

2 Corinthians 9

Sunday 2/17/2013

We are going to start 2 Corinthians 9. There are a couple of good things about that. The first one is I cannot wait to get into Chapter 9 because Chapter 8 and 9 go together. The second thing is, every chapter we get done here—which I am not hurrying through this—we get closer to what? Oh, the book of Proverbs. I am looking forward to that.

I told you that this is the second chapter. Chapters 8 and 9 go together on the book of the heart of the minister. I really enjoyed Jeff's message last week. I always enjoy when Jeff preaches; he just does a great job. I really enjoyed hearing him last week. He tied so much in. He had no idea where I am at or what I am doing; it is just the Holy Spirit of God. That was a great sermon last week, and it kind of dovetails into what we are going to talk about today.

I. The Principle of God's Giving

You remember that I told you in Chapters 8 and 9 that God, in this book that really deals with the handbook of ministry, gave us two chapters on probably the key to everything that we do in ministry. It is the fact that our heart is devoted to God and given to God. So, it deals with the heart of the minister. It is simply understanding and giving back to God based on our understanding and realization of what God gave to us.

In our first chapter, Chapter 8, a couple of weeks ago, I gave you probably an incredible Bible principle that I hope you not only put in your Bible but also commit to memory. It is in 2 Corinthians 8:9.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

What a great verse that is. In reality, in the Christian life or the ministry, or whatever you want to try to accomplish as a child of God, that verse is the key to it because it all goes back to our attitude of heart regarding what God has done for us.

I said it before: God, who had everything; God, who was the aristocracy of heaven; God, who had everything that was due to Him—all honor, all glory, all of the creation. The Bible says in Colossians 1 that all things were created by Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

He had it all. Yet He gave it up because He simply saw that the need that I had and the need that you had was greater than all He had. If that thought ever sinks into your life, there will be no stopping you. The reason why so many of God's people never do anything for God is because

they never understand that great concept: the fact that God gave it all up because He simply saw that our need was greater than what He had. That verse then forms the basis of our giving our heart to God, simply based on understanding that great truth.

II. Misuse of Scripture and True Giving

I also told you that these two chapters are continually used by pastors to try to force you and intimidate you into giving money. These two chapters, for all my life in the ministry, I have heard every time anybody wants to hit anybody up for money or get them to feel bad about not giving. This is what they do; this is where they go and try to use these verses.

I know the chapter is built around the offering that they gave and took up for the suffering saints of Jerusalem. I know that; that is true; we have talked about that. But money is not what this great chapter is about. The principle is very clear in Chapter 8 and also very clear in Chapter 9. The Bible says that before they gave anything, before they did anything, they gave themselves first. It brings back the truth that God did not want their money any more than God wants your money. What God wanted from them is exactly what He wants from you. He wants you. He wants your heart. He wants you to surrender your life to be and do everything that God wants you to do.

This is true human nature; it always holds true; it always goes this way. When you are not giving all of yourself to God, and you do not get into the plan of God and the will of God—and we all, human nature always does this—then what we do is we go to church, get a Bible, and then we, in our life, give God what we do not want. We keep the most important for ourselves, and then we pretend like we are doing God a great service. That is what we do every time, every time. Chapter 8 is a great chapter with some great principles that we laid out. But today, we are going to move into another great chapter as we are now more than halfway through this great book, which is the handbook of ministry.

I personally believe that we started this book right around the time that God gave us Restart, and right around the time that God gave us all this. Look what God has done now with the turnaround of ministry, the opportunity to have hundreds of people, young men and young ladies, in the prime of their life, who made a mistake in life but want to change their life and turn it around. You and I both know the only way we are going to turn around really is that book. What else are you going to get but here? So that is where it is at, and God just keeps blessing us and keeps giving us things, and we just keep taking it and doing what we can do with it.

So, we are going to move into this great book today, and I want to read for you Chapter 9. Maybe we will read the first eight verses, and then we will show you some things here that I think will help you today.

2 Corinthians 9:1-8

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Let us pray.

