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 Bridgeway Community Church
 Series: DEBT FREE
 April 21, 2024

DEBT FREE:
“Harvest Time”

I. OPENING COMMENTS

Praise the Lord, Bridgeway!

Today is the last installment of a 3-week series we’ve entitled DEBT-FREE

- The first message was on *flourishing* from Psalm 92 and we celebrated the paying off of our church mortgage with a “Mortgage Shredding” Ceremony.
- The second message, last week, was on *legacy* where we talked about passing on the baton from one generation to the next; especially financially.
- TODAY, our title is *Harvest Time*!

I will be centering the message around the key passage of **2 Corinthians 9**...

- Toward the end of the message, I will invite **Kevin Turpin II** (one of our bible teachers) to join me for the practical applications portion of the message.

Let’s pray!

II. SERMON INTRODUCTION

I received a letter after last week's sermon where we discussed “LEGACY” and being debt-free. In this letter you will see that it was indeed, Harvest Time for this woman in our congregation.

The author of the letter wanted to give glory to God with her testimony. This is what she wrote...

- *Dear Pastor Anderson, Last week Sunday - 04/07/24, I felt privileged to witness our church's "Mortgage Shredding" celebration, as we gave thanks to God for completing our 30-year mortgage in only 15 years. Praise the Lord! My joy became full to the point*

*of overflowing when you asked the whole congregation to press in and ask God to help us be Debt-free in our personal lives as well. I prayed in faith believing that the Lord is more than able to free me from my various debts. I am extremely happy to share with you that two days later, on **Tuesday -04/09/24...** I opened my email and was ever so pleasantly blessed with a surprise good news mail from the U.S. Department of Education, informing me that one of my two Parent Loans has been **paid in full!** Praise God! **The sum of \$30,000 has been canceled!** Wow! As a single parent and now a retiree, I have been struggling with the loan company to find a reasonable payment plan, but seemingly getting nowhere. I don't have enough words to express my gratitude to God for ...allowing me to be considered a recipient of this [student loan] forgiveness. Sincerely, Omolara Solaru (BCC Partner)*

Like I said in my last two sermons and I am declaring it again today...

Declaration:
“DEBT-FREE IS YOUR DESTINY!”

This woman's debt of \$30k was dropped and forgiven 2 days after that sermon.

Question:
How many of you know that her email came in at just the right time?

The decision by the government may have been made weeks or maybe even months before, but that Tuesday was her “Harvest Time”. Your harvest time is coming!

Hold on! *Your Tuesday* is on its way.

Question:
Will you have BOLD ENOUGH FAITH to believe it BEFORE you receive it?

The space between “seed time” (sowing) and “harvest time” (reaping) is the space in between where we must...

- Exercise our faith
- Be steadfast in our faithfulness
- Remain patient as you persevere toward our harvest time

Speaking of Harvest Time, please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 9 in your Bibles or smart phones. This passage highlights the generosity of God's people in advancing the kingdom work that the Apostle Paul was doing.

There were people coming to visit with Paul and they were planning on giving him a financial gift to help with the ministry.

Let's start with verse 1 and see the "*heart of generosity*"

III. SERMON BODY: EXEGESIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 9

A. THE HEART OF GENEROSITY (1-7)

Observe and notice the *emotional words* in the text...

- *"There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. 2 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*
- *3 "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."*
- *4 "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."*
- *5 "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. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one **grudgingly** given."*
- *6 "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give, not **reluctantly** or **under compulsion**, for God loves a **cheerful** giver. (2 Corinthians 9:1-7 NIV84)*

Question:

Did you notice the *emotional words* that are described when discussing generous giving?

- FOUR POSITIVE EMOTIONAL WORDS

- *Eager (v.2)*
- *Ready (Or Prepared) (vv. 2 & 3)*
- *Enthusiasm (v.2)*
- *Cheerful (v.6)*

- FOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL WORDS

- *Unprepared (v.4)*
- *Grudgingly (v.5)*
- *Reluctantly (v.7)*
- *Under Compulsion (v.7)*

Notice that God's desire is for the HEART to be right and happy about giving, not just gut-wrenching obedience out of compulsion and guilt.

