

Stewardship Forum

An evangelical alliance Partnership for Change

Stewardship Tools for Leaders : Sermon Library

Title: Sowing Generously, Reaping Abundantly

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Introduction:

Paul was organising an offering that could potentially benefit thousands of people. He was writing to an initially very enthusiastic people, but reality had set in and with it, reservations had frayed the edges of their excitement in giving.

0. *'How do we know the project will ever happen?'*
0. *'I could give to their fund and someone could run off with it or just waste it'.*
0. *'I'm afraid that if I give to this now, in the future I myself will run short of cash'.*
0. *'I'm sorry but I don't have anything to spare. There's always too much month left at the end of my money!'*

You and I may not have much money, but the question is, 'Does *money* have you? '.

Throughout 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul is motivating the 'Grace of Giving', so that his readers will provide from their financial resources the finance or money that will be given.

- Where God says
- In the Amount God indicates
- In the spirit God wants

These chapters help us to all give for the right reasons (not motivated by guilt), in the right amount (neither less nor more than God asks us to give), and to the causes God targets (not wastefully or inappropriately). These two chapters constitute what Roy Clements calls "A *model Christian Begging Letter!*"

They climax in this extraordinary analogy of Sowing and Reaping (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).

Three questions:

- Does your church minister to exist, or exist to minister?
- Does it consist of mainly Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers or Settled Agricultural Farmers?
- What is this Principle of Sowing and Reaping? - It requires faith, not sight to become a sower-reaper.

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I MONEY AND MAMMON

Money inherently possesses either GREED POWER or SEED POWER over our lives.

'Mammon' – the Carthaginian deity of wealth

Do you have your money or does it your money have you?

In 'Seed Power' we see money as a trust which has both *our life* and *God's life* in it.

For that life to bless both ourselves and others it has to be SOWN.

II MONEY AND MOTIVATION

- **If you give generously it is the best investment you can make (v.6).**

We aren't scattering to the wind
wasting our resources
or 'writing off' our wealth
We are investing it all wisely

The Law of Sowing and Reaping is not a Promise, nor a Threat,
It is a Spiritual Law

- **If you give generously, you will experience God's love in your life (v.7).**

Giving is often co-erced by manipulation, threats, fear.

God wants giving that is:

- 0. Thoughtful
- 0. Voluntary
- 0. Cheerful

- **If you give generously, it will free you from financial worry (v.8-9)**

There are five 'alls' in this statement:

- All grace
- All things
- All that you need
- At all times
- In all good works

The astonishing principle here is that WE CANNOT OUTGIVE THE LORD.

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The world offers 'stingy returns' on investment of 2%, 3%, 7% etc.

God speaks in terms of 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold

- **If you give generously, your outlook, prospects and character will change (v.10-11)**

God entrusts more resources to those who know how to use them wisely (Luke 6:38; Luke 16:9-12).

- Swindler Jacob and his 10%
- Crooked Zacchaeus and his 50%
- Anonymous Widow and her 100%

'There was a man, they call him mad. The more he gave, the more he had.'

Remember Dickens' classic story *'A Christmas Carol'*, and the unforgettable transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge.

- **If you give generously, God will receive much honour and glory (v.12-15).**

Vision is made possible. Vision becomes Reality.

Our dreams are often too small.

The world infects us with its cynicism.

- e.g.
- George Harrison (1970's)
 - Victor Matthew (1930's)
 - Seneca (1st Century)

Our highest motivation is to bring glory to God, to make the name of Jesus famous once again, and to evoke praise, thanksgiving and worship towards God in many human hearts.

This is the Principle of 'Sowing Generously, Reaping Abundantly'.

CONCLUSION: The actions the Apostle Paul meant to evoke from all this are plain.

0. Deliberately set aside a proportion of your earlier harvests.
0. Be convinced that you are putting in good soil.

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- 0. Plant it.
- 0. By faith *lose* it.
- 0. Be in faith that, as with natural seed, mysterious, God-ordained powers (of sin, rain, wind, soil) will bring miraculous increase.
- 0. Be patient. Like a farmer, you have to learn to *wait*.

“Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well” (Ecclesiastes 11:4-6).

About the Author: Revd Greg Haslam is senior minister at Westminster Chapel in London. He is a well known Bible teacher and speaker. Greg was one of the plenary speakers at M:Power 2003 Christian Stewardship event. The outline of his presentation is uploaded above.

To purchase the audiotape of Greg's address at M:Power 2003 please visit <http://www.reelife.org.uk>