

SUPPLYING OR MULTIPLYING

The sequel to the sequel (as *Liberty for Life* followed *Exiting Egypt*) This morning is the first of three consecutive Sundays in which we look at a **biblical principle, a Bible idea, that can change a life!** Your life, for instance. It already has changed lives in this church. If it hasn't changed yours, it can. ***If it changes the life of enough of us***, it will change our church --- and our church will do more good, more of God's work, in London and all over the world than we are doing just now! The biblical principle is explained in a figure of speech. "***Sowing seed and reaping a harvest.***"

Two bits of background information to begin with:

i) **The historical context:** The backstory **2 Corinthians 9:1-5** There was an opportunity to do something for God that Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians in on. It was a financial thing. It was giving money to the **needy Christians living in Jerusalem during a famine. This 9th chapter is about that opportunity.** This is a chapter about using your money, but **money is not the only thing** you can use to do something for God.

ii) **The New Testament concept of what sort of "good" God works out the details of our lives to accomplish.** The good is his people becoming more like Jesus in character and action. **Romans 8:28-29** And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

NOTES:

1. **God intends that his people become conformed to the image of Christ.**

In our text: Christlike character and action get described like this: **2 Corinthians 9:8-10** ... you may abound **in every good work ... his righteousness** (That is, God's righteousness) **endures forever... increase the harvest of your righteousness.** (By the way, James in his New Testament letter uses the same word picture: **James 3:18** And a **harvest of righteousness** is **sown** in peace by those who make peace.)

LET'S BE CLEAR ON THIS: God is very committed to this intention!
He means to make it happen. He has the power to make it happen!

2. **God determines what you get and how much you get and when you get it and how you get it.**

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

The Old Testament understanding: David says (in prayer) to God: **1 Chronicles 29:12-14** Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

The New Testament understanding: James to his Christian brothers and sisters: **James 1:16-17** Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Now the lively **Q:** *Upon what basis does God decide HOW MUCH to give any one person?*

And the **A:** **(Romans 8:28,29) GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR CHRISTLIKENESS!**

So Paul the apostle writes to some Christians he knew in Colossae:

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- ⇒ **Can you see how important this instruction is? Consider what happens if we get this wrong! Can you imagine living your whole life pursuing some worldly dream that you never accomplish, but which, if you ever had managed to accomplish, would have turned out NOT to satisfy as it was always promising to???**

But you never find this out in this life because you never succeeded in acquiring the thing, the stuff that you thought would satisfy you (but wouldn't)???. Or you find out at the very end, and as you lie there dying, you think of the life you are just finishing up, and all you can think to say is, "***I've wasted it!***"

And this very important issue is the same thing that he is writing about to the Corinthian Christians

2 Corinthians 4:18 ...we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And in our actual text (Our KEY VERSE) today... **2 Corinthians 9:10** He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase **the harvest of your righteousness.**

3. **God supplies seed for bread and multiplies seed for sowing.** Here's that principle; that foundational truth

And here in our text is how this works. **2 Corinthians 9:10** He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase **the harvest of your righteousness.**

Here is the biblical principle: but before we look at it, let's be clear about something: Money is only one of the commodities that God distributes according to his plan to conform us to the image of Christ. Along with **money** there is **time** (*You would have more if things went more smoothly, right?*) ("**Time to Sow**") and **energy** (*Some people are more energetic than others, you may have noticed. Who really decides how that works?*) and **abilities** (*Life isn't fair. Some people are really good at things. Some people are good at lots of things. Life isn't fair. But who is in charge of this?*) and **opportunities** (*Paul called them "open doors" → Colossians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 2:12,13*). **Seed = money** in **2 Corinthians 9**, but **time**), **energy**, **abilities**, **opportunities** ("**open doors**" → **Colossians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 2:12,13**) are all gifts that God gives. They are all "riches and honor" that come from God. All "good and perfect gifts" that come down from the Father of Lights All these are gifts of God, and in regard to them this same principle is true:

As a memory device: **Money. Abilities. Time. Energy. Opportunities → MATEO! → "Gift of the Lord"**

NOW: here is what this 3rd Note is saying: God provides the "seed". (They are all gifts of God. All of our "MATEO"). **God offers to provide us with as much seed as we need. But how much seed we need depends on what we are meaning to accomplish.**

If what we mean to do is totally focused on this world: just getting by, just feeling good, just living from one meal to the next, from one weekend to the next, from one vacation to the next, from one good TV program to the next, then **God SUPPLIES seed for bread.**

IF, on the other hand, you have more in mind than that: if you really do seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" and "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (**Colossians 3:1-4**), **IF YOU HAVE A MIND TO ~ IF YOU "HAVE THE HEART"** for it: **TO REAP A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, then you can expect that **God will MULTIPLY seed for sowing.** He can be expected to multiply your money and abilities and time and energy and opportunities so that you will have enough to sow, that is, to invest in the things above, the things of the kingdom of God.

If this sounds a bit like "**the prosperity gospel**" and I am sounding a bit like a "prosperity preacher," I'm glad you noticed! **And what about that?** At the risk of sounding very wrong: **THERE IS SOMETHING "RIGHT-ISH" ABOUT THE IDEA OF SEEKING PROSPERITY.** What is totally off-base about "**the prosperity gospel**" is NOT the idea of seeking prosperity but RATHER the superficial, worldly, materialistic, ungodly idea of what prosperity is.

Psalms 1:1-4 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. **In all that he does, he prospers.** The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Adopting this unusual view of prosperity requires a radical change of mindset!

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Also **Colossians 3:1-4**)

ACTION: (For those who believe this principle: Just one today with two more coming over the next two Sundays)

- a) **Decide how much of "a harvest" you desire.** *Would you like to be more than just a bread eater? Just a consumer? Would you like to be a seed sower? A harvester? Would you like to be more like Christ in this? (He was a sower!)*

2 Corinthians 9:8-10 ... you may abound in every good work ... and increase **the harvest of your righteousness.**

A related question: *How much do we as a church desire?* (To be more like Christ? He sowed and he harvested!) Because if you as a follower of Christ --- and if we as a church of Christ --- are serious about "a harvest of righteousness" → serious enough to change the way we use our "MATEO" → our lives will change! And so will the lives of people in London and around the world! So here is the choice facing us: **GOD OUR SUPPLIER OR GOD OUR MULTIPLIER???**

NEXT SUNDAY: April 25, 2010 "**Time to Sow**" SPARINGLY OR BOUNTIFULLY **2 Corinthians 9:6**