

KAINOS MOMENT

Each week, set aside some time to reflect on this devotional as you prepare for your *Kainos* commitment.

GENEROSITY AS A CONDUIT OF GOD'S GRACE

Chapters 8 and 9 of Paul's second letter to the Early Church at Corinth is one of the longest continuous teachings on giving in the Bible. If you haven't read through both of those chapters in their entirety in a while, please do so. We won't be able to do them justice here in this *Kainos* Moment, but we're going to focus in on a key part near the end of chapter 9.

To give the context in this chapter, the Apostle Paul was writing to the church at Corinth about an offering they are being asked to give in order to help some of the poorer churches in Jerusalem. As you may know, Jerusalem was across the other side of the Mediterranean Sea from Corinth, and so these early believers were being asked to give to another church whom they would likely never meet and who was quite different than them in many ways.

Rather than spend loads of time on the rationale of why they should give to these churches in Jerusalem, however, Paul instead spends his time writing not about what they are giving TO but rather what they should be giving FROM. He seeks to disciple their hearts. He is far more concerned about the hearts and discipleship of the givers doing the giving than the gifts themselves. You see this all throughout chapter 8 as well as chapter 9, but let's pick it up right here in chapter 9 with verses 10-11:

"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 enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

Let's reflect for a moment and focus in on verse 11. You will be enriched in every way so that — what? You can feel more secure? No. So that you can feel more accomplished? No. So that you can have everything you desire? No. Paul says, "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be GENEROUS on EVERY OCCASION." We are blessed to be a blessing.

Paul continues on in verses 12-15:

"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. Because of this 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. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

Paul is sharing that while this giving is certainly going to supply the needs of the Lord's people, i.e. the poorer churches in Jerusalem, that there is actually more going on here. See, generosity isn't merely paying for the mission. Generosity actually is the mission. Generosity accompanied by a gospel confession is a way of others experiencing God's grace flowing through us. In verse 14 Paul writes, "In their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you." It's not about us. It's not about our great frugality or even our great heart for generosity. It's about God's grace flowing THROUGH us that is the point.

So reflect on this question: What is the WHY behind your generosity? Are you merely giving TO a mission that you are funding? Or are you giving FROM a heart that is being changed by the transformative power of the gospel, allowing others to hear about that "why" as you give? This *Kainos* initiative is an opportunity — a powerful moment — for others to see the NEW THING God is doing in us and through us, as we are conduits of His grace.

THE GOSPEL'S FREEDOM

SUN, NOV 7, 2021 | COLOSSIANS 2:16–23

MEMORY VERSE

"If you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belong to the world? Why do you submit to regulations...?"

Colossians 2:20 CSB

READ: Colossians 2:16–23

INTRO:

On what do you base your value? Culture tends to lean into outward appearance: your significance comes from the clothes you wear, the car you drive, social media clout, or experiences. However, the Bible teaches that our value is based on our status "in Christ" and all else becomes tools and resources to accomplish the mission He has placed before us.

So, Paul writes to the Colossians "don't let anyone judge you" (2:16). Only our Ultimate Judge, God, can adequately know us and judge us by His standards. Back during the culture of greed in the 80s, a popular t-shirt/bumper sticker read "He who dies with the most toys, wins." A realist followed that up with "He who dies with the most toys is still dead." In the parable of the rich fool who focused on accumulation (Luke 12:16–21), Jesus concludes with "You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared – whose will they be?"

We cannot base our life's priorities on measuring up to the standards of popular culture. Impressing others is not our life's goal. Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." (Matthew 6:33)

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

The false teachers in Colossae seemed to be teaching a "Jesus plus" heresy: Jesus plus ritual (2:16–17), Jesus plus philosophy (2:18), or Jesus as an add-on rather than the Head of the Body (2:19). In other words, they taught that Jesus was insufficient to meet our basic needs, whether spiritual, physical, or emotional. In fact, we find elsewhere that these early false teachers were preoccupied with material things. Peter described them as lustful, sensual, adulterers, with "hearts trained in greed" (2 Peter 2:14).

Beware when anyone says that "Jesus is insufficient, the Bible is unreliable, or the Church is unsustainable." In our culture that rejects absolute truth and wants to define morality as a personal choice, we must not only believe God's truth but also walk in it.

