

Investing From The Heart

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Would you take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 9. 2 Corinthians chapter 9. We're continuing our series this morning entitled We Are the Church. We are the church. And by way of refresher, and maybe you haven't been here for the entire series and that's all right, we're going to give you a quick refresher on this. Let's say it together as you're turning. Would you look up at the screen? Maybe you don't have to by now, but let's say this together. Ready? Begin. We don't just go to church. We are the church. I told y'all last Sunday you would get it first time and you did. Great job. Very well done. That is right. We don't just go to church. We are the church. We talked about that with the children just a little bit ago. The church is more than a building. It is a body. It is the people gathered together. We get that concept from the New Testament. They use the word ecclesia, ecclesia, which means assembly, congregation, a called out gathering of people. So the first week in our study of what we call ecclesiology, which is the doctrine of the church, comes from that word ecclesia. We talked about we are the church and the church is not about who? Me.

Who is it about? God. That's right. The church is about God. The church is not about you. It's not about me. It's about God. The next Sunday we talked about the church, how it's unified in its diversity. We all come from different backgrounds. We're different kinds of people. Oftentimes people that probably wouldn't associate in other walks of life, but we come together as the body of Christ and that brings glory to God. He can unite us, people from all different kinds of backgrounds together under his name. And then last Sunday, we talked about the church. Are we a customer or a minister? How every one of us is qualified to be a minister. Everyone is called to be a minister. That doesn't mean we're all the same kind of minister.

We all share the same kind of ministry, but we are all called to minister. Specifically, we're all called to the ministry of reconciliation, reconciling God with man. We do that through sharing the gospel with one another. We do that by making sure we're reconciled. There's no strife and discord among our body of believers in the church. So we are the church. Today, we're going to talk about this subject, investing from the heart. Investing in the church from your heart.

Y'all ever heard this before? Bless your heart. Somebody ever said that to you? You ever said that to somebody else? Well, bless your heart. What does it mean exactly? Well, I found this online and I don't know exactly how accurate it is, but this little sliver up here, I don't care, but I feel like I should. Maybe that's what bless your heart means sometimes.

This one is especially cruel. You're pitiful, but you just don't know it. Then jump over to the other side. I'm praying for you. You ever said that to somebody? You know what? I'm praying for you. And then you forgot to pray for him. Ever done that before? And then the little grace lover here. I wish I could say what I'm really thinking. That's rough. And then I love the bottom one. Can I bring you a casserole? That's especially Baptist right there. Bless your heart, right? That's kind of a southern thing. And I guess Texas is enough of the south that we get in on that bless your heart action as well. Let's look over in Acts chapter 20 and verse 35. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, you could stay in 2 Corinthians 9 if you want to. I put these up on the, we're going to spend more time in 2 Corinthians 9 so you don't have to bounce around after I asked you to turn. But I put these up here. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. It's more blessed to give than to receive. When Jesus says, bless your heart, you know what he does? He blesses your heart. He really does.

[4 : 4 6] He actually does it. He means what he says. He is the fountain of all blessings in our life. We can be blessed by walking closely with the Lord Jesus. Proverbs 11 verse 25, the generous will prosper. Those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. It's talking about a blessing. When you bless others, you yourself will be blessed. When you bless the heart of something, of someone

else, your heart will be blessed. And that's not a joke. That's not a bless your heart joke. So generosity will allow you to prosper in all kinds of ways. When you refresh, I love the usage of that word refresh.

When you're refreshing to someone else, God will refresh you. He's talking about your inner being. He's talking about your soul, your heart, the seat of the mind, will, and emotions in you. That is what God will bless. That is what he will refresh. So the takeaway from the sermon this morning that we're going to try to dive into the scriptures and search out today is the more I give to God from my heart, the more he blesses my heart. The more he blesses my heart. Doesn't necessarily mean the more you give to the church, the more God blesses your heart. That's not the takeaway. The more you give to God from your heart, then we find the promises in scripture that say, that says he will bless your heart. So would you stand with me in honor of the reading of God's word? I know we don't always do that. And if you're not able to stand this morning because of physical disabilities, that's totally fine.

But if you can stand, let's, let's do this. They stood in the Old Testament for the reading of God's word. We're not necessarily commanded to do that every time we read the Bible, but it's, it's not a bad practice to get into. So second Corinthians chapter nine in verse 16, the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. The person who sows generously will also reap generously. Well, that seems pretty obvious, right? That part of it, that's kind of straightforward. If you sow sparingly, you'll reap sparingly. If you sow generously, you'll reap generously. Verse seven, each person should do as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make every grace overflow to you so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work. As it is written, he distributed freely. He gave to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. God didn't hold back. He distributed freely and he sets the example for us. Verse 10, now the one who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will also provide and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us. Do you see that? Generosity produces thankfulness to God. Giving generously makes us thank God more for his generosity to us.

