

Last week, we were talking about the ‘one-another’ aspect of being a disciple of Jesus... One of the most beautiful aspects of becoming a Christian, is that we gain a whole new family. And as God’s family, we bear one-another’s burdens.

This is all part of ‘living by the Spirit’ / ‘keeping in step with the Spirit’... And so, if I don’t love the family of God, and love connecting with the family of God, that’s a pretty sure sign, that I’m not a Spiritual person.

And today’s reading – (BTW, sometimes we think this passage is all about giving... – and it **is** about giving, but it’s not **just** about giving) – Today’s reading is about bearing one-another’s burdens. And **part** of ‘bearing one-another’s burdens’, is to support those who preach the Gospel – and more specifically, to support those who teach the word.

Which presents a bit of a dilemma for me: As someone who teaches the word of God (our primary ministry here at BD, is a teaching ministry). And as someone who teaches the word, well, I don’t want it to come across as if I’m being ‘self-serving’, (a bible teacher, teaching his listeners, to give money to support the bible teacher)...

*And as I’ve explained every other time I’ve given a message on “giving/Tithing”,,, there’s a lot of churches around, who shamelessly give a message every Sunday, just before the Offering’s taken up. And usually it revolves around, “If you put more money in, God will bless you right back...” ... BTW, I find that ‘abhorrent’ – to try and present ‘giving’ as some kind of obscene ‘get-rich-quick scheme’ or some kind of ‘buy*

*your blessings scheme’ – and so people are told “Give, so that you can be blessed, and the more you give, the more you’ll be blessed...” I find that obscene.*

But by working our way through whole books of the Bible, we hear about “money”; “giving”; Tithing;,,, just as often as what God wants to bring it up... And it might be more often than some of us would like...

But, I’m not going to apologise for teaching on this, because God has put this in His word, and we need to hear what God has to say on “giving”....

When it comes to “giving”, it seems to me, that there’s 2 types of people in the church, and they’re **both** looking for excuses... Some are looking for an excuse to give – BTW, it’s often not the ones who have the most money, who are looking for an excuse to give...

Have you noticed this? Some people are just so generous – they’re always looking for an opportunity to give...

*Not long after we started Bush Disciples, I went away to a church conference, and in a small group, I shared where I’d come from & what we were up to... Anyway, a couple of days later, as the conference was coming to a close, this older man (late 70’s?), came up to me and handed me an envelope, and he said, “This is all I can afford, but I want to support you as you start this ministry.”... And in the envelope, was \$100... And I just cried, because that old bloke, he’d been a pastor his whole life, (from back in the days when they got paid nearly*

nothing)... *He didn't have much – he and his wife lived very simply, but he needed to give...*

And some people are like that – always watching to see what God is doing – always looking for an excuse to give.

And then there's the second group who always look for the excuse as to why they **don't** give; **can't** give; **shouldn't** give; not in a **position** to give...

For some of us, the last part of us to be saved, is our hip-pocket.

*There were 3 men discussing how they decide how much to put in the offering.*

- 1. "When I get my pay-packet, I draw a circle on the ground, and I throw the money up in the air, and what lands in the circle, I give to God."*
- 2. "When I get my pay-packet, I also draw a circle on the ground, and I also I throw my money up in the air, and what **doesn't** land in the circle, I give to God."*
- 3. "When I get my pay-packet, I throw everything up into the air, and what God wants, he takes."...*

What's your attitude to giving?

The Old Testament principle is to tithe (1/10<sup>th</sup> of what we earn). BTW, the Old Testament tithe, is to give a 1/10<sup>th</sup> of **everything** – it's not a 1/10<sup>th</sup> of our profit after expenses – it's not 1/10<sup>th</sup> of our 'after-tax' earnings – It's not 1/10<sup>th</sup> of our taxable income. It's a 10<sup>th</sup> of our gross income...

- grow 100t wheat, deliver 10t in the name of the church;
- cows produced 100 calves, 10 of those calves, you'd grow out, and give to the church

And many Christians give as a tithe.

But the New Testament doesn't lay down a law of giving – it's more of a heart thing. On our offering box down the back, we've got a Bible verse: **2 Corinthians 9: (ESV) 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

Alright, it's about 'giving from the heart', but **why** do we give??? Well, let's see what today's reading has to say: **V<sup>6</sup> Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.**

From the earliest days of the Christian church, out of all of the ministries that we could possibly envisage, it's the teaching ministry (teaching the word of God), that was recognised as being so important to the church, that those who are being taught, should support the ones who are doing the teaching.

And let me tell you: to teach the Word of God, and to do it well, takes a lot of time in preparation/study/prayer. And when a person is regularly teaching the word of God, their secular employment/business get neglected... And so, part of our giving, is to support the ministry of 'teaching the word', because those who teach the word of God, have a reduced capacity to earn a normal living.

And if I'm going to benefit from that (and I have benefited from the teaching ministry of others), it's only right, that I should support such a person, in the work of God that they are doing – not just for my own benefit, but for the benefit of others, who will also hear the Word of God being taught.

