more.' But God says that he is delighted by the Christian who gives without compulsion because he is a positive believer and he loves to give.

The apostle Paul sent the letter of 2 Corinthians, which we've been looking at, with Titus to the Christians in Corinth. And in 2 Corinthians, he lays out the Doctrine of Church Age Grace Giving. The Christians in Corinth have asked to share in contributing to the Jerusalem relief fund, which was being collected by Paul from his various churches to relieve the famine conditions of the suffering Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

A year, however, has passed by since the Corinthians expressed an intention of sharing in this fund, and nothing has been done. So, in 2 Corinthians 8-9, to which you should now turn, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul tells the believers how they should go about gathering their part of the Jerusalem relief fund. He encourages them to get on with it. In the process of explaining to them how to collect the money and encouraging them to do so, he has laid out for us the totally different doctrine of collecting money for God's work under the Church Age in contrast to the Jewish age.

Paul has inspired many other churches in Macedonia to give by telling of the zealous intentions expressed by the Corinthians to give. Paul says, 'I'm going to be very embarrassed when these representatives from Macedon who are from very poor churches but who have given to the limits of their means and even beyond it. I'm going to be very embarrassed when they come down with their offering and meet us here to go on to Jerusalem and they get here to the rich churches in Corinth and we find that you people haven't done anything.'

The Macedonians, Paul says, even did more than just give their money, they knew where grace giving begins. He said, first of all, they gave their lives to the will of God and to the service of God. Then it followed very easily that they generously gave their money, even though they were poor people.

And when you talk about grace giving, you see how hard it is to promote grace giving among the congregation of Christians. It's easy to hit him with tithing. It's easy to plaster posters all around and give inspirational talks about tithing. It's easy to get some Christian businessmen to stand up and say 'I started tithing my money and boy, did I ever become rich.' So, everybody charges out to do that, to make a deal with bribing God. But what you have to say to people is, first of all, 'You look yourself in the mirror and you hand your life over to the living God. [and say] "From this moment on, I do what you want me to do. My life is for your service. Yes, I have a good job. Yes, I earn money. Yes, I have reserves. But all that is Yours. I'm Your steward and I will use it as I will use my life for Your purposes."' That kind of a Christian is a gem in the crown of the living God, and he does not forget your service of love. And that is the kind of Christian that delights the heart of God.

The Macedonian Christians understood that if they gave themselves, they wouldn't hold their money back from God. Paul wants the Corinthian Christians to abound in the spiritual virtue of financing God's work because they abounded in so many other virtues, they should not lack in this one. The Lord Jesus Christ impoverished Himself in order to obey the will of God and to make all believers spiritually wealthy. "He," Paul says, "is our inspiration for our financial support." It is grace giving which enables God's people also to equalize among themselves the necessities for life that believers need. And when Christians give to the work of the Lord, the local church has finances to help out believers who may be in need of the very necessities of life. The apostle is taking the Jerusalem relief fund, along with several other representatives to the elders, the local pastor-teachers in the various churches in Jerusalem. He is going to vouch for the delivery of these funds and for their proper use. Those, he said, who have given generously to God's genuine work are in fact sowing rich rewards for themselves in Heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**God Supplies All Funds Necessary for Divine Good**

We begin this morning in 2 Corinthians 9:8. We have come to 2 Corinthians 9:8 on the principle of Grace Giving. In 2 Corinthians 9:8-11, Paul points out that God supplies the money for grace giving. Aha! You thought that you supplied it! You thought that your hard work supplied it. You thought that your cleverness of investment supplied it! No, God can wipe you out overnight. God could make you so physically incapacitated you can't earn a cent. It is God who supplies the money.

2 Corinthians 9:8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." It is God who enables a believer to exercise grace giving because God supplies that believer with the funds to do His work. God does provide money for divine good works, which He wants done. That's why He says, "I will provide you all sufficiency." That's the principle we enunciated. God's work done under His direction will have all sufficiency provided for its execution. If we have anything to give, it is because God has provided it.

