

“GIVING IS INVESTING”

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

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June 7, 2015

INTRODUCTION:

1) A fictional story on giving: After listening to a good sermon on the blessings of giving, a poor farmer who had very little went up to the preacher and offered him a promise. He told the preacher that if God will bless him with two large farms, he will give one to God. If God will give him \$100,000 worth of harvest, he will give \$50,000 back to God. And if God will give him a herd of 100 cows, he will be happy to give 50 back to God. The pastor encouraged him to pray for God's blessing. Few years later, this farmer got all his heart's desire, but he didn't give half of his possessions back to God as he had promised. The moral: Making a promise to give what we don't have is easy, but to actually give what you already have is hard.

2) A true story of investing: In the planning process of building our new church, we modified plans several times from the original 8,700 sq ft to the final plan of 24,000 sq ft, what we have now. We started small because we didn't have money to build anything after we paid the costs of the land and grading the land. We didn't have money to finish the second floor, and had no money to buy hymn books, bibles, chairs and pulpit furniture, while we owed the bank a loan of \$650,000. So, I made many phone calls to ask our people for special gifts for all these plus the five chandeliers in the sanctuary and the foyer. The \$12,000 extra dollars of giving were invested in the church so we could come to worship in comfort all these past 17 years.

The apostle Paul gives us five principles of investing in God's work in this passage, so we have a blueprint to invest our resources in eternity.

(A) THE AMOUNT OF INVESTING IN GOD: (9:6)

1) Investing the human way: “Investment” is a term relatively new to

many people from the older generation. While Chinese people are very good at the “saving” of money, the older generation wasn't that good at putting their money in other places besides their own homes or under the bed. These people didn't understand the erosion of the value of their money due to inflation, and ended up losing value of their money by keeping it in their own hands. Now most of us understand that the amount we save and invest has a direct effect on the amount of return for our future. It is the same principle as our investment for our eternity.

2) Investing the Bible way: “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” (9:6) This is a simple truth: “You reap what you have sown.” If we are stingy to God in our giving, God won't be generous to us in his blessing. If we are generous in giving to God, he will be generous to us in his blessing. These include his blessing on our health, family, children, opportunity and the joy of life. This doesn't mean we can earn God's blessing, but it does mean God is just and fair to reward those who are generous to him and his cause. (Matt 6:4) Here is the rule: The more you give or invest in God's kingdom now, the more you will receive from the Lord in this life and the life to come.

(B) THE PURPOSES OF INVESTING IN GOD: (9:7-8)

1) Invest in God cheerfully: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheer-ful giver.” (9:7) This is about the attitude of giving: lovingly and cheerfully. We all love to invest in our children, or even grandchildren: our love, time, resources and even our life. We do that because we love them. God asks that we give to him with that same attitude: lovingly and cheerfully. In fact, the way we give to God is the best way to reflect our inner attitude toward him. He deserves and demands we give our utmost because of what he has done his utmost for us—the very life of His Son.

2) Invest in God abundantly: “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.” (9:8) God wants us to know that giving or investing in him is never a losing business but the most profitable thing we can do. We will never lose anything because we give too much to God. Paul uses “abound” twice and “all” twice in this one verse of the bible. Lots of stingy Christians are mistaken about the nature of giving: “If I give more to God, then I will have less for myself.” The truth is just the opposite: The more we give to God, he will give more than double to us. He will give us “all” and “abound” in filling our needs. We won't have less because we give, but will have much more when we generously invest in God.

(C) THE SCOPE OF INVESTING IN GOD: (9:8b-9)

1) The sky is the limit: “In all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in (all) every good work.” (9:8b) When we invest in this world, we can only invest in a few things because we only have limited resources. But invest in God, the sky is the limit. God says we need to invest in all things at all times, that we may abound in all good work. Our being stingy or sparing is because we think we only have this much and we can't afford to give more. But God wants us to know we can do a lot more for him than we think. You may ask: Where am I going to get all the resources so I can give more? We will talk about that next: the resources we need.

2) The world is our field: “As it is written: He has scattered abroad his gift to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.” (9:9) Most Christians care about the needs of their own homes and churches, and it is proper to do so. But God wants us to see beyond our own needs, needs at home and our home church. He wants us to see the poor, the needy, their physical and spiritual needs. God uses our giving to help others, abroad, in other places. God also sees our gifts to help others as acts of righteousness that will last forever to eternity. Giving to support mission work is to bring fruits of

righteousness in heaven.

(D) THE RESOURCE TO INVEST IN GOD: (9:10)

1) God provides so we can invest: “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food...” (9:10a) Let's say: If someone who invests in God makes money from his job or business, God wants him to know that isn't his money, but money from God who supplied him with knowledge, opportunity and good health so he could make that money. Without God's supply, he can make nothing. We all need to know this: It is God's supply of seeds that we can give. Remember what Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:7, “We brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it.” All that we have is from the seed giver, and we are only the sowers. Never forget that all we have is from God, including our investment in God's work.

2) God increases so we can invest more: “(God) will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.” (9:10b) Here God promises to increase our “store house,” enlarge our harvest, so we can invest even more in God and his kingdom. If we invest in God faithfully, we are going to see God increase his blessing accordingly so we can invest more to bring a harvest of righteousness. This means if we don't generously and faithfully invest in God with what he has given us, we are not doing right with his blessing. Remember what Job said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.” (Job 1:21) Jesus encourages us to give generously: “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured in your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

(E) THE RETURN OF INVESTING IN GOD: (9:11-12)

1) You are the object of God's blessings: “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.” (9:11)

Again, God makes a promise to those who are generous in giving to his kingdom: You will be made rich in every way. Giving or investing in God and God's ministry will never cause you to lose or become poor. On the contrary, God will bless you to make you rich in everything, not just in material possessions but also in honor, in joy and in good health. Salvation is free to us because Jesus has paid it all, but God's blessings are only poured on those who trust him and obey his command like giving and investing in God's business.

2) You can be the benefactor to others: “This service (of giving) that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also over-flowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” (9:12) When God's people are generous in giving to and investing in God, they certainly will benefit many others who are in need of support, be it to their livelihood or ministry. Just as those who were faithful in investing in the building of this facility, so many people who came to this facility in the past 17 years are beneficiaries of their generosity. Today, if we can be generous in giving and investing in this church, many others who will come after us will be benefited from our generosity. This is God's way of expanding the scope of his kingdom on earth by his faithful, you and me. Without our faithful giving and investing in God's business, there is no hope for all the people in this world.

APPLICATIONS: Time to change our perspective in giving:

1) Giving to God is investing: If Christians can be generous and faithful in their investment in God's kingdom and not too stingy in supporting God's ministry within the church and beyond, churches won't be cutting worthy causes from their budgets. We all know the importance of investing for our future retirement; how much more do we need to learn how to invest for our eternity in heaven? How long do you plan to live after your retirement? How much longer do you know you will live in heaven? Investing treasures in heaven is an important topic that Jesus repeatedly taught us to do and do it

wisely. (Matt 6:19-21; Luke 12:20-21)

2) The best time to invest is now: “Now listen, you say: Today or tomorrow we will go to this and that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say: If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that... Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” (James 4:13-17) Many people know it is right and good to give to God and invest in God's business generously, but they just procrastinate in translating the thought into the action of giving. They think, let me do better and make more, and then I can give more to God. The problem is, you don't know how long you may live, and whether you will do better or not in your business. If things don't go as you plan, you will never have that opportunity to give to God. If the spirit of God is telling you to do it now, then just do it. Don't be like that poor farmer in the beginning of the introduction. Give now while you still can. Don't wait.