

## The indescribable gift! – Part III

By Adauto Rezende

### **“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift”**

#### **II Corinthians 9: 15**

Every giver in Scriptures is known by their faith:

*“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”<sup>1</sup>*

It is a pattern in Scriptures that giving is act of worship, love, mercy, but also is an act of faith:

God sent Elijah, to Zarephat, to a starving widow during the drought in Israel, and prophet challenged her faith: *“Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” <sup>11</sup> As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” “As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.” Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’” <sup>15</sup> She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. <sup>16</sup> For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.”<sup>2</sup>*

Paul taught the same principle in our study of Second Corinthians.

The church’s members in Corinth were praised for their wish to send a missionary gift. He quotes: *“For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.”<sup>3</sup>*

Paul probably sometime earlier had shared with them the need of other Christians in the mission field, explaining their struggles for being Christians (some had their goods confiscated by the state for being Christians or sometime ostracized by society and family.).

He probably had taught them about responsibility of the church to preach the gospel to the world, as he reminded them in the same letter of their immaturity and fear to support him while in Corinth: *“I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed.”*<sup>4</sup>

Paul’s teaching on the subject really touched their hearts in Corinth and it says that they “were very enthusiastic” to give.

*“...telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action”*<sup>5</sup>

### **PROVE YOUR WORDS BY ACTION**

*“So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised...”*<sup>6</sup> It is clearly stated they had made a public promise to give an offering and it was a generous one. But, there was a need to see their promises coming true. I have seen church members on Sunday morning crying at the altar, singing “I surrender all” and making promises to give their time to serve God in the mission field, in evangelism, in intercessions and in whatever area their congregation is in need, and promising to tithe and to give their offerings regularly. Few days later their enthusiasm started to fade away, and they are no longer singing I surrender, not even 10%. Adding to this, the devil sends someone to tell them about the last financial scandal of a church leader somewhere. And try to guess what the next is? All the promises they made vanish away, and our fellow Christians go back to the same things they did before in their congregation: Nothing!

Because the apostle Paul knew all of this, he decided to challenge them. He wanted to see their faith not just by their emotions and words; he desired that they would prove it by their action. He said: *“Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.”* *“But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be.”*<sup>4</sup> *For if any Macedonians come with me*

*and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident”<sup>7</sup>*

## **THE SPIRITUAL IMPORTANCE OF GIVEN**

“This service, that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you”<sup>8</sup>

According to the above verses as Christian, my gift:

- a) It is to bless the Lord’s people who were in need (including workers and church members).
- b) It is a practical way of worship and thankfulness to God.
- c) The recipients it would praise God because of my offering.
- d) It is a practical way to express my Christian service.
- e) It is liberal.
- f) The receivers’ will have me in a high esteem. Certainly my offering isn’t to purchase someone’s heart, however a giver will have a divine favor in the hearts of its beneficiaries.
- g) My offering will prove my Christianity. I can’t serve money and God. If I am a taker and not a giver, I am still serving Mammon.

## **THE PRACTICAL SIDE**

Paul will follow Jesus’s instructions. He will speak in a way that his hearer would understand the lesson; therefore, he applied a basic agricultural concept: *“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.” (9:10)*

## My attitude as a giver

### a) How should I give?

I should be free from the burden of fear, greedy, Pharisaic pride or pressure. Your action as giver should also be accompanied by some fruit of the Spirit such as Love, joy, goodness and faithfulness. Read what Scriptures say:

- *Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. (9: 5)*
- *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (9: 7)*

### b) How is the size of my field?

The size of my field is going to show the quantity of my harvest. It could be a small field. It might be supporting your local congregation in its needs with your tithes and offerings; however, if your church has a missionary ministry, and you also give your donations to help you are enlarging your field and sowing more seeds on it.

Last Sunday (December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019) I visited a small congregation in Cambridge. They were about 30 members. In their mission report, they had sent during the year ten thousand dollars for missionary work in Asia and Africa. They had found further ground to sow their seeds.

### c) What type of ground and to which people I will trust my seeds

Remember, I mentioned in the previous study that Paul was making sure that the Corinthians would know where their seeds would be sowing. He had specifically disclosed the destination of their offerings and the spiritual background of the Christian leaders that would be overseeing their offerings. They were accountable to God and to men, people of integrity who had proved their commitment to Christ and his church.