BTW, it's very important that we direct our support to those who are **rightly** teaching the Word of God.. It's not about supporting an institution (regardless of how Scripture is twisted by the teacher of the day) – it's about supporting those who **teach**, because we benefit from that teaching.

And here at BD, we are so thankful of the support that comes from afar. It used to be **over** half – but now it's **almost** half of our annual offerings, come from givers who are not local. And most of these people are giving because they appreciate the biblical teaching that they're receiving, and they understand this biblical principle <sup>6</sup> **Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.**

So, thank you. It's humbling to know that some of you are supporting this ministry weekly/fortnightly/monthly/annually... It **all** helps, to keep us going...

Now, as we continue unpacking today's reading, it's important that we understand this: “Yes, this **is** about “giving”, but it's about **more** than giving – it's about **bearing one-another's burdens** (which includes giving), and it's about keeping in

step with the Spirit, (which includes bearing one-another's burdens, which includes "giving").

Alright, so are you with me? It's about giving, but it's about much more than giving.

And V7 makes it glaringly obvious, that this (what we're hearing today) is serious, serious stuff, and we really need to pay attention to it: <sup>7</sup> **Do not be deceived: God is not mocked....** (turn nose up at)

You know, most of us like to think that we're above deception,, and we're pretty sure of ourselves – "Oh, I'm smart enough – nobody's going to deceive me..."

But the deception that's being talked about here, is to be completely unaware, that the way I live, and in what I do (or do not do) – I'm mocking God... That's serious, serious stuff...

It's to be mocking God (in how I choose to live), and to be completely unaware of it – that's the deception. What's he talking about?

for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Throughout the last few weeks, Paul has been teaching us about how the desires of the Spirit, and the desires of the flesh

oppose one another. There's a war going on inside of us  
<sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit,  
and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh

And he's told us to:

- walk by the Spirit
- led by the Spirit
- live by the Spirit
- keep in step with the Spirit

And part of this, is to bear one-another's burdens, and part of this, is what we do with our money...

*A few weeks back, I gave an example: A lady asked her pastor, if as a Christian, she should give up smoking, and the pastor's response was, "Well that depends: For you, is smoking a craving of the flesh, or a craving of the Spirit?" And she had her answer (didn't she), and you get this, don't you???*

Well, what if we apply this to what we do with our money???

We know, that there isn't a New Testament **law** that we have to give. The tithe was an **Old** Testament Law... And here in Galatians, we're being told "We're not under the Law. Don't be a slave to the Law"... Therefore, if I understand that the Tithe is a Law I have to keep, I've been deceived...

But haven't we also learned, that if I live by the Spirit, I will fulfill the Law...

Ahh, is the penny dropping??? (Pardon the pun)... No, it's not a Law that I have to give, and that I should give 1/10<sup>th</sup> of my **gross** income... No, that's not the Law,, But if I am living by the Spirit – if I am controlled by the Spirit – if I'm not being controlled by the flesh, I will **fulfill** the Law – not because it's a rule that I'm enslaved to keep, but because I've given my all to God, which includes my money...

Let's go back to the Offering Box verse: **2 Corinthians 9: (ESV)**

**<sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

**Each one must give as he has decided in his heart ...**

How do I decide how much to give??? Well firstly, I have to recognise, that there's a battle going on inside of me,, to give, or not to give, that's the question... And this is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh is saying, "Michael, you don't need to be donating money – there's so much other stuff that you can do with it, that's going to benefit you and your family..."

So:

- Giving to the church, to support the Christian ministry – A craving of the flesh? or a craving of the Spirit???

- Holding back from giving because I'm saving up for a new car (A craving...)
- Signing up to sponsor a child, who's living in poverty (A craving...)
- Committing myself to a large debt (to buy a business asset), and committing to paying that debt, means I don't have a lot of money left to give (A craving...)
- Supporting a missionary who has left their employment, to take the Gospel to a place where few have heard it (A craving...)
- Holding back because I've got goals that I'm wanting to achieve
  - Pay off a house;
  - Build up my superannuation, so I can have a glorious retirement;
  - fund my hobby
  - send my kids to a better school
  - have that nice holiday
- Or because I've given enough, and now it's time for others to do their share... (A craving...)

When it comes to giving, the deception is so seductive... And when we let the flesh win, and we're not living by the Spirit, and we don't think this matters, we end up mocking God...

Every time I spend money, I'm either sowing in the flesh, or I'm sowing in the Spirit...

What Paul's teaching us here, is entirely consistent with what Jesus taught:

**Matthew 6:(ESV) 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Alright, and Paul's saying, when we sow (spend) on fleshly stuff, we reap corruption... It has no eternal value – every physical thing we have, is going to break down/disintegrate/burn away...

But the craving of the Spirit, is to sow from the Spirit, and we reap eternal life...

Now, let me be really clear here – this is **not** hinting at any possibility that by giving, I'm buying my eternal life...