Christians with ample funds, therefore, who have been prospered in life need to remember why you have it. God's grace is there He says, "For every good deed you may have in abundance," for what? Not just for your old age, not just for your children, not just for whatever else you may look for in the future that you want to do. You may have an abundance for every good divine good work. A divine good work is the product of God the Holy Spirit, working through you as a believer. So, God has the wealth and we are the channels to get it to where His work needs it.

In 2 Corinthians 9:9-11, he says, [verse 11] "as it is written, 'HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER.' We have an illustration that is pertinent at this point in the book of Psalms. Psalms 112:9, "He has given freely to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor." The word "horn" there standing for personal strength. "He has given freely to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor." This is the way God looks upon the Christian who is faithful in supporting God's work. "HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER." That's the verse he's quoting here, you see, in 2 Corinthians 9:9.

**Grace Giving Eternally Enriches the Giver**

In 2 Corinthians 9:10-11, Paul says, "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." Here the illustration is giving to the poor, who are in need, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. And this righteous act, He says, abides forever. His righteous act abides forever. How? Because at the Judgment Seat of Christ that act of investing your money for these who are in need, which is exactly what Paul is doing in this Jerusalem relief fund, is going to be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God in grace gives the Christian, the Christian sower, the seed money for producing blessings and gratitude in the lives of many.

And you see, here this famous little device that Oral Roberts began calling money "seed money," for you to sow for your personal return and benefit, when Oral Roberts says 'send me 100 dollars,' or our friend up in the Carrollton area here says, 'Send us 100 dollars and God will multiply it many times, that's your seed money,' he is talking about you making yourself rich.

But when the Bible talks about seed money, the God who provides you the seed, He provides the bread for your physical needs, will take and increase your harvest of righteousness. He's talking about your planting your seed money to produce spiritual returns in your life, the life of your family, the life of your children, the life of your friends, the life of your employees, the life of the people you influence. He is not talking about you taking your money, investing it so that you will be enriched financially. God never promises financial enrichment to a Christian. He gives us food to sustain the physical life. He gives us money to sustain our spiritual life through grace giving. Got it? He gives us food to sustain our spiritual life and He gives us the funds to get the food.

He gives us money when properly invested to sustain our spiritual life. Aha! You didn't think that was the way you sustain your spiritual life, did you? You sustain your spiritual life in a variety of ways? But one of them indeed is through the giving of your money, you can be the best student of the Word of God. You can be the deepest researcher of doctrines, but when it comes time to handling your money, that's the touchstone. That's the linchpin of the whole system. And the Christian who is stingy with his money in terms of God's work is the Christian toward whom God will be stingy in spiritual blessings and in rewards for all eternity.

The seed for crops which is not sown, is like money which is not placed in God's work. It cannot multiply in blessing for time and eternity. So, how much do you put in reserve? How much you pile up in the bank? How much do you put aside for your old age? How much is set aside for contingencies? That's a decision you have to make between you and God. But this is the guiding principle. Seed on the shelf does not reproduce; money in the bank does not reproduce spiritual blessing. It is when it is sown that the blessings come.

Grace giving increases your experiential righteousness because you have been faithful to God. And it also Paul says, produces great Thanksgiving from those whom it blesses. People rise up and call you blessed because of what your funds have made possible for them to have.

How many people write us through the mail and say, 'God bless the congregation of Berean Church? Your tapes have finally brought me into a relationship with God that's real and that my cup now finally really runs over!' Who's responsible for that? That is you people who have invested your money in the work of the Lord at Berean Church that has made that possible. And the thanksgiving and the gratitude expressed, for what, for spiritual benefits that are far more valuable to those people than any sums of money we could have given them or even the food that they might need or other necessities, though those must be provided as well. Paul is providing here for the physical needs of the Jerusalem Christians and the result of that is that the Jerusalem Christians are stimulated to praise God.

Using God's money as seed work will multiply blessings that you will be rewarded for at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God is able to supply the grace-oriented believer with an abundance of money to give. And the other thing about it is the spiritual capacity to do it. We have a lot of Christians in the Christian community who have the money to give. We don't have so many who've got the capacity to let it go. And you have to ask God for 2 things. Give me the resources to give and then give me the spiritual capacity to let go of the funds you have given me.