Verse 12, for the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, the saints gathered together here as a church, the ministry of this service, your generosity is not only supplying the needs of the saints or the church, but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Once again, their generosity produces thanks to God. Verse 13, because of the proof provided by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we thank you for this time this morning. We thank you for your word, your living word that comes alive and challenges us every time we open it. God, it's a terrible thing for us to live with the guidebook to life. The living word that can transform us and not seek truth from it, not go to it, not heed its counsel, not obey what it teaches. I pray that we would not be guilty of that this morning, God.

Do a work in each of our hearts. We'll give you the glory in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. This passage in 2 Corinthians 9 just gave us the law of sowing and reaping. The law of sowing and reaping. How many of you guys are currently farming? Anybody a farmer? Ish? We got two kids raising their hand. That's awesome. I need to invest in you guys' businesses, man, because you're getting started early. That's great. How many of you guys grew up on a farm of some kind? Anybody? Yeah, we got a lot more of that. So you grew up in it and then you got away from it. You're like, I'm done. I ain't doing the farming thing anymore. The law of sowing and reaping. You definitely understand that and the Bible gives it to us right here. If you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. If you sow generously, you reap generously. Can I tell you, remind you that the same is absolutely true in the Christian life.

[10:41] So if we sow generously in God's work, we will reap God's blessings generously. If we sow a little bit, we will reap a little bit. That's what the Bible is teaching us here. So what do we need to do?

I knew y'all would get there. Yes, that's right. We need to sow generously. Absolutely we do. So let's look back in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 in verse 6, that first verse. The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. The person who sows generously will also reap generously.

Now notice verse 7. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart. Not reluctantly, not out of compulsion, not being forced to, since God loves a cheerful giver. So there's two ways you can go with this in interpreting this verse. One, you can say, the Bible says I'm not supposed to give reluctantly. I'm not supposed to give because somebody compelled me to do that, not out of compulsion.

And if I give that way, I can't give cheerfully. So I give how I want, I give what I want, and you can't tell me any different. Or you could say, each person should do as he's decided in his heart, I'm going to let the Holy Spirit affect my heart. Do you know nine times out of ten in the Bible, when it talks about the heart, it talks about it in a sinful context.

[12:32] Now I just pulled that stat from, you know, left field, okay? So it might be eight times out of ten, rather than nine, okay? But the point is, our heart is deceitful. Our heart is wicked.

So if we completely on our own decide that we are going to give to God, out of our own sinful heart, we're, first of all, probably not going to give anything. And anything we do choose to give will be for the praise of man. It'll be to make us feel better. It'll be to somebody to notice us and pat us on the back or meet some expectation that is put on us. If we let the Holy Spirit affect our heart, guide our heart, direct our heart, then we will do what God wants us to do. That's true for every area of our life, including giving. God loves a cheerful giver. How do you be cheerful if you're a child of God? Anybody want to take a guess at it?

How do you be cheerful if you're a Christian? Smiling helps, that's true. But sometimes you can force a smile on your face when you're not even necessarily feeling cheerful. How do you be cheerful? Let's change it to joyful. How do you be joyful?

Keep your eyes on Jesus. That's very good. Focus on his blessings. We're missing one.

What's that? Have a full heart. Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Yes. Obedience. Obeying that Holy Spirit. Letting that Holy Spirit fill you. Obeying him. Obeying God will eventually produce joy in your life. Paul writes throughout the book of Romans about a war inside of himself. There's the war of the flesh against the spirit. It's constantly at war.

[14:59] Our natural desires, what we think or want to do, are at odds with what God thinks and wants for us. So there's a constant battle going on, and depending on which dog you feed more, that's who's going to win the fight, right? Depending on whoever wins that struggle, you reap the rewards of that win.

If the flesh wins, you reap the rewards of the flesh. Anybody ever tasted the rewards of the flesh?

They can taste sweet for a minute, can't they? And then they always turn bitter, don't they?

They absolutely do. They turn bitter. They leave us empty. They leave us wanting more. The rewards of the spirit winning that battle are eternal. They're fulfilling. They keep our heart full.

