Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Path to Prosperity, Part 1
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Code: 47-64

There's an old story of a king who went into his village to greet his subjects. Wandered through the streets and as he was doing that he came across a beggar sitting by the roadside. The beggar eagerly held up his little alms bowl, sure that the king would put in something of value for him. Instead the king looked down at him and made a most unique statement. He asked the beggar if he would please give him something?

Taken aback the beggar fished around and found three little grains of rice and dropped them into the king's hand. Well as the legend goes, at the end of the day when the beggar poured out what he had received, he found to his astonishment at the bottom of his bowl three grains of solid gold and he wished he had given the king everything.

The world will tell you that if you want prosperity, hold on to everything, hoard it, accumulate it, save it, invest it. That's how to increase your riches and guarantee your future prosperity. But God has a very different plan. When you talk about prosperity in God's terms, it is the opposite of what the world would suggest. And God does have a plan for financial prosperity, He really does. And it does not disregard hard work, it does not disregard saving, it does not disregard wise investment. But it does reject accumulation and hoarding. In fact, God's plan for prosperity calls for you to give your money away. That's right. Very much like that beggar, if he had given more rice he have gotten more gold.

Now the passage before us in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 lays out the truth of what I have just said to you. And I warn you right now, it will challenge your faith, it really will. It will directly challenge your faith in an absolutely unavoidable and inescapable way. When I'm through this morning you are going to have a measure of whether you really believe in the promise of God and the power of God. You're going to know. Your faith in God, your faith in His Word is going to be on the line this morning. And it's going to be on the line every day after this because you're going to learn what you're going to learn today. So I'm giving you fair warning in case you would like to leave before your accountability level goes up very high.

There is clearly a path to financial prosperity, but it is contrary to everything the world says and everything that works in the natural realm. And so it demands that you follow it by faith. The path to financial prosperity is going to demand that you give away what you have.

Now in all honesty this is not a new principle. In fact, it's a very old one. It has been repeated throughout Scripture maybe you missed it. Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his good deed." Proverbs 11:24 and 25 says, "There is one who scatters yet increases all the more. There is one who withholds and it results only in want." The generous man will be prosperous.

And then in Luke 6:38 Jesus said, "Give and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap for by the standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

Now all of those verses basically say the same thing. What you give is invested with God and He pays dividends on it. That is the path to prosperity. The generous Christian never needs to fear not having enough. The more you give the more God gives in return. God will out give you all along the way, returning generous gifts beyond all proportion or expectation of what you have given.

In our passage Paul teaches this principle. The passage before us, 2 Corinthians 9 verses 6 to the end of the chapter, verse 15. Now the principle that is going to be elucidated here with powerful, powerful instruction is given initially in verse 6. Verse 6 uses the familiar agricultural imagery to establish the principle of prosperity that you much learn. Here it is, verse 6, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully." That is simply an axiom, an axiom is a self-evident truth that doesn't need any verification because it is so obvious. Any farmer knows that. You sow a little seed you get a little crop because it has to be there in the seed form before it can show up in the form of the grain. Your harvest is directly proportionate to your seed sown, that's the simple agrarian principle or axiom in verse 6. What is behind it is this principle that when you sow or when you give to God you will reap a harvest according to the measure of your sowing. And if you can come to understand what we're going to learn this week and next about this principle, you're going to be in a hurry to give like the Macedonians who back in chapter 8 verse 4 were literally begging Paul with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints. They wanted to give and they sought to give and they pled and begged to give because they understood they were investing with God and they were sowing with God and a great dividend and a great harvest would be forthcoming. If you understand what this passage says, you're going to be in a hurry to give, to give more faithfully, more generously than ever in your life. You're going to know the principle. The question is going to be whether you believe it, whether you believe in the promise of God or believe in the power of God. And it will show up in your giving which will become then a measure of your faith.

Here then is the path to prosperity. The world says get rich by robbing others, get rich by grinding the face of the poor. Get rich by withholding wages that are due. Get rich by not paying your bills. Get rich by stealing or embezzling. Get rich by hoarding. God says get rich by giving away what you have and watch Me replenish it.