**The Effects of Grace Giving**

In 2 Corinthians 9:12-15, he talks about the effects of grace giving. 2 Corinthians 9:12, "For the ministry of this service [Supporting God's work with money] is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God." The Ministry of offering one's money to God's work is what is in view here. The reference here, of course, is specifically to this Jerusalem relief fund. "The ministry of this service" - this Greek word for service looks like this, it's the Greek word "leitourgia," l e i t o u r g i a, and "leitourgia" is the word for service, but it's the word specifically for a priestly service. When you give your money, you're acting as a priest. What is a priest do? He puts up offerings, presents sacrifices to God. And your money indeed is your sacrifice. Your money is the sacrifice of your substance. Your money is indeed an offering to God so that when he talks about a service, he is talking about you acting as a Christian priest. "For the ministry of this priestly service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, [in this case the starving Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.] but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God." The Corinthians' gifts have supplied the need for food of Jerusalem Christians and indeed it is the duty of Christians to feed believers who are starving. Just consult James 2:15-16 and 1 John 3:17-18. You will see that this is a Christian duty. You don't let a brother starve. You don't tell him, praise the Lord. You don't tell him to pray. You don't wish him well when he is hungry, you take care of his needs.

The Corinthians' gifts also resulted in abundant thanksgiving to God for the Jerusalem saints who are fed with this money. This thanksgiving is to whom? Thanksgiving to God. This word "thanksgiving" is the Greek word "eucharistia," which means gratitude, expression of gratitude to God. You see, it is directed to God. You want to give and be thanked? A person who has given his life to God never thinks about anybody thanking him for what he does in God's service. You would not dream of asking somebody to thank you for the fact that you made an offering that was such a dramatic impact in their lives that their heart welled up in praise to God. It is the Lord's glory for which we give. It is the Lord's glory that we pursue. You do not need to be thanked for the gifts that you give.

The great blessing of grace giving is indeed to hear God praised by other people and for God to be given the credit for your gift. That's the great thing: for people to praise God for the gifts and thank God for the fact that you are capable of doing that. God's money planted as seed produces a crop of divine good, which causes them a great expression of gratitude to God. It is a great honor as a Christian to be the instrument of bringing praise to God. What greater honor could be bestowed on any Christian than because you do something, God is praised; because you do something you're not glorified, but God is glorified. Do not think for one moment that that is not carefully recorded in Heaven.

2 Corinthians 9:13, "Because of the proof given by this ministry [this Jerusalem relief fund, they, the starving Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.] 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." A Christian's grace giving will prove his deep dedication, his obedience and his love toward God. Others are going to glorify God as they do this generous giving on the part of these grace-oriented Christians liberally giving. And the word "liberally" here in the Greek means "singleness of purpose." Somebody has a problem, God's work has a need, and you say I'm going to solve that. And singleness of purpose, you proceed to do it, whatever it takes. This demonstrates the genuineness, Paul says, of your confession of believing in Jesus Christ as Savior.

That's interesting. 'Oh, I'm so glad that God has saved me.' You stand up and you give a testimony. You praise God. You're glad that He has chosen you by His divine election. You appreciate the fact that you have been able to believe the gospel. Do you know what will document that? Paul says your liberal giving out of your means will document your profession of faith in Christ as Savior. It's documented it for the Macedonian Christians who didn't have a lot to give. Paul says we see your dedication to the gospel of Christ, and they will praise God in Jerusalem for that. They will also praise God because of the liberal offering which you have given as a result of that which is compatible with your saying that you're a child of God. Christian giving is going to strengthen the band of affection between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Eventually, these Corinthians, I'm glad to say, got on the stick and they gave very generously to the Jerusalem relief fund. And they gave, in fact, to all other areas of God's work. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, the apostle Paul points out this principle: "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." So that the Christians in Jerusalem we're going to suffer or they were going to honor and rejoice as Gentile Christians joined them in that situation.