They keep us filled with joy. Even in the midst of death of a family member. Even in the midst of financial uncertainty. Even in the midst of having no rain for your cattle, etc. Even in the midst of struggles that we know will come, God can still make us joyful. God can make us cheerful. But it takes obeying him. It takes listening to him. So as we decide in our heart, we must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Not our own thinking. Not our own fleshly thinking. Who's going to win that battle? So I wanted to make that point before we move on. Y'all ever heard this? The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. He also accepteth from a grinch. It's true. Look, however you give, we can take it. We can use it. God can multiply it. God can use it for his glory. And we are grateful for it. But for your own heart. For your own well-being. Give cheerfully. Let God dictate to you in your heart what you should do.

And then you do it. Not you dictate what you think you should do. And then blame it on God. Y'all ever done that? Y'all ever been guilty of that before? Decided something on your own and then blamed that decision on God. Give God credit for something. And I imagine God sitting up in heaven thinking, I didn't have any part of that decision. But thanks for telling everybody it came for me.

[17:36] Well, God wants me to do this. Like, are you sure that's God or is that just you? We're all probably guilty of that at some level. But the Lord loves a cheerful giver. Yeah, he can use whatever. He used Balaam the donkey to talk. You know, he can use all kinds of things.

Now, maybe we have more in common with the donkey than we'd like to imagine. But the truth is, God loves when we give him a willing, able vessel to use. Teenagers, God can use you at school. He can use you on your volleyball team, on your football team, your track and field team. God can use you with your coaches. He can use you with your teachers.

He can use you on the cheer squad too. I don't want to leave anybody out. They're going to get mad at me. Why didn't you mention our team? Probably did, didn't I? Did I cover them all? We haven't gotten to baseball and basketball and all that yet, so I'm not, not even there yet. Listen, God can use you in your fantasy football league. I'm coming for you today, child. Where y'all at? In case y'all weren't aware, we got a little church fantasy football league kind of going under the surface here, so we're going to try to let the Holy Spirit reign over that.

God can use you in every single area of your life, but you've got to submit to him. You've got to be usable, and giving is the exact same. God can use you to do more than you possibly think you could do.

[19 : 19] So how are you going to give? Deuteronomy, the Old Testament gives us a wonderful recipe kind of, don't have a stingy heart. First of all, don't have a stingy heart when you give. Because of this, if you don't have a stingy heart, the Lord will, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. Does that mean God's going to make you rich financially? God makes us rich in all kinds of ways, but not necessarily financially. Why? Because y'all, it doesn't matter.

Being rich on this earth does not matter at all. It's a means to an end. If God chooses to give for a season of life in abundance, then use that abundance for his glory. If he chooses to withhold, then use what little you have for his glory. God will take care of you. God will take care of me.

I have had seasons of life when I've had more than other times. I've had Christmases where we couldn't afford a Christmas tree. I've had, you know, all kinds of things that times in life when we had a lot or a little. Through it all, God took care of us. God will take care of you. Why? Because he's a father. Because he loves his children. He's never going to let you completely be shamed. He's never going to leave you completely on your own. He might take you through difficult times. He might take you through times of leanness, times of being without, but God will take care of you. And he will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. But you can't be stingy with God. Don't be stingy with God. That messes up the process. Then you're not giving everything to God for him to bless. Then you're withholding. Say, you can bless all this area of my life, but I'm holding on to this one. You can't have this. Okay, fine. Then God can't bless that area. Whatever you keep back from God, you limit his blessings in your life. So it's a mind shift. It's a mental shift.

[21 : 49] I'm not saying every single person in here has to take 10% of their paycheck and write a check on Sunday morning and drop it in the offering plate. That's not what God said. God said, don't have a stingy heart. God said, give cheerfully. Let the Holy Spirit guide you and do what the Holy Spirit of God wants you to do. But look, y'all, that means you're accountable to God. Say, sweet, I'm just accountable to God. I'm not accountable to you, and I'm not accountable to you. Y'all, God's going to demand a whole lot more from you than we ever would. God's going to ask you to give up your children to go be a missionary in Africa. God's going to ask you to give something to someone that would never even enter your mind to do. God's going to ask you to step out of your career and do something else. God's going to ask you to do all kinds of things, but he will sustain you through that process. I'm a living testimony of that. God has sent me all over this world, and there's other things I could have and maybe would have even rather chosen to do with my life, but God knew what I needed to do. And I'm absolutely in my sweet spot in my life. But if I had held back from him, where would I be? Whatever you're holding back from, I'm not shaking my fist at you. I'm not pointing my finger at you. I'm just saying, God can't use it. God can't bless it. Let go of it. Relinquish it.

Hands off. Give it to God. He'll do something much greater with it than you ever could. The next principle, we have the law of sowing and reaping. Whatever you sow, that's what you'll reap. Now we have a principle, the principle of the heart and the treasure. Before we dive into this verse, I want to get back, and I probably should have put this in.