You see, it is the lack of generosity that impoverishes Christians. To give, according to verse 6, go back there for a moment, is like sowing seed. Paul is motivating the Corinthians here to give. He's motivating them to give every week over a long period of time to accumulate a huge sum to take to the poor saints, the poor believers in Jerusalem who don't have enough for the basic necessities of life. He's motivating the Corinthians to give, to give magnanimously and generously.

He sought to motivate them by the example of the Macedonians. We saw that in chapter 8 verses 1 through 9, the example of the Macedonians was his first point of motivation. Then secondly he sought to motivate them by exhortation in chapter 8 verse 10 through chapter 9 verse 5, we just completed that passage and he gave them a number of exhortations with regard to their giving. Now he seeks to motivate them by the potential benefit. Be motivated by example, be motivated by exhortation, and be motivated by the benefits that are bound up in your giving. If the example isn't enough and the exhortation isn't enough, maybe the benefit will be enough.

This is the culminating way to reinforce his desire to motivate the Corinthians to give generously to the poor saints at Jerusalem and to motivate all of us to give as we should faithfully to the church and the work of God in the world. And again I say, he establishes the premise with an agricultural axiom that says the size of the harvest is in direct portion to the amount of the seed sown. That's obvious. The farmer who sows only a small amount of seed is going to have a very small harvest. If he foolishly says I don't want to give away all my seed, I want to hold on to some of this seed, I'm afraid to give up all my seed, then his miserly approach to the sowing is going to result in a very small harvest.

On the other hand, the one who sows bountifully is going to reap bountifully. When a wise farmer goes about sowing he says I want to find the biggest field and in that biggest field that I can find I want to put the most seed that I can get so that I can look for the greatest harvest possible. His generosity is tied to the benefit of that generosity.

By the way, as an interesting linguistic note in verse 6, you see the word "bountifully," you might have a marginal reading that says "with blessing." It is the word eulogiafrom which we get eulogy which means blessing. It is proper to translate it bountifully, it does have that idea, sowing bountifully as opposed to sparingly. But it also carries the inherent idea of blessing and it can have the sense that the man who sows with the view toward blessing is the one who is going to receive blessing. In other words, he who sows on the principle that he wants the most blessing possible is going to get the most blessing possible. It may to some appear like he's giving too much but he operates on the principle of blessing, that the more he gives the more God is going to return to him in the harvest. That is the principle that sets this whole text in motion right on to the end of the chapter. When you hold back fearing loss, you forfeit gain. When you give everything trusting God, you have a huge harvest.

And isn't God gracious...I have to mention this...isn't God gracious that He puts this motivation in here? You say, "Well isn't this in danger of sort of appealing to our self-interest? Isn't this in danger of sort of appealing to our greed? Isn't this in danger of saying...well if you give this money it's going to come back and much more? Isn't that all the wrong motivation?" No, and you'll see why it is not as this passage unfolds. It is magnanimous of the Lord to show us that He's going to do that. It is gracious of the Lord to tell us He's going to do that. It isn't really anything new. The Scripture says that the ones who are humbled will in the end be exalted. That if we deny ourselves now, the Lord will confess us before the Father in the future.

I mean, there are all kinds of rewards granted to us in Scripture and promised to us. And this is among them. But it is not the promise that we're going to get rich so that we can consume all that God gives us on our own desires. You'll see that as we go into the passage. God graciously tells us that He will give us a harvest in measure according to what we sow, that is He will return to us an investment and a dividend on what we give because it has such tremendous motivational potential to a pure-hearted person. He's not appealing to the hypocrite. He's not appealing to the self-interested believer, as you will see as this passage unfolds.

So, if you sow bountifully, you reap bountifully. The question immediately is what is the bounty, what is it? What is the harvest? And some of you are saying...I know what will happen, I'll give all my money away and all I'm going to get in return is spiritual blessing and I can't eat that, wear it, or sleep in it, or drive it.

What's going to happen to me if I give with this great generosity and all I get back is spiritual blessing? You missed the point. Follow very carefully and you'll see it unfold.

What is the harvest? What are the benefits? There are a number of things, we'll only consider the first two. And listen, they are cumulative, and they flow out of each other to the fullness at the very end of this chapter. So you need to be sure you get the whole thing, including next week. But let's start at the beginning.

