

Devotional



Day Seven

AN ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" - II Corinthians 9: 7

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" - II Corinthians 9:15

Have you ever had anyone tell you, "You need an attitude transplant"?

If you have, you know it feels like a slap in the face. What a humbling experience! It hurts if you deserved it, but it hurts even more if you didn't.

In the past, the Corinthians had given even more than Paul expected, and he makes it clear that he expects them to continue the giving trend set earlier. Still, he reminds them that as they plant their gift, they should examine their attitude. It is important for us also to search our heart attitudes in relationship to this process.

Giving to God's kingdom work is far too important to be simply a duty. The foundation of our stewardship is God's indescribable gift of His Son, who "for the joy set before Him," took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. We come to Him with nothing but our sin and our need. He gives us His righteousness for our sin, His riches for our poverty. He transforms us into sons and daughters of God and changes our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. The gospel at work in our lives causes us to give. We give out of the gospel.

Those of us who have been enriched by the work of Christ are to embellish that richness through the act of giving. Victorian author Marcy Cholmondeley wrote, "Every year I live, I am convinced that the waste of life lies in the love we have not given, the powers we have not used, the selfish prudence that will risk nothing, and which, shirking pain, misses happiness as well. No one ever yet was the poorer in the long run for having once in a lifetime let out all the length of all the reins." This is also true in the spiritual sense.

There is much spiritual poverty because of the lack of giving among believers. Through our giving, we experience the privilege of being instruments of God's grace. Missionaries who have given up much for God's work are empowered to preach the gospel to those trapped in the darkness of unbelief. Churches are planted as light in places where there is little hope. Homeless children are brought to experience love through the family of God. Broken people find healing through medical missions.

Our culture is obsessed with the accumulation of wealth, but not spiritual wealth. Nothing is sadder than to be rich in material things, but poor in the experience of God.

Little we do pays spiritual dividends as high as giving to God's work around the world.

Giving, like love, cannot be forced. Paul may even be suggesting that giving under compulsion can be dangerous to your spiritual health. As you consider your faith promise, pray not only that God will guide you in your giving, but that He will give you a longing to give. Ask that this desire will be so great that it would hurt too much not to give.

Some years ago, Louis Evans served as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood. In his congregation was a gifted surgeon who was called by God to go to Korea as a missionary. During a visit to his friend, Pastor Evans observed him operating in severely primitive conditions on an eight-year-old child. After three harrowing hours, the doctor stepped back and said, "She will be all right now."

Evans asked, "How much would you have received for that operation back in the States?" "Oh, 500 to 750 dollars* is the going rate." "And how much for this one?" "Oh, a few cents - a few cents, and the smile of God."

The surgeon put his hand on Pastor Evans' shoulders, shook him slightly and added, "But man, this is living!"

It is in this same spirit that Paul says, "Give what you have decided in your heart to give, for God loves a cheerful giver (II Corinthians 9:7)

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank You for the privilege of giving. You have enabled me to give, and You have provided the faith promise opportunity for me to respond. I now ask You to give me a heart that desires to give with joy. Let me give out of the gospel. Show me what you want me to give, and please continue to enable me to give. Amen.

QUESTIONS:

What does it mean for you to give out of the gospel?
Do you consider giving a duty or privilege?
You have been praying about your faith promise pledge. How much did you intend to give before you began?
As you have studied God's Word, has He stretched your commitment?

Aim at heaven, and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth, and you will get neither.
-C. S. Lewis

* Far below today's cost.