Let's ask this question...

Question:

What category of words most reflect your heart right now?

The first category of positive emotions like: *Eager, ready, enthusiastic, cheerful?*

Or the second category like: *Unprepared, grudgingly, reluctantly, under compulsion?*

If any words from the second category describe you, STOP GIVING!

Can you believe the preacher is saying this? SERIOUS THOUGH, Stop Giving!

There are some areas of prayer that you need to focus on as God works on your heart.

You will know when your heart is changing when you start seeing the negative category fade away and the positive category of generosity starting to flood your soul.

E.G. FLOWERS FOR A LADY

- Ladies, if you and your man get into an argument about him not being romantic enough and he asks you what you want. What will you tell him?

- Maybe you will respond with the words of that old song, *“You don’t bring me flowers anymore.”*

If he brings you flowers the next day, throws them on the table, and says: *“Here, take the flowers. Are you happy now?”*

Question:

Does this engender that warm, romantic, and loving feeling that you were wanting?

OF COURSE NOT!

(Some of you might throw those flowers right back at him!) *haha*

My Point:

Friends, this is how many people give to God...

- Grudgingly
- Under Compulsion
- Out of Guilt
- Maybe, even out of anger
- *“Here God, take the money!”*

I have one word for you. STOP!

“STOP! In the name of love, before you break HIS heart. Think it o-o-ver!!”

When you give, it should be because you want to. It should be because of GRATITUDE in your heart. The heart of generosity should be filled with...

- *Eagerness*
- *Readiness*
- *Enthusiasm*
- *Cheerfulness*

That is the HEART OF GENEROSITY (v. 1-7).

Now let's move to **verse 8** and observe the *Wholeness Of Generosity*...

B. THE WHOLENESS OF GENEROSITY (v.8)

- 8 “*and God is about 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 Corinthians 9:8 NIV84)

WOW!

Can I read that again?

- 8 “*and God is about to make ALL grace* (HOW MUCH GRACE?)
- “*abound to you, so that in ALL things*” (HOW MANY THINGS?)
- “*at ALL times*” (AT HOW MANY TIMES?)
- “*having ALL that you need*” (HAVING “SOME” OF WHAT I NEED? NO, ALL!)
- “*you will abound in EVERY good work.*” (IN HOW MANY GOOD WORKS?)

Question:

Did you see the word ALL mentioned 4 times?

In Greek, guess what the word “All” means? The word “All” means ALL! :-)

God wants to bless you wholly and wholeheartedly..in ALL ways.

- FULLY!
- HE wants to see you abound in ALL areas in your life.
- ALL things, at ALL times, in EVERY way.
- “*Every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights.*” (James 1:17 NIV84)

- Jesus said that *“I come that they might have life and have it to the full!”*
(John 10:10 NIV84)

You may be saying, *“Pastor, I receive that. I want that. I am vibing with that...BUT WHEN?”*

WHEN WILL THE “ALL” FALL ON ME?

This leads us to the third point of the message...

It is not just the Heart of Generosity (v.1-7) and the Wholeness of Generosity (v.8), but we must wait for the *Harvest of Generosity* (v.9-12)!

In other words, IT’S COMING! (Either in this life and/or in the life to come)

C. THE HARVEST OF GENEROSITY (9:9-12)

- 9”As it is written: He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.” (cf. Psalm 112 NIV84) 10 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. 11 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. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:9-12 NIV84)

God will INCREASE YOUR STORE OF SEED and will ENLARGE YOUR HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Notice the word “WILL” 4 times!

- That’s a promise!
- You have to hold on to those promises and be righteous all the way to the end!
- YOUR HARVEST TIME IS COMING!
- YOUR TUESDAY IS COMING!
- YOUR INCREASE IS ON ITS WAY!
- YOUR ENLARGING OF HARVEST IS ON ITS WAY!