The first part of that harvest we could call love from God...love from God. Verse 7, "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart, in the matter of sowing, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." A cheerful giver, by the way, is one described earlier, as one who purposes in his heart to give without any grudging or any compulsion. He's the cheerful giver and God loves him. The first thing that comes to you when you give generously is love from God. I cannot imagine a more precious promise than that...to be the special object of God's love for my giving to come in the sphere of a special and unique love from God. I can't think of anything more wonderful than that...all the riches of this world, all the achievements of this world, all the prestige, all the accomplishments cumulatively put together in one package would not mean nearly as much as

some special affection from God Himself.

This is a very unusual verse, by the way. I looked throughout my Bible and I can't find any verse like this, any verse where there is a special love for God given to people because of some behavior. We know God loves the world in a certain way, He loves His own in a more wonderful way. He loves them to perfection. But even among His own there are some among His own for whom He has an even more special affection. God loves a cheerful giver. Agapaois the verb here, it's the strongest term for love, the one we so often celebrate as the unique redeeming love of God for His own. But God has a special strong affection for those who give generously. This is an incredible promise. This is the first great benefit of generous giving. So he says let each one, every Christian has the opportunity to be involved in this, every Christian is open to this love from God. And so he says you can experience it, here's how..."Do...and do is implied, it's in italics which even gives it greater force...Do just as he has purposed in his heart." Every believer is free to decide what to do. And we go back to this voluntary giving thing again.

We are to give whatever we want to give, proportionate to what we have, voluntarily, as personally determined from a willing heart. It is completely up to you. As I told you last week, my responsibility to you, to any group of believers ends when I tell you the need. I cannot manipulate you, tell you what to give, that is up to you. That is before you and the Lord from the heart.

This is not new. Way back in Exodus 25 when God was teaching His people initially the principles of giving, it says this, Exodus 25 and verse 2, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me, says the Lord, from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution." I only want it from willing hearts.

So do as you have purposed in your heart. It is individual. It is voluntary, it is personal. That's where it starts. True personal freedom must be maintained in all Christian giving.

Now listen, it is personal, it is, however, not casual. The concept of "purposing in the heart" carries with it the idea of predetermination. It's a very unusual verb, it's never used anywhere else in the Scripture, proaireomi, it means to predetermined, to make a predetermination rather than act out of an impulse. Meditate, think about it, predetermine it and do whatever your heart tells you to do. And then he adds in qualifying that, "Not grudgingly," or literally not with grief, not with sorrow, or not with sadness. What does that mean? Remorse, regret, reluctance.

In other words, it's painful because you're doing it but you really don't want to do it. You're doing it but you're sad about it, you're sorrowful about it. There's an attitude of mourning, or depression over what you're doing and you're even regretting doing it. But maybe you feel like you ought to do it, the need is there, it's right to do, somebody expects you to do it, God expects you to do it. You'd like to invest with Him but you're really not happy about it. God does not love that kind of giver. Keep it. Go

spend it on yourself or change your attitude.

Secondly, he mentions being under compulsion. We are not to do this giving from the heart grudgingly, that is with grief or sorrow or reluctance, or under compulsion. The first one has to do with inside attitude, the second one has to do with outside pressure because somebody told you you're supposed to give ten percent, misunderstanding the tithe of the Old Testament. Or because somebody tells you there's a certain amount that you have to give, or because somebody is an authority in your life, or become somebody is in charge of you and they're putting this burden on you. Such an attitude is unacceptable. Even the Apostle Paul did not want to put a burden on people with regard to some legalistic giving. You are not to give with motivation coming from outside of you, because somebody told you to, somebody demands that you do, or some others are doing it and you feel that you need to get in line with the others if you're going to be accepted by them. You are not to give because you are coerced, you are not to give because you are taken advantage of. You are not to give under pressure externally. You're not to give under pain internally. In either case you are robbed of your reward.