**God's Grace Operating In Us Is What Produces All Good**

Incidentally, the word "contribution" here means "fellowship." The liberality of your contribution is exactly the same word that we talk about as fellowship, that very same word that is so dear to us. We talk about having Christian fellowship so that contributing to God's work, sharing with the needs of God's work is a great way of having fellowship with God and with His people. 2 Corinthians 9:14, Paul says, "while they also, [these Jewish Christians in Jerusalem] by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you." The Jerusalem Christians respond to the generosity of the Gentile Christians by praying for them. And the word for "prayer" here is that Greek word which means prayer for a specific, desperate need. That's interesting. The Christians of Jerusalem said 'We don't have money. But tell me, what is your need? What specific crises is in your life? What I can do is go to God in prayer, in your behalf,' and that is an invaluable contribution in return, praying in turn for the needs of their benefactors.

These Jerusalem Christians have an affectionate longing. Furthermore, now for fellowship with the Gentile Christians. These Gentiles are the very people that they once shunned. These Gentiles are the very people they once called dogs, which was an insult. These are the people now who have become very dear and very precious to them as they find that they are indeed one family in the body of Christ. They truly do have a basis of Christian fellowship. How is it demonstrated... with their money. When you demonstrate your fellowship with God and His people, indeed with how you act as His stewards.

So, grace giving is used by the Holy Spirit here to create a very godly emotional response. The reason that the Jewish Christians love the Gentile Christians is, of course, because of the super grace which they see functioning in the lives of the Gentiles. That's the liberality that he's talking about. Overflowing grace is the idea; they're not just moved by the money that was crucial to them, but they are also rejoicing in the fact that these people have demonstrated that they have such super grace capacity they can let go of their money. That's the thing that we rejoice. Yes, we are delighted when we get the funds we need and we may even get substantial funds for something. We are more delighted by the fact that we look at that person and say, 'isn't that great, that here is a Christian who has come to such super grace mountaintop maturity that he can actually release his money?' God's grace produces a capacity for love in the Christians, and this has resulted in intercessory prayer on the part of the others who have been benefactors. It is the grace of God operating in a believer which produces everything that is attractive in him. When people give their money, that's attractive, but it's the grace of God that does that.

So, super grace Christians, you see, and that's what he means when he says in 2 Corinthians 9:14, "surpassing grace of God." He's talking about super grace Christians, those who have built full spiritual maturity structure in their soul. These people he says are a joy to behold. They become the objects of our esteem, of our love, and our prayers because of how much they bless the work of God with the money that God has entrusted to them.

**"Thanks Be to God For His Indescribable Gift!"**

Then he closes this instruction on the doctrine of grace giving in 2 Corinthians 9:15 with a verse which is indeed very fitting at this Christmas time; "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." The great gift of God to mankind, which inspires all of our Christian giving is the sending of God's gift of His Son to this earth to be the Savior of the world. And the word here in the Greek language means that it is beyond description. How can you describe Jesus Christ? How can you describe the act of God the Father to take those of us who had no claim upon Him, had no right except a right to the Lake of Fire for all eternity, and that He looks down and He chooses you into the family of God.

Why not that nice next-door neighbor of yours who gives money to the United Fund? Why not that good person you are employed with, but who laughs at the Gospel and considers it foolishness? He's got as much education as you have; he's as smart as you are. He has as much human goodness pouring out of him as you do. Why is he bypassed? And it all begins with this gift that you cannot describe: the person of the son of God.

Paul closes his instruction on the Doctrine of Church Age Giving with praise to God for His grace gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world. The Father's gift of His Son to save us, then, is to be the frame of reference for our offerings back to His work. When you think about it that way, it is sure easy to give. The Father's gift of His Son, and all that that means to you for all eternity, is the basis upon which you make your decision in how much you do in you're giving. Who or what indeed can compare with our beautiful Savior! He is truly beyond description. So, what can we say except 'Thank you, Father, and please accept at best our paltry offering gifts in return?'

**Dangers and Blessings of Prosperity**

For those that God prospers, there are certain things that we should mention. There are dangers to prosperity and there are blessings to prosperity; first, the dangers.