- INCREASE *means that God will give you more to so you can do more for His kingdom*
- ENLARGE *means that God will grow your righteousness through your increase*

Another Way To Put It:

God will bless you to be a blessing to others!

Then, by *blessing others* YOU will be even more blessed!

As your generous heart begins to grow, you will begin to understand what is meant by, “*It is better to give than to receive.*” (Acts 20:35 NIV84)

IV. REVIEW & PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

We’ve talked about...

- The *Heart* of Generosity
- The *Wholeness* of Generosity
- The *Harvest* of Generosity

A. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

I’m going to invite Kevin Turpin II up to the pulpit now. Kevin is a business man and one of our Bible teachers here at Bridgeway. He’s also been a mentee of mine for several years and is currently in our Ministers Training Track program...

1. OTHERS: Partner with Others in Expressing Generosity

- **Question:** (To Kevin) *What things have we done together with regard to generosity?*
 - **Kevin:** It’s so much more fun being generous with someone else. It’s fun to be generous, but it’s extra fun when you have a prayer partnership around your generosity. God will direct you toward specific people who need your generosity. We did this in our mentorship relationship, but also with a small group of others who wanted to grow in our practice of Spirit-led generosity.

- We launched a podcast where we discuss practical, Spirit-led generosity, called *Graceonomics* Podcast (Spotify/Apple Podcasts). You can check that out for more practical applications that will help you be more generous in everyday life.

2. OVERFLOW: Use Your Overflow to Be a Blessing

- **Kevin:** 2 Corinthians 9:11 is one of my favorite verses. When I circled it in my Bible, I wrote “9-1-1”. When we call 9-1-1, we are in need of help and first responders. I believe God’s people are called to be Kingdom First-Responders! God wants to use your generosity to respond to others in need, so they in turn can be enriched to help others in need.
- Our overflow is meant to overflow *into other people* (e.g. time, leftover food, joy etc). One of my favorite verses is **Malachi 3:10**, ““Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’” (NIV)
- God wants us to use EVERYTHING we have to bless others in our life. We might have financial overflow, or we might have an overflow of joy that God wants us to share with others. Share whatever OVERFLOW you have! *Don’t build bigger barns to store your overflow, but let it flow through you to OTHERS!* (see **Luke 12:18-20**)

3. OPEN : Open Your Heart to Trust God with Your Tithing by Faith

- **Question:** *How does this idea of Generosity and being Debt-free connect?*
 - **Kevin:** I think generosity has to start with *tithing*. God is the most generous being who ever existed. GOD himself came down to cover our sins and bring us salvation, and not only that, but he still feeds and clothes us daily! So when we start thinking about generosity, we must begin by acknowledging the *source* of our generosity – that everything comes from God, and all of it ultimately belongs to him. Generosity begins with a heart that believes and is thankful over how generous God has been to us. It always begins with the heart!
- **Question:** *Kevin, what is your tithing story?*

- **Kevin:** Both my wife and I grew up with parents who modeled tithing for us. But it wasn't until we heard a sermon here at Bridgeway on giving that we really felt challenged to trust God more fully with our resources. I just remember Dr. Anderson asked in a sermon whether some of us tithed our "net" income or our "gross" income. At the time, we were just tithing based on our net income. He then asked a follow up question: "*How do you want God to bless you — "NET or GROSS?"*" We have been tithing off our gross ever since, and from that point on, God has increased our gross income *11-fold!*
- We have to repent when we play funny with God's money. And for some of us, that means we begin by tithing what we can – even if it's just 2% – and looking at how God meets us.

B. A FINAL BLESSING

Paul makes a statement in **verse 9**, which comes from Psalm 112. It says:

- *"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."*
(Psalm 112:9 NIV84)

Please allow Kevin and I to read this Psalm over you as a blessing to close out this series...

- *1 "Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands. 2 Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. 4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous. 5 Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely who conduct their affairs with justice. 6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. 7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting the Lord. 8 Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. 9 They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever, their horn (dignity) will be lifted high in honor."*
(Psalm 112:1-9 NIV)

Amen and Amen!