In contrast, Paul affirmed Christians are free from the world's system of judging value. We should not subject ourselves to legalistic rules that others use to determine "maturity." He made a clear distinction between God's truth and human traditions. While legalism, asceticism, vain philosophy, and human traditions have "a reputation of wisdom" (2:23), they have no practical value in achieving spiritual growth.



EXPLORE AND APPLY

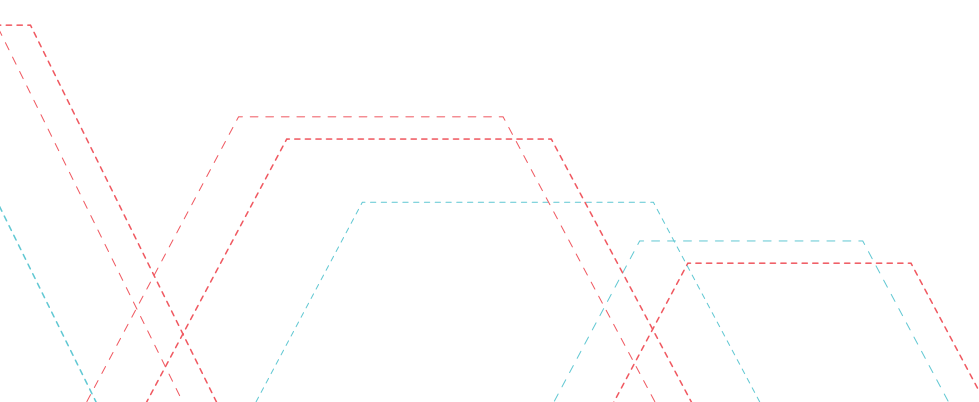
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

KEY POINTS, PART 1 - vs. 16-19

- Don't judge your value by other's opinions.
 - Pseudo-religion may be worse than no religion.
 - If Christ is not Lord of all, He's not Lord at all.
1. How do people judge your spirituality today?
How do measures used by church members differ from those outside the church?
 2. List some things that the world considers "spiritual," but are unbiblical.
 3. What are some day-to-day aspects of living in which we neglect to let Jesus be the Head?

KEY POINTS, PART 2 - vs. 20-23

- Dying with Christ spiritually provides ultimate freedom in the physical realm.
 - Doctrines of God trump doctrines of humans.
 - Not everything that appears spiritual has practical value toward maturing spiritually.
1. How have we died with Christ to "the elements of this world?" (2:20)
 2. What are some "doctrines of men" that we confuse with God's truth?
 3. Why do some things have an appearance of wisdom but, in fact, have no practical value to the Christian?



THIS WEEK'S PRAYER FOCUS:

STRETCHING OUR FAITH

"Teach me your way, Lord, and I will live by your truth. Give me an undivided mind to fear your name." (Psalm 86:11)

Make this your opening prayer today. Spend time reflecting on God's faithfulness in your life. "Recount the answered prayers, the miracles He has done, and all of the ways that He has blessed you. When we recall His faithfulness in our lives, our faith is spurred on!

As a church, we are entering into a NEW season of joining God in His activity in our commission, our community, and our compassion. This will require each of us to seek the Lord to know our part. Let's allow God to stretch our faith in NEW ways. How great it will be to see with our own eyes what He does as we put our trust in Him alone!

Prayerfully read the following scriptures:

"Everyone must appear with a gift suited to his means, according to the blessing the Lord your God has given you." (Deuteronomy 16:7)

"Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,' says the Lord of Armies. 'See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.'" (Malachi 3:10)

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Ask the Lord to show you how He wants to stretch your faith and bring you into NEW territory in your journey with Him. Is there a way that you have held back what belongs to Him? Ask Him to give you courage to trust Him with all the resources He has entrusted to you so that you can experience a NEW awareness of His sufficiency.

Now take a step of faith. Believe God at His word. Believe He is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do. He does not change.

What does God say He will do if we bring our resources to Him? He will throw open the floodgates of Heaven. What we release into His hands, He pours back so much we cannot contain it! Floodgates are designed to regulate and control the passage of something. Consider that there are blessings held back in Heaven intended for us.