Any real shepherd, any real pastor who loves his sheep would never lead them to forfeit their reward in their giving. So no shepherd and no pastor should ever pressure people or put them on guilt trips about their giving. If they give coerced externally, if they give painfully internally, they've lost their reward. You want to teach your people, I want to teach you not to give out of legalism, not to give because you misunderstand some Old Testament tithe, not to give because you've been psychologically manipulated but simply to give because it's in your heart to give, not because you have to give, not because you feel pressured to give. There's only one way to give and that's to give cheerfully...for God loves a cheerful giver, hilaron doten. Hilaronfrom which we get hilarious. God loves a hilarious giver, a happy, joyful giver. God wants a heart that is thrilled with the pleasure of giving. That's the kind God loves.

This is a very unusual statement. Again I say, God has a unique love for a generous person. We know God loves all of His own. John 13, He loves His own which are in the world, He loves them unto perfection. John 16 says how much He loves us. John 17 He tells the Father how much He loves us. First John 4:16, how much He loves us. He loves us, but there is a special love that God gives to those reserved to committed generous giving, a special affection. I don't know about you but I want that. I cherish that. I would never want to forfeit that. I want the benediction of being uniquely loved by God. I want to experience the blessing of that.

So first of all, the initial benefit is love from God. That leads to a second and immediate benefit, generosity from God, generosity from God. We've said this through the years, you can give without loving but you can never love without giving. Just as we can't love without giving, God can't. And if He has a special love for you, it's going to show up in His giving. To all whom He loves He gives His Son. But to all whom He loves in a unique way, because they are generous givers, He will give

something more...something more. Whom He loves He lavishes.

Look at verse 8, here it is, "And God toward those He loves 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." This thing is full of so much hyperbole it's inescapable. In fact, in the original language the "alls" here just go on and on and on in almost every form that you could put them, you have pason, panti, pantiti , pasonpon(??), all of those forms of the word all. It could be read, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in all things you may have an abundance for all good deeds." It's just...it's so grandiose, to immense, so magnanimous that it has no limitation. And that was the intent of the Apostle in throwing in all the superlatives.

Now giving from the natural viewpoint is a sure way to have less. I mean, that's how it works in the natural world. You give it away, you have less. But we are promised that in the supernatural realm, you give it to God and you'll have more because our God who specially loves a cheerful giver is able. And that is the initial point of faith, beloved, that is the initial point of faith. To believe that you will prosper by giving away what you have takes faith. It takes confidence in the fact that God is able to do it.

Now we know He's promised it because it's in the passage. The question is, do we believe He has the power to do it? It is precisely the power of God which is the ground or basis of our confidence that the promise of God will come to pass. If I tell you give your money away and God will return it multiplied, if I show you that in the Bible, you can say yes it's there, it's a promise, I see it, I believe the promise. The only remaining question is, do you believe He has the power to meet the promise? That's why Paul says, "And God is able." He is dunateo, He has the power.

He has the power. God is able. You must believe that. Generous giving can appear risky. Giving away what you have can appear fool hardy if you don't understand the power of God and understand that He is able. Your faith, says 1 Corinthians 2:5, must rest not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. If your faith rests on the wisdom of men, you're not going to give your money away because men will tell you that's how you have less and God says that's how you have more, so your faith has to rest on the power of God and not the wisdom of men. I mean, that has been tested throughout redemptive history, throughout the pages of Scripture, men who put their life on the line with regard to the power of God.

I think of Daniel 3:17, the three young men in the fiery furnace, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire." We're going in that thing because we believe He is able. God is powerful enough to do it. He is able.

That is a great phrase, by the way, in the New Testament, "He is able." Romans 16:25, "Not to Him who is able to establish you." He is able. He has no limitations. Ephesians 3:20, "He is able to do

exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think." Jude 24, "He is able to keep you from falling." He is able. He is able. He is powerful. Scripture describes God's power as great, Psalm 79:11; as strong, Psalm 89:13; as sovereign, Romans 9:21; as irresistible, Daniel 4:35; as incomparable, Exodus 15:11 and 12; and incomprehensible, Job 26:14. Scripture says all things are possible for Him to do, Matthew 19:26; and nothing is too hard for Him, Genesis 18:14.

Scripture shows that God's power is exhibited in creation, in providence, in miracles, in the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of saints, the transforming power of the gospel and the ultimate destruction of the wicked. God is able. We need to be like Abraham of whom Scripture says in Romans 4:21, "He was fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able to perform." There's no question about the promise, that's in Scripture, I've read it to you. The question in your mind is about the power. If you give, will God return? The answer is bound up in His power. Paul says God is able.