Did you see verse 7 here? 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 7. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart. Okay? Now let's jump back to Matthew. Here we go. Matthew chapter 6. If you want to turn there quickly, you can. If you want to just read it on the screens, that's fine too. Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, where your wife doesn't spend it all at Target. Just made all the ladies mad, didn't I? It's a joke. I probably spend as much as my wife does at Target, so what are you going to do? And thieves don't break in

and steal, and all the things that happens to our money on this earth doesn't happen in heaven. Where your treasure is, there where your heart will be also. You don't have to worry about the stock market doing well or not.

[24 : 52] You don't have to worry about taxes. You don't have to worry about all the different things that accompany earthly riches, earthly wealth. So don't chase so hard after earthly wealth.

Does that mean you shouldn't be financially wise? If that's what you're getting out of that passage, you're just not getting it. Absolutely not. You should be financially wise. Throughout the Proverbs and throughout the Bible, we see great golden nuggets of wisdom on how to manage your finances well, how to be fiscally responsible. But it's for a purpose.

It's not just so you can accumulate it all and build it all in your storehouses and point to your riches and wealth and say, look what I have. Look what I built up in my life. Because then you're getting all the glory. And what good does that do anyone? None. It doesn't even do you anybody good.

It doesn't even do you any good. But if you give God the glory, then you unlock his blessings. Then you unlock his full scope of what he can do in your life.

You just give it all to him to you. God might choose to give a lot of it back to you. Or he might not. That's up to him. We trust his wisdom in those areas. But where we store our treasure, that's where our heart is. That's the recipe.

[26 : 33] Where your heart is, that's where your treasure will be. And vice versa. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be. Look over in Exodus chapter 35 and verse 29. The Israelites brought a free will offering to the Lord. All the men and women whose hearts prompted them to bring something for all the work of the Lord that the Lord through Moses had commanded to be done. So they brought a free will offering to God as their hearts prompted them to bring something for the work of the Lord. All the work that God commanded them to do, they knew it couldn't be funded except through them. So they said, okay, we value that. So we're going to put our treasure toward it. That's where our heart is. Our heart is in what God is doing in this community.

Our heart is what God is doing through our people. That's what the Israelites said. And so they put their treasure toward it. They applied their treasure toward the work that God was doing because that is what, that's where their heart was. So they did it freely. Free will.

They didn't have to be compelled. They didn't have to be begged. They didn't have to have somebody beating them over the shoulder saying, why don't you guys give? We don't have enough to support the ministry here. They just did it because that's where their heart was. George Mueller, one of the people in life who, in the history of Christianity, who has put more practice to his faith in depending on God, trusting God to provide, doing without knowing that God would come through. You read the biography of George Mueller. He lived that. Ran an orphanage and, you know, absolutely there were days when they had nothing, had zero food to feed the children, etc. And people would just drop off food for them.

He says, laying up treasures in heaven will draw the heart heavenward. And I'll take him at his word on that because he lived it. You want to get closer to God? You want your heart to bond more closely with the Lord? Wonder why you're not getting all his blessings in your life? Maybe because your heart has wandered far away from him. You're holding back. You're limiting what God can do in your life.

So if you lay up treasures in heaven, that draws your heart heavenward because you're putting your treasure in something and your heart will be there. Your heart will follow.

[29 : 08] So there's two ways we can look at this. One is public and one is private. Public company, company A on the left here, owned by who? Shareholders, promoters, general investors.

That's kind of like the church. Our members, our givers, our regular attenders, our partners in ministry, those who are involved here, those are the shareholders. We should not, we can also be promoters out there telling people, you know what? God's doing something in our church. Y'all need to come be a part of it. Sharing the gospel with people, helping them to meet Jesus. And then general investors, those who actually lay up their treasure in what's going on in the work of this church. So that's kind of like a public company. Some of you probably view it the other way. And there are churches that operate this way. It's more private. It's owned by management, the founders, private investors. Do you understand the difference there? It's not a direct one-for-one comparison with publicly traded companies and privately, you know, privately owned companies and the church.

It's not an exact comparison. But there is a distinction between the concept of public and private. The church should be more public in this way. Shareholders, promoters, general investors, anybody can come in, meet Jesus, start to have him transform their lives, invest in what's going on in this ministry and see God do something through them powerfully. As opposed to the us for and no more concept. This is our unique exclusive club. You can't necessarily be a part of it.

We take care of the needs that we have and etc., etc. So there's a distinction between this public and private. Are you an investor in what God is doing in Henrietta, Clay County, and beyond?