Now Father, we thank You today for the time we have set aside. We love You. We ask You to help us glean out of here all that You have for us. We just thank You for the continual blessings You just keep putting in our life and giving us, and the opportunities of ministry. Lord, I thank You for the young men and young ladies, the moms and dads, and all of the folks, Lord, that rise to the occasion, that they just want to continue either on the front line support or in the rear, supporting with all of the things that we need, that we on the front lines can get the job done. Everybody doing their part. We thank You for that. We pray Your blessings today. May the folks that have dedicated their lives to understanding and working with people and the problems in their life, may they glean the great principles out of here. For those, Lord, that just want to put their own life together or learn the great general principles of life and the happiness and what we need to do with God, may they get a benefit from it. When it is all said and done, Lord, we will give You the honor and the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name, we humbly ask it. Amen.

Now, in this passage, there are some great truths here. In fact, in this passage is probably the single greatest verse in the Bible for a Christian, without a doubt. I do not know of another verse that is more important to anybody as a child of God than the verse that is found in here, and we will get to it a little bit later. It is one that every Christian certainly should memorize.

But before I do that, and we kind of get into this, I want to give you a context. I do not like just to go through and tell you what the verses mean; I like you to get an understanding of what is happening in the storyline. I know many of you are putting those in your Bible so down the line if you ever teach 2 Corinthians, you will have pretty much the storyline, or if you even study it, you will pretty much have a handle on it.

He is saying in verses 1 through 5—and it is kind of complicated when you read it, but I will break it down for you—here is what he is saying: He says that I have sent Titus and Timothy. He does not name them here, but we knew that Titus and Timothy were going to be sent down from

Chapter 8, if you remember. What he is saying here is simply this: I have sent Titus and Timothy ahead of my getting there. Paul is getting there. He says, "I am sending them down to collect the offering that you have taken up for the saints at Jerusalem."

Then he is careful here, and he says, "I am not sending them down because I am greedy, or I am not sending them down because I just want to get my hands on the money," which is about what 98% of the pastors would do today. He said, "That is not the reason I am sending them down." He says, "I am sending them down so that when I get there, we do not have to waste the time to get it all together because of the urgency of the saints in Jerusalem." He is simply saying in verse 3, "I want to make sure that it is ready to go so when I get there, we can get it to them without any delay because of the urgency of the struggle that they are going through." That is basically what he is saying there so you get the storyline.

Then there is a word there in verse 1, "superfluous." That is a big word for sure. It simply means "more than enough." I always mark that there are some words in the Bible that sometimes we are not familiar with, and when I found out what they were years ago, I marked every one of them just so I would know them, and I think you ought to do that as well. But it simply means "more than enough." Here is what he is saying; he said, "I have said enough about this subject; I have said enough about this matter. Any more being said about it would not be necessary, or would be superfluous." Superfluous means, "I have said enough; there does not need to be anything more said about it." Most pastors need to learn that. Most pastors keep on talking when there is nothing left to be said, and that is always a problem. But he says "superfluous" is a good word.

III. The Power of Zeal: Provoking Others

Then I want to draw your attention to verse 2, and this is a great principle. This is something I want so many of you to see today. I wish I could pull about 20 of you aside and just open up the top of your head and show you how God has used you in so many people's lives in such a short time. I am on Woody and Kelly's volleyball team, and Anna did her devotion last night. Anna has only been saved a little over a couple of years, and yet it was one of the finest devotions that anybody has ever given. It was right where it needed to be. There are about 20 or maybe 25 of you, maybe 30 of you, I do not know, that are being—you are not up on that level yet where some of the other people are—but boy, you are in that mid-range. I want to tell you something: God is really using you. I know that you do not see it. It is hard for you to see God doing something in our own lives because we are always with ourselves. You have to kind of step back and see it. I want to tell you, there are about 20 or 30 of you in here that are what this verse is talking about. Your life has, and you do not even know it, you do not even see it. I wish I could just get you aside someplace and open up the top of your head and dump a can of what I want to talk to you about into your brain to get you to see it. But maybe that would not be good either. Maybe you have to find it out in God's time. But I want to talk about this principle here in verse 2, and it is a great one.

2 Corinthians 9:2

For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

Now, Christians, our job is to provoke each other. I love the word "provoke" here. The word "provoke" means "call into action." It means "to excite, to motivate, to move with passion." I love the way he says this: "Your zeal hath provoked very many." Christians ought to provoke each other unto good works. When you get excited about the things of God, and it is real in your life, other people will get excited about it because of your passion. Mel Sabaka used to say all the time—and many of you who heard him preach back in those days, he used to say it—he says, "If your Christianity is not contagious, then it is contaminated." Your job and my job is to provoke other Christians to good works. The zeal that you have for the Lord, and you do not even know it many, many times.