And His ability is so great He is able to make all grace abound to you. God possesses all grace, all the grace there is in the infinity of God is available and He gives it aboundingly. God doesn't hold anything back. God does not scrimp. The giving Christian does not lose, he cannot lose, he gains and not just a minimal amount but God returns your generosity with abounding grace.

Now you say, "Wait a minute, what's he talking about here? What is this abounding grace going to give me?" Well it's going to give you provision, listen, so that you will always have all sufficiency for all things. You say what does that mean? Material things, life in this world, life in this world.

Listen carefully. The first essential meaning here, the primary essential meaning, the thing that Paul is talking about here has respect to earthly wealth. Listen, because the harvest must have the same nature of the seed. You understand that? If you sow a certain seed you get a certain harvest. The harvest has the same nature as the seed. If you sow wheat you get wheat. You sow barley, you get barley, you sow oats you get oats. Are you ready for this? You sow material things, you get material things. That's what it's saying. It's not talking about some spiritual graces. It's talking about money. When we sow money we are graciously replenished by God so that we will always have all sufficiency for all things. God makes sure we don't have any needs. The giver will always have plenty. You give it away and you'll get the dividend back in kind. You sow your treasure with God, you sow your money, your possessions with God and they'll lavish back to you.

The language here is frankly lavish. One writer says, "As regularly as the resources of the cheerful giver are taxed by his generous giving, they are replenished by divine grace." That's right, pressed down, shaken together, running over, God just pours it into your lap so that you will always have all sufficiency in all things.

Now this is a wonderful thought here. Look at the word "sufficiency." That word is a word loaded with meaning in the Greek culture. It was a word that was bandied around in ethical discussions by philosophers from Socrates clear on to the time of Paul. It meant contentment. It meant literally to the philosophers, particularly to the Stoics, like Seneca who was a contemporary of Paul, they understood as the proud independence of self-sufficiency which makes for true happiness. You find your true happiness when you are self-sufficient, when you are proudly independent. Boy, nothing's changed, has it? Nothing's changed from Socrates to Seneca to today. All the self-esteem stuff, all the ego building stuff that is in the current philosophy of our time which is called psychology, all of that stuff is intended to produce independent self-sufficient proud people.

Well Paul sanctifies that Stoic term, he sanctifies that philosophical term and says that supposed sufficiency that you seek in yourself God will grant you in everything and you'll be content and you'll have everything you need. It's like my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, Philippians 4:19. And there's no stinginess.

Now follow very carefully, this is crucial. God's going to pour this back to you in kind, you've sowed your treasure, you've sowed your money, you've sowed your possessions, He's going to give it back to you...here's why...so that you may have an abundance for every good deed. Oh, here is the great truth here. Don't miss this or you miss the whole point.

The reason God gives it back to you with such overflowing generosity is so you can use it to do more good deeds. That's the thing. It's not to consume it on your own desire. You will be given by God all you need, listen now, to meet the demands of your generous heart so that you are able to do every good deed you desire to do. God will just replenish your supply. When God finds a giver, a generous giver, he sets an unusual element of His affection on that generous giver and keeps replenishing in abundance because He knows the heart of a giver is going to continue to give. You just...you just get into a constant flow, you give it, God replenishes it so you have more to give, and your generous heart is allowed to express itself and do every good deed it desires to do.

This is really nothing new. Go back to the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy chapter 15. In Deuteronomy 15 verse 10 instruction comes from God from the Lord God to the people. It says this, "You shall generously give to him, your brother, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him." You don't give grudgingly, the same exact concept as we read in 2 Corinthians 9, you give generously, your heart shall not be grieved, you do it with a willing heart, without grudging or compulsion. Your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, "Because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings."

You know what it means? God will prosper your business. God will bless your farm. God will bless your vineyard. God will bless your craft. Why will God do that? To make you rich? Verse 11, "For the poor will never cease to be in the land." Because God knows that if you have a giving heart, He

wants to fill up your coffers because you will meet needs. Therefore, verse 11, "I command you saying you shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and the poor in your land." When God finds a giver He sets a special love on that giver, replenishes his giving with an abundance so that he can give even more.