The reward, is the eternity we already have, in Christ (bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus – that's our faith)...

And this is one of the biggest battles of the Spirit: The Spiritual person, focuses on eternity, and is living for eternity, whereas the fleshly person focuses on **this** life, and is striving to achieve a whole heap of physical blessings in **this** life.

And one of the strangest things, is some Christians who claim to be really super-Spiritual, they're the ones who are almost totally focused on the flesh...

A pretty good gauge of **our** focus, is our prayer life. Am I praying mostly for physical blessings?

- health;
- prosperity;
- happiness;
- stuff – bountiful harvest

Or am I praying for things of the Spirit?

- for the salvation of the lost;
- for the return of Jesus;
- for the faith and steadfastness of the persecuted church;
- for the steadfastness of faith for myself, that I would not give up...
  
- that we would become people who are keeping in step with the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit, growing in our lives...
- and that we as a church, would become a witness for Christ in the world...

Is our focus “things of the spirit” (eternal value), or “things of the flesh” stuff that disintegrates...

....

Righto:

“Living by the Spirit” and “keeping in step with the Spirit”, is a life of “doing good”... It’s a life of “doing good” and “working good” – “good works”...

Now, we should know by now, that we are not **saved** by doing good, but because we **are** saved (by faith in Christ Jesus), living by the Spirit, means we **do** good. Now Scripturally, this is **not** a controversial issue. As James said: “Faith without works, is dead.”<sup>i</sup>,, But unfortunately, because we Christians often like to sum our faith up with a ‘catch-cry’, the Reformation correction of a “salvation by works” (now understand: saved by grace/faith alone) means that many are scared to ever talk about “works” part of our faith.

And even the way our bibles are translated, in some of them, this bias comes through. And so even the version of the Bible that I’m using today (ESV), in V9, it says “let us not grow weary of doing good”, and in V10 it says “<sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone”... But the underlying Greek word in those 2 sentences, is different. V9 is more about “doing”, and V10 uses the Greek word ἐργαζόμεθα (ergazōmetha), which means “work; labour; bring about”<sup>ii</sup>...

Alright, so this is how it should read:

<sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us [work; Labour] good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

What is this “doing good” / “working good”??? It’s about:

- living by the Spirit;
- bearing one-another’s burdens;
- giving;
- demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit

This is how we are to live...

But what if we’re not??? Well, V7 reveals that this is not something that we should take lightly... God is not mocked; We **do** reap what we sow; If our lives are characterised by ‘works of the flesh’, we reap corruption. If our lives are characterised by the Fruit of the Spirit, we reap eternal life...

I wonder how many of us skim over V9, and never consider the impact it’s meant to have: <sup>9</sup> **And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap** (what are we going to reap? (v8) Eternal life) , **if we do not give up.** Give up what??? Living by the Spirit; keeping in step with the Spirit; and I guess ultimately, faith in Jesus Christ...

Now, if you believe in the human teaching of “once saved, always saved”, you won’t even want to grapple with that verse...

Do you know what Paul’s telling us here? How we live out our faith; and how we bear one-another’s burdens; and even how we give, is serious, serious business...

So, how do we apply all this? Well, we've been talking "application", all the way through this message, haven't we. Who hasn't been challenged today?

But even so, V10 sums up the application of pretty-much what we've learned over the last few weeks:

You and I – we're presented with opportunities, every day of the week. Opportunities to:

- do good;
- keep in step with the Spirit;
- demonstrate the love that God has given to us, by showing that love to others;
- give to support ministry and mission;
- sow in the Spirit;
- do good & work good...

The application is, as these opportunities come along, to keep in step with the Spirit, and to work for the good of all people, but especially what Paul calls "the household of faith."

Our first concern should be for our brothers and sisters in Christ, but that doesn't stop us from also loving all people.

So, when these opportunities come, to:

- do good
- work good
- give
- sow in the Spirit
- live by the Spirit

And the flesh then tries to convince us to live according to the flesh,,, who are we going to listen to? Am I going to give in to the flesh? Or live according to the Spirit?

At the cross, Jesus gave His life for us... The cost of our salvation was high.

- He died to save us from our sins; and
- He rose again to give us a new life; and
- He sent His Holy Spirit, to transform us from within.

Therefore, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the wonderful gift of Grace You've given us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

But Lord, we've sometimes turned our nose up at that, because we've deceived ourselves that it doesn't really matter how I live – it doesn't really matter that I've stifled the Spirit and embraced the flesh...

God forgive us.

Lord we pray that today would be a new beginning in Your grace.

Lord, help us to keep in step with the Spirit;

Help us to sow in the Spirit;

And to reap eternal life.

And Lord, we want to thank you for this eternal life – Something which is not bought or earned or deserved. You have been so good to us.

Help us now, to live by the Spirit,  
and give according to the Spirit,

in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> James 2:17 & 2:26

<sup>ii</sup> NIDNTTE