Be careful where and who is taking care of your seeds. I have seen preachers on television dress up in thousands of dollars suit, drive limousines and living in on million dollars mansions. They collected millions of dollars from their viewers, by manipulation, declaring how good and fertile their field had being ready to receive the audience's seed. However, most of the times, some of these people's ground are like the parable of

the sower that Jesus taught his disciples. The Lord spoke about four types of ground where the seeds fell:

1. Some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came ate it up. These ministries are the path and these people are the birds that will eat up your seeds by their luxury and greedy. You might think that you are blessed, but later on you would find out that your investments had no spiritual significance.
2. Some seeds fell on rocky places. Their ground is full of gravels. Your seed will grow a bit, but will die, because there is no space in these types of soil for fruitfulness. There is full of rocks such as ego, greedy, pride and self-ambition. There is no space for missions, evangelism, love, mercy and generosity. It is all about me!
3. Some seeds fell among thorns. Some of these grounds have bad seeds on it. It is thorns. Once the seeds fell on it and started to grow, but the thorns choked the planted and it didn't bear grain. These people serve their lord, which is Mammon; therefore, they killed anyone who fall in their soil. They do not produce fruit, for they are thorns (once in a while you see some videos of them helping the poor in somewhere around the globe to cover up their extravagant lifestyle with jets, yachts, and multimillion real states.
4. Other seed fell on good ground! Yes, there are good soils where you can sow your seeds. There are faithful men of God who will take care of your donations. There are faithful ministries where your seeds will grow and multiply by hundreds. It might be your local congregation and the pastor who is serving the Lord there with integrity and faithfulness. If you are member of your local church and are sending your tithes to the gospel tycoon in California, you are simply throwing your seeds to the birds.

#### **d) Quality and amount - How much and what type of seed will you sow?**

- Numbers of seeds

You can't eat the seeds meant to sow. Every farmer knows this law, and you have to understand this principle as well. The tithe doesn't belong to you; it must go back to the ground. However, you have 90% of seeds that belong to you. Your offerings should come from these seeds. Jesus praised the widow who placed two copper coins on the

offering plate, worth only a few cents. It was all she had as her 90%. She sowed all her seeds, meanwhile the rich people offering much more compared to her amount, yet probably it was 2% or less of what they had.

- Quality of your seed.

If the farmer wanted to have a good harvest the following year he had to keep the best seeds to sow. He would make sure that his worker would select and set aside the finest kernels for this purpose. The same law applies for what you give. God did not accept an offering of blind, cripple, or diseased animals. Israel had to offer the best they had. You also should offer your finest seed. You have to set aside the premier of your crops to sow in the Lord's field. Once you get your salary, make sure to have a good offering on the mission's collection in your church. Set aside an offering for a faithful ministry you know. Perhaps, it might be a loving offering to help the poor, the orphans and widows. I would suggest you that to pray and ask the Lord to show you the good ground to sow your seeds, and He certainly will.

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. "(9: 6)

## The harvest

There is a conditional promise from God: "If you obey me, I will fulfil supply your needs."

Abraham obeyed God and offered his only son Isaac. He gave the most precious treasure he had. Because of his obedience, God gave him uncountable children from every tribe, tongue and nations. *"I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore."*<sup>9</sup>

David was one of the most generous believers in the Bible. Not considering his usually tithes and normal offerings, he offered in our day's money billions of dollars in gold and precious stones to build God's temple in Jerusalem. He would refuse to give to God what cost him nothing. In his last days on earth, he spoke an amazingly statement: *"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread."*<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, I have seen many Christians begging for money, full of debts and living in misery. It makes me wonder what these people had done with the seeds God gave them to sow.

- **How would I be blessed?**

“You will be enriched in every way.” 9: 11

And God is able to bless you abundantly ... having all that you need,...9: 8

The harvest would extend not just in the financial realm, but in every way: I will have a plentiful harvest, spiritually, emotionally and physically, such as food, shelter, clothes, love, joy, peace, grace, self-control and good sleep.

- **When would God bless a giver?**

“So that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 9: 8

All the time God’s blessing would be upon you. No matter the season, no matter the weather, no matter the world economy. Once you learn to give, you will always see God’s hands over your seeds.

- **Why would God bless a giver?**

“So that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 9: 8

The reason why God blesses a giver is that he might be fruitful. If you are not a giver, you will never abound in every good work. Did you note that the verse didn’t say to abound in work, but to abound in every GOOD work? What kind of work is he talking about? Good work is actions that please God, such as to proclaim the gospel to the nations, to give and to bless the poor, the orphans and the widows. It is important to know that when you sow you would not just harvest your crops in this life, but also in eternity. A harvest that you will reap when Jesus will judge your GOOD works you had done. Jesus spoke many times to his disciples about this harvest. I will quote two passages as follows:

- “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed

clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’<sup>11</sup>

- “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11: 18-19

<sup>2</sup> I Kings 17: 12-16

<sup>3</sup> II Co. 9: 2

<sup>4</sup> II Co. 11: 8-9

<sup>5</sup> II Co. 9: 2

<sup>6</sup> II Co. 9: 5

<sup>7</sup> II Co. 9: 3-4 II Co. 8: 24

<sup>8</sup> II Co. 9: 12-14

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 22: 16-17

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 37: 25

<sup>11</sup> Mathew 25: 34-40

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6: 19-21