Here is the Christian, back to 2 Corinthians now, here is the Christian who has not directed his life toward accumulating possessions but has directed his life toward eliminating needs. And God keeps him fully supplied with an abundance so that he can continue to do good in generous giving. Every good deed here really is every deed in which you do good by giving to meet needs.

So the principle is simple. We give, we sow with God. The more we give, the bigger the harvest. The bigger the harvest, the more seed is contained in that harvest to sow a bigger harvest next time. You give, you trust God's power and grace to release rich abundant gifts to replenish what you give and give you the privilege of giving more and more and more.

Now if you believe that you're going to act on it. We're all called to do this. In Ephesians 4:28 Paul said, "Let him who stole steal no more." You thieves, stop stealing...stop stealing. And he said, "Let him work with his hands." Go to work. Earn your money. Why? "In order that he may have something to share with him who has need." We're called to give. We're called to support God's work, God's people. Even a thief who gives up his thief...his thievery and just takes the little task of working with his hands is to do so in order that he may sow with God, receive a loving dividend which he can reinvest in the lives of others.

Lest someone assume that this is some new idea, in verse 9 you will notice the Apostle Paul says there is already scriptural support for this, it is on the sacred record. "As it is written...and here he refers to Psalm 112:9, Psalm 112:9...he scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness abides forever." The principle is this, he scattered like a sower. In what way? By giving to the poor and God cashed him in and his righteousness endures forever. That kind of behavior God remembers forever. That righteous sowing, that righteous man who fears the Lord, who worships the Lord, who reverences the Lord, who adores the Lord, that righteous man, Psalm 112:3 says, will prosper. And then in verse 9 it says he will scatter and he will give to the poor and God will never forget his righteousness. God will never forget it. His generosity will never be forgotten. And God will replenish him and reward him both in time and eternity.

So, the principle is in verse 6. The results, God's going

to love you in a very special way. And then verses 8 and 9 tell us that God is able to fulfill His promise. He is able to do it. Verse 10 tells us He will do it. Look at verse 10. He is able in verses 8 and 9. He will do it in verse 10.

Now, "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food." Stop right there. Who's that? Who is the one who supplies seed to the sower? There's only one. God, He's the only one. Back in Genesis chapter 1 in the creation account, verses 11 and 12, "Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them on the earth and it was so and the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind and trees bearing fruit with seed in them after their kind and God saw that it was good."

When God in one day created the entire vegetation of the earth and it was all in place, of course it didn't come from seed because it was instantaneously created, but it all had seed in it so that it could reproduce, God is the one who gives seed to the sower. God is the supplier. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food. God supplies the seed, God supplies the grain, the oats, the barley, whatever it is that makes the bread. In other words, it all comes from Him. The very God who is the creator and the universal provider from whom comes all seed, all grain, all that is made into bread, all that is made into food, that God will supply and multiply your seed. He'll do it. That's the promise.

By the way, Paul is borrowing again from an Old Testament passage in this verse out of Isaiah 55:10. But here he's simply saying the absolute, unwavering, reliability of the creator provider God who daily in the realm of nature provides all the resources for man's life and never fails will fulfill His promise to you. He provides the seed. It goes on and on and has since creation, He provides the grain, He provides the food continually in His providence. The same God who faithfully supplies everything His creatures need, the same God who fills the earth with food, who makes the rain fall, who controls the seasons, who makes the sun shine, the God who is kind to all men is especially kind to His own children and most uniquely gracious to those of His children who give generously and He will return their seed sown.

That's the promise. He will supply, look at it, verse 10, "And multiply your seed." Now, underline this, "For sowing." You see it there? That's the principle again. The point again is that it might be resown. He will supply what giving people need so giving people can have the continuing joy of giving more. Seed is sown, the harvest comes with more seed to be sown. Those who give sow seed with God. God returns it abundantly multiplied so they can sow it all over again. That's the cycle. And the end is to increase the harvest of your righteousness.

It's just exponential. It's just ever-expanding, ever-expanding. That's the path to prosperity for the purpose of resowing, for the purpose of an increased harvest or righteousness. That ultimate harvest of righteousness is certainly eternal reward. But it also is temporal blessing, it's also in the here and now that the Lord blesses the cheerful giver whom He specially loves.

