Expensive Blessings
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9
Code: BQ022012

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6–7)

The most outrageous example of materialism in the name of Christianity is, unquestionably, the heretical Word Faith movement, or Health and Wealth Gospel. Its proponents unabashedly proclaim that God's will is for all believers to be rich. If they claim riches by faith and speak positively of them, that verbal confession itself creates the wealth. Word Faith teachers insist that God is obligated to deliver the goods believers request. They are so bold as to replace the sovereign God of Scripture (cf. Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) with the sovereignty of the believer who wields creative power to make himself healthy and wealthy by his own faith. God becomes a utilitarian genie who grants believers' every desire.

But believers cannot, in spite of what Word Faith deceivers shamelessly proclaim, create their own reality for their own indulgence. Such a self-centered, prideful desire does not ever characterize genuine believers. It is true that some godly men, such as Job and Abraham, were very wealthy. Yet Paul described himself as "both hungry and thirsty, … poorly clothed, … roughly treated, and … homeless" (1 Cor. 4:11), while Jesus said of Himself, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). The church has always consisted of both rich (cf. Matt. 27:57; Acts 4:36–37; 8:27; 10:1–2; 16:14–15; 17:4; 1 Tim. 6:17) and poor (cf. Acts 6:1; 1 Cor. 1:26; 2 Cor. 8:2) people, because according to His own sovereign purposes "the Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts" (1 Sam. 2:7).

Rich or poor, however, the Bible warns against "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19), and exhorts, "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens" (Prov. 23:4–5). In Matthew 6:24 Jesus declared, "You cannot serve God and wealth," while in Luke 12:15 He warned, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed." Greed characterizes unbelievers (Ps. 10:3; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:3), especially false teachers (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:1–3, 14–15; Jude 11), and is a form of idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). In sharp contrast to the materialism promoted by prosperity teachers, Jesus commanded, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where

thieves do not break in or steal” (Matt. 6:19–20).

God has a very different plan for financial soundness than that of worldly or pseudo-Christian materialism. Instead of trying to speak wealth into existence, God’s plan involves hard work, wise investment, and careful saving. But in contrast to man-centered self-indulgence, the means for prosperity is not greedy accumulation—but the opposite, generous giving:

Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. (Prov. 3:9–10)

There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered. (Prov. 11:24–25)

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed. (Prov. 19:17)

He who gives to the poor will never want. (Prov. 28:27)

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.” (Mal. 3:10)

“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” (Luke 6:38)

The point of those verses is clear: The more one gives, the more God gives back in return.

In this passage Paul expressed that principle using familiar agricultural imagery: **Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** Every farmer recognizes that the size of the harvest is directly proportionate to the amount of seed sown. The farmer who **sows** seed **sparingly** will **reap** a meager harvest; the one **who sows bountifully will … reap** a great harvest. In the spiritual realm, the principle is that giving to God results in blessing from God; **bountifully** translates *eulogia*, which literally means “blessing.” Generous givers will reap generous blessings from God, while those who hold back selfishly fearing loss will forfeit gain.

COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).