

Text: 2 Cor 9.1-8  
St Stephen's

Nov 18, 2006  
Sat/Sun

## Giving Beyond Your Fears (II)

This weekend is **Ingathering Weekend**, where we will have the opportunity to bring our pledges of support for St Stephens. I get to talk about money!

Take a look at your pledge card. This is something far more significant than you might think.

If you give it serious thought, don't you find that **worries and fears** begin to flood in? Do the '**what abouts**' and the '**what ifs**' begin to take over? For most of us, the answer is, "Yes"!

If you listen carefully to your heart while this happens, what you discover is that **the greatest barrier to giving** in your life is **not greed**, not your **income**, not your **life's circumstances** – **but fear**.

Worry and fear are the greatest barriers to the generosity of Jesus flowing through your life. We pretty **easily give up to that barrier – but not often beyond** it.

Then we become **reluctant** givers, **left-over** givers, **guilt-driven** givers. That is why, in teaching about giving, Jesus often teaches about fear.

*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Matt 6:31-33 (NIV)

*"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor...*

Luke 12:32-33 (NIV)

Jesus wants us to live and give on the other side of fear.

**In our passage** Paul cheers the Corinthians for exactly that kind of giving, 'on the other side of fear' giving.

## **2 Cor 8 3-6 (Msg)**

*They were incredibly happy, though desperately poor. The pressure triggered something totally unexpected: an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. I was there and saw it for myself. They gave offerings of whatever they could- far more than they could afford! - pleading for the privilege of helping out in the relief of poor Christians.*

## **2 Co 9:7**

*God loves a cheerful giver!*

**Background to 2 Cor 8-9** Converted Jews were shunned socially, economically, religiously and nationally! Businesses must have collapsed, life's savings lost, family ties severed. Paul saw their poverty first hand, **and organized 3,4,5 collections** to relieve their poverty...

**Every collection from the churches gave him an opportunity to teach about giving...** And he **didn't motivate them by** guilt or pride or try to bulldoze them into compliance. He wouldn't settle for **reluctant** givers, **left-over** givers, **guilt-driven** givers. He went **way larger**. So large that if you go with him, it will **get you way on the other side of fear and worry**.

**He tells them that God has brought them into a Partnership**

He begins to describe it.

## **This Partnership has a Purpose**

Inside our passage, Paul includes this verse from Psalm 112

*"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;  
his righteousness endures forever."*

2 Co 9:9 (NIV)

Why? Because he is reminding us that God's very **character, his righteousness, is behind his giving.**

**He cares** about the poor, and

He cares about the lost.

So he scatters abroad

**his compassion for people who are suffering,**

and he scatters abroad

**his Gospel for people who are lost.**

This is what we call

the **great commandment** (love your neighbor) and

the **great commission** (make disciples).

He is **committed to resourcing** these things. His character, his righteousness is behind it.

He wants to get you behind it... to **make you a full partner** in the resourcing of his purposes. That is his vision for you. A **full partner in accomplishing his purposes.** When you accept that call, your life takes on a whole new significance.

Take a look at your **pledge card.** When you fill one of these out, you are saying, **I accept this partnership!** I am committed to resourcing the **great commandment** (love your neighbor) and the **great commission** (make disciples).

**Comments on our activities at St Stephens...**

This is something far more significant than you might think.

**This Partnership is Built on a Principle**

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

2 Co 9:6 (NIV)

**This is a Kingdom Principle,** the way things are... God **multiplies your giving - or your withholding.** That is the way life works.

**We think** we will gain more by keeping what we have for ourselves. But again and again the bible tells us that is **the way to lose** what we do have! God operates his universe on a very different principle.

*Give, and it will be given to you.*

This is a principle of our partnership with Jesus.

I think one of the reasons we see this principle so many different places in scripture is that he wants us to know that **it is perfectly safe to give on the other side of fear and worry**. It is safe to obey God. It is safe to be generous. It is safe to **'live light, and give large'**.

This is a principle that **extends across all of life**. If it is **safe to give**, it is safe to **forgive**. Even 70X7. Safe to **love**. Safe to go the **extra mile**.

It is **not safe** to hold back. Not safe to live for yourself. Not safe to bear a grudge. Not safe to put yourself first.

It is not safe to live on the short side of fear and worry. It is safe to live on the far side... because the far side of fear is the God side.

## **In This Partnership God is Looking for Repeat Business**

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

2 Co 9:8 (NIV)

Would you **look at the superlatives** in this verse with me?

He wants you to be well supplied with 'all grace' 'abound' in 'all things' at 'all times' 'all that you need' 'abound' 'every good work'

Why all the superlatives?

He wants you to **be confident you will be cared for**. God takes care of his partners...

Remember who wrote these words. Not a man who only knew the easy side of life. Paul was...

*flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been*

*shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather.*

Now he writes these words with confidence...

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

He wants you **to live and give on the far side** of fear and worry.

And he wants to use you again and again.

*Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way **so that** you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

2 Co 9:10-11 (NIV)

**If you do well, he will trust you with more.** He is looking for people he can trust and use again and again for his great commandment/great commission purposes. He will come back to you again and again.

*increasing your store of seed and will enlarging the harvest of your righteousness. Making you rich in every way **so that** you can be generous on every occasion.*

This is no little thing we do today. We say to him – I want in on that team.