**The Dangers of Prosperity**

1. Surplus funds enable us to do things which can remove us from the study of the Word of God and from prayer. Surplus funds enables you to have the freedom to do things that removes you from feeding upon the Word of God on a daily basis and keeps you from prayer. When you've done that, you've put yourself into a spiritual tailspin and eventually you will hit the ground.
2. Prosperity tempts us to place our trust in our money rather than in God. This is a false security and it in fact makes money your God. If you think that your future is secure because you have funds in the bank, you are a very foolish person. That can very quickly be taken from you. Your security of your future, the security of your old age is in the hands of the living God and no place else.
3. Prosperity opens the door for pleasures, the pleasures of plenty. When we have plenty, we set in motion, strangely enough, the spirit of greed for more: the love of money, the frantic miser, the slave of things, the loss of all contentment, the great emotional upsets. It's very strange, really, how when God prospers you and gives you plenty of money, you get on a high. Money becomes a drug.
4. I've often wondered why people who have vast sums of money are still killing themselves in ways other than investing for eternity. They have far and beyond what they usefully can use. It is the addiction of what the Bible calls the love of money which becomes the root of every kind of evil.
5. Prosperity faces the danger of your getting involved in activities with a circle of people who have no divine viewpoint values. When you have money, you are very tempted to be with people who have no divine viewpoint values. When you are poor, you tend to gravitate toward Christians. You find a mutual comfort and strengthening there. When you're prosperous, you start moving out into the world. Freedom from necessity can free you to invest yourself in things that are sinful.
6. Another hazard of prosperity is that your wealth can create false friendships. You yourself may want to have a status by being accepted into certain groups. People will give you deceitful words for their personal gain. If people think you have money, they become your great friends. But those who are truly your friends are going to be your friends whether you have money or not.
7. If you have money, you're tempted to indulge your kids, you're tempted to indulge your family so they become weak and irresponsible. You supply them with things that they should be hacking out for themselves in order to establish their own turf and their own sense of accomplishment.
8. The effects of the danger of prosperity includes bringing out your sin nature lust for power over people. That is a big problem. A Christian who has money is in a position where he can have a club over other people and that is unbecoming of a Christian. It makes you arrogant, pushy and abusive, especially at El Chicos with the waitresses. Because you're so high and mighty, you get pushy, arrogant and abusive.
9. One of the problems of prosperity is that it can destroy your spiritual maturity structure and thus put you on a road that loses potential eternal rewards. You become occupied with yourself instead of with Jesus Christ.
10. You may develop a guilt complex, as a matter of fact, because others have so little and you should not have a guilt complex because you're wealthy and other people are poor. That is contrary to the Word of God. If God has prospered you, He has prospered you because He wants you to act as a faithful, responsible steward of what He has given you. If God has prospered you, you should not have any intimidation over the fact that others have less. The Bible does not condemn a person being wealthy. The Bible does not condemn a Christian seeking to store up reserves of funds. What the Bible condemns is that when you have stored it, you have not used it as His steward for His glory to expand the work of God. That's what's condemned.

The Bible does not condemn you enjoying the fruits of your labors. Only the United States government does that. But the Bible does not condemn you enjoying the fruits of your labors. And if your labors produce extensive, gracious, prosperous fruit, then you're entitled to enjoy them. That is, between you and the Lord. Just avoid the old principle of get all you can and can all you get. That's bad philosophy and that's what the world does. God says, 'That brings judgment upon you.'

1. Finally, prosperity has the danger of bringing severe divine discipline on you because you misuse God's money and God's discipline is never any fun.

**The Blessings of Prosperity**

On the other hand, prosperity can be a great blessing.