Hosea 10:12 may have been in Paul's mind. "Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness." Sow with a view to righteousness. And when you reap, do it with a perspective

toward kindness. That's the same principle, Hosea 10:12.

So the path to prosperity, you give. God restores, replenishes, pours back which gives you more to give and you just continually exponentially increase your harvest of righteousness. It is righteous behavior that brings both a temporal harvest and righteous behavior that brings an eternal reward.

Paul sums up everything at the beginning of verse 11. "You will be enriched in everything." Stop there for a moment. If you do this, if you give generously without grudging, without compulsion, you will be enriched in everything. I'll fill up your coffers. Why? "For all liberality...for all generosity," so that you can be generous again. That's the point.

And he says it again, verse 10, "I'll multiply your seed so you can sow it again." Verse 11, "I'll enrich you in everything so you can be liberal again." Verse 8, "You're going to have all sufficiency in everything so you can have an abundance for more good deeds." That's the point. When God finds a conduit through which He can give to meet the temporal needs of His people, He will make that conduit rich. He will...He will give enough so that the heart of that giver can be fulfilled in the giving, generous giving, magnanimous giving. That's what is called for from the Corinthians and from all of us if we're going to be what God wants us to be.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 31 and verse 10 we read, "And Azariah, the chief priest of the house of Zadok said to him, Since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, we've had enough to eat with plenty left over, for the Lord has blessed His people and this great quantity is left over." That's the same concept. You keep giving, you keep bringing contributions and God just keeps replenishing so that there's plenty left over, there's always enough.

Back in 1 Chronicles 29, if I had the time I'd take you through the chapter, but time is gone. First Chronicles 29 tells about how in the plea of David the entire assembly comes together to give for the temple, and they bring gold. I mean, it just goes on and on, the whole chapter just pouring out gold and people just giving up all their wealth, all their possessions, everything that they had of value and they give it all to God in the first nine verses...a great, great account. And David blessed the Lord in verse 10 in the sight of all the assembly, David said, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of Israel, our Father forever and ever, Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty indeed, everything that is in the heavens and the earth, Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from Thee and Thou dost rule over all and in Thy hand is power and might and it lies in Thy hand to make great and to strengthen everyone."

Why is he saying all that? He's reminding everybody and himself that they had just divested themselves of all their wealth but their God can replenish it all. "Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name." Verse 22, "So they ate and drank that day before the Lord with

great gladness." They were a bunch of hilarious givers. And you know what? God replenished all of that. Later in the chapter it says that David when he died had great riches. He was followed by Solomon and the nation was rich.

You can't out give God. Proverbs 3 verses 9 and 10, very important in this regard, very simple, Proverbs 3:9 and 10, "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." You give to God, He gives back. Just a tremendous truth. Proverbs 10:22, "It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich." You want to be rich? Let God bless you. Get in the place of that special love by your generosity.

Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 27, another very important verse, 28:27, "He who gives to the poor will never want." He who gives to the poor will never want. What a promise...what a promise.

Malachi 3 verse 10, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, 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, test Me, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." Test Me. Test Me. That's the path to prosperity.

The question is do you believe it? Cause if you believe it, it will show up in the way you give. There will be more, more than you need, far more than you need and plenty to share.

I close with Isaiah 48:17, "Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit. Who leads you in the way you should go." That's really true. God has showed us how to profit with a view toward greater and greater generosity. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thank You for this wonderful morning, for the great music and time of worship and time of intercession before You. And now, Lord, thank You for these great truths, how thrilling it is to find this path laid out for us. O God, may we be generous. May we know what it's like to specially loved and to be the beneficiary of Your special generosity, love from You, generosity from You because we have given joyfully, cheerfully, without any reluctance or any compulsion from the heart. O Lord, may that be the joyous experience of all of us and may we experience what it is to have You pour blessing, open the floodgates, open the windows of heaven, fill up our laps so that we can continue to give and that same cycle can repeat itself over and over again. To be bound up in such a joyous relationship with You is indeed glorious. May it be our own experience, Father, because of our obedience. We pray that You'll enable us by Your Spirit to be faithful in this regard in Christ's name. Amen.

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