Our church has been built on that very concept. There are some of you here today that you are sitting here with your brother, your sister, your aunt, your uncle, your mom, your dad, your grandparents—your whole family basically is part of this church. Yet when it started, do you know what it started with? It started with you. It started with you struggling in your own life, whether you were going to do what God wanted you to do. You made the right choice, and you did the right thing. Do you know what? You fell in love with the Book. You love the Word of God. You got excited about the Word of God. You got a zeal for the Word of God. God took that zeal and provoked many. That is the way He does it. Our whole church is building up. That is why this Operation Turnaround will be a piece of cake for us. You give me 30 or 40 men and women who have a zeal for God, put them with somebody who wants to do right but does not know how to do right, put them with somebody who wants to change their life but does not have the wherewithal to do it. When they see your zeal, when they see your commitment, when they see your love for God and your dedication to something, it is going to be everything that God is going to need to provoke them to good works, and they are going to get saved. You are going to make a difference in their life.

This church—and I am not taking any credit for anything that I do—but I will tell you this: no church will be any better than the pastor's zeal and passion for what he does. If I did not love the Book, if I was not excited about the Book, most of you would not be. Many of you came from dead churches. Many of you came from churches where you had more zeal than the pastor did, and it got you in trouble. That is what always will happen.

The problem with so many of you—and I love you all—but the problem with so many of you, the difference between me and you, I just never got over the day I got saved. It was almost 45, 50 years ago. I never have gotten over the day God changed my life. I never have. I have not done everything right, and I have made some poor choices and decisions, but I am telling you, there was never a day in my life that I never forgot what He did for me. Even when I was messed up and screwed up in times of my life, I knew I was wrong, and I knew He was right, and I knew that that Book had all the answers. When you get to that place in your life, you are going to affect people. You are going to provoke many to good works. You are going to have a thing where it changes people's lives. "Provoke" is a great word. When you get excited about the things of God, other people get excited.

John 1:5

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

When you love that Book, it shows. When you care about people, it shows. So when God takes you and puts you with some Ethiopian eunuch someplace, and He brings you two together, and you spend some time—he is lost, he is looking, he is looking for the light, he is looking for truth—God is going to provoke him through your good works and your zeal. That is the way you build a church. There is no one man that builds a church. There is no one person, no one family, who—and you see that so many times—somebody is a big giver, or somebody is very important in the city, and the whole church pastor builds it around that person. You never build a church around one person. You build a church around a Book, and then people fall in love with that Book. They get a zeal for God, and then it provokes many to good works. That is what you do. That is how you build a church. You stir people up. It stirs people to get into the Word of God.

Preaching is a great example of that. If I said it before, if a pastor is not excited about the Bible, if he is not passionate about the things of God, he will never get anybody else to be. If a pastor is always negative, if he is always down, if he is always acting weak, if he is always this with his tail between his legs, that is always going to produce wimps. Real men produce real men. Sorry, ladies, you are included in that. That is not yet a period, which it shall be.

But along with that, when you provoke people to do good works, you have to deal with this in dealing with people. Many of you want to work with people, and I am excited about that, and I am pouring everything I know into you. It is a great deal. But I am going to tell you something: one of the things you better learn, and one of the things you better grasp, is that when you provoke people to do good works, sometimes, many times, it has a negative effect. You see it all the time. You are paying attention. When I preach a message on living for God and being separate and giving your life to God and staying away from the world and the things of the world and all the things that go along with it, just step back sometime and watch which way it provokes people. Sometimes it provokes people to love God and get in that Book and leave the world. Sometimes it provokes them to get mad at the truth and stay with the world. But it goes either way.

We are going to get into this in the book of Proverbs in a great way because you know that Bible is written to and written around two people? Those two people are defined in the book of Proverbs. The whole thing starts in Proverbs. It works through Psalms, and it goes through Ecclesiastes, and it goes through the whole Bible. The Bible is written in a practical sense. The Bible is written to two men: a wise man and a foolish man. It is just that simple. It talks about a wise man and a foolish man, and then it defines them in the book of Proverbs. If you are a wise man—we will call you the good guys—you love truth. Truth to you is like eating strawberries and ice cream. You love truth. You love the things of God. You have a passion for it. But the mixed multitude, the other crowd, will always get provoked the wrong way. I am telling you right now, I want you to understand, that