1. When you have surplus funds, it enables you to do more in storing rewards in Heaven. That's one of the great advantages of having surplus prosperity: can you ever store treasures in Heaven!
2. Secondly, it gives you greater freedom to invest time in the study of the Word of God and in prayer and moving very quickly toward spiritual maturity. People who are always having to work, always tired, always exhausted, always right down to the crisis line, they find that they don't have much time for studying the Word of God, for listening to a tape, for spending time in prayer. It has to be a lick and a promise. Your money can be the blessing of giving you freedom to learn the Word and to pray.
3. Third, it enables you to come to the aid of the genuinely needy, to develop true biblical compassion. This is what the Bible says. Those of you who came out of the unsaved life as thieves, stop stealing, go to work, earn surplus so that you'll have your needs covered and you'll be in a position to help other believers who also have legitimate needs that you can help. It's nice to be able to come to the assistance of another Christian. Not only to give him something he essentially needs, but it's nice to come to another Christian and just do something kind for him: give him a gift, give him a present, give him something that he would be very happy to have, something that would bring some joy and blessing into his life. It's just nice to do things, kind things, happy things for people with your money.
4. One of the great things of prosperity is you are able to open the doors of communication of doctrine. This is the thing that people need above all else. You open the doors for the communication of the Word of God in a variety of ways. Those of you that support our Tape Ministry understand what I'm talking about. That is a door that you keep constantly wide open to any positive believer who wants access to the Word of God. You do it because of your financing. Wouldn't it be nice if we could expand that even further into other communication areas?
5. Having prosperity enables you as a Christian to have the opportunity to exercise humility, restraint, to put restraint on the lust pattern of the sin nature. It enables you to trust in God that enables you to give without strings. You just give because you're handing God back what is His to begin with.

I think it was one of the young men who was killed in Ecuador many years ago, the Wheaton College student, his name was Jim Elliot, that in expressing the motivation of his life, he said something to the effect, 'He is a fool who will not give what he cannot keep for that which can never be taken from him.' He is a fool who will not give that which he cannot keep in exchange for that which can never be taken from him! Well, he gave his life in Ecuador. He could not keep his life, but he gave his life. But what did he get? He got eternal glory and enrichment at the Judgment Seat of Christ that no one can take from him. That's the principle of the joy of being a prosperous person, the opportunity to give without strings, the opportunity to give what you will not keep to be invested where you can never lose it.

1. Being prosperous enables you to become a good steward of Jesus Christ in handling His money under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And that is great fun, for the Holy Spirit to give guidance in how you distribute your money.

I had a wealthy Christian businessman friend one time who used to say to me (On occasion, he would help me financially with Berean Church needs. He'd say,) 'I know when the Lord wants me to give. I hear the Joy Bells ringing in my soul.' I listened very carefully. I never heard them myself, but I'll take His Word for it that he heard them. But that was his way of expressing what, he was under the conviction, it was clear, of God. The Spirit was telling him what to do. And he was just a Christian who wasn't perfect, but he had a deep appreciation that he had wealth that came from God and he did very seriously seek to return it as God's good steward. And when he heard the Joy Bells, he felt at ease to invest in an area of the Lord's work.

1. Being prosperous enables us to be free to raise a great deal of praise and thanksgiving from others to God for what we do with our money. And that's no little thing for you to be the instrument of raising prayer and thanksgiving to God.

**Closing**

There's one more thing we need to do to tie all this up as the background of what Paul was saying back in Romans 15, that he's on his way to Jerusalem with this gift from Achaia and Macedonia. He's talking about grace giving. We've stopped and examined the doctrine in detail. Next week, we'll put it together as a summary. We will print it. You will receive it in the mail and it will tie together for you everything that we've been talking about. You should be able to go through the Doctrinal Summary of Grace Giving. Learn it well with the associated Scriptures and you will be glad, for the rest of eternity, that you started this new decade and probably the final few years of your life on earth before the Lord takes you to Heaven in the Rapture, that you learned again the principles of grace giving.

I have discovered again people in this congregation coming up to me and saying, 'I've heard this before, but only now have I grasped this.' Little points are now clicking and hanging in people's minds, perhaps because your maturity, perhaps because of your circumstance in life. But there is something about the Word of God that it grows and its impact upon the soul. So, we'll put this together. Do not treat it lightly. Your spiritual life is reflected in your personal financial support of the work of God. Do it in the right way and you will be rewarded for all eternity. Do it in the wrong way, and it's a rat hole operation that brings blessing neither to God nor man. So, do it right.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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