Across Texas through Mary Hill Davis offering. Across the United States through our Annie Armstrong offering that we take at another time of the year. Across the world through our Lottie Moon Christmas offering. As we support missionaries across America, around the world, we get to have a part in what God is doing across this globe. But right here at home, the vast majority of our work and ministry affects Henrietta, Texas. Affects Clay County, Texas. That is where we live. That is where we work.

[32 : 00] When you invest in the work of this church, you're investing in that. You've seen anybody who's been in this church for any length of time has seen the impact this church can have on our town, on our county.

Are you investing in that? Is that worth your investment? If it's not, I ask you to seek God about that. Let God speak to your heart. Influence your heart about what he wants you to do. I can't tell you what to do. You might need to do like I do and give 10% of your income.

I can't command you to do that. That's what's best for me and my family. We give 10% of our salary and then we go above and beyond sometimes and give special offerings on top of that. But that's what God wants us to do. But what does God want you to do? Are you going to be honest with yourself? Are you going to be honest with the Lord and truly do what he wants you to do in making an investment in this ministry in this church? I want to leave you with this concept. Anything our church does is paid for by God working through you. We're not independently wealthy, y'all. We don't have a rich uncle.

Our ship's not going to come in. Anything that this church does is paid for by the church. And who's the church? We are. We are. So anything this church does, say, man, I wish this church would. Well, you're the church. Why don't you do it? I wish this church wouldn't do this. I wish we'd do this instead. Okay. Well, let's do it then. Let's do it. Let's do it together. Anything our church does is paid for by God working through you, working through me. As generously and cheerfully to God's work as I could be. Am I giving as generously and cheerfully to God's work as I could be? That's the question we all need to take away from here this morning. I'm not telling you, I don't know what you're giving. I'm not telling you that you're giving exactly what you should be or not.

I have no idea. I don't know your heart. I don't know what God's telling you to do. But we should all be asking ourselves. I'm going to ask myself that question. Talk it over with my wife. Are we doing what we could be doing? Are we giving as generously and as cheerfully to God's work as we could be? That's the question we should all be asking ourselves. So how much am I investing in my church from the heart? How much am I investing in my church from the heart? Back to the takeaway.

[34 : 41] The more I give to God from the heart, the more he blesses my heart. Guys, ladies, gentlemen, children, youth, if you want God to bless your heart, you got to give him your heart. Don't hold back.

Don't hold back from God. With your money, with your time, with your energy, don't take one of those areas and hold it back. Give God freely everything you have. God won't be stingy with you. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your promises to us throughout scripture. We thank you for these promises that tell us, my goodness, you're such a heavenly, wonderful father that there's nothing earthly about you. There's nothing man-made about you. You have different motivations. You have different priorities than we have. Yours are always good. Yours are always right. Yours are always loving. It's always for our best. So I pray that we would just stop holding out on you, God. I'm confident there's people in this room that need to do more than they've been doing. Maybe they need to change the way they give. Maybe they need to make an investment that they haven't previously made. There's needs in this church, God. We want to do so much in this community.

[36 : 07] We want to do more for the school, for teachers in the school. How great would it be if First Baptist Church decided to be a blessing to every teacher in our school with a thoughtful gift when the school year starts? The kindness ministry does so much, and they could do so much more if our people joined together and said, we're going to invest in how God is using this church to bless this community.

There's so many extra ways we could get the gospel out, God. We need to buy printed materials. We need to do all kinds of things. We need to paint our building or fix things that are broken and be a good testimony that we're taking care of the facilities God's giving us. There's all kinds of needs, Lord.

That's not the issue. The issue is the people that make up this church. We are responsible to say yes to your Holy Spirit. So I pray that that would be the testimony over the weeks to come, that you would make a clear impact in my heart and every person in here, even children, that they would begin to understand why it's important to give back to God out of what he's given to us, to invest in the work that God is doing. We'll thank you for it, Lord.

Lord, while our heads are bowed, our eyes are closed, I'm going to ask this question. If anybody here has never put their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, believe that Jesus died on the cross, that he rose from the grave, and he's willing and able to forgive your sins and make you God's child. If you've never made that decision, would you slip your hand up now? Say, I don't want to leave church this morning without knowing Jesus as my Savior.

Let me ask this question. How many of you would say, God is talking to me right now about changing the way I give, whether it's increasing the way I give, changing what I give to, et cetera. God's working on me. Would you pray that I do what God wants me to do? Would you slip your hand up right now? I'll pray for you. Thank you. God, you know every heart in here, Lord.

[38 : 30] I pray that we wouldn't be a church that just goes around asking for money all the time. But I pray that we, as the church, would take ownership of our ministry here, that we would invest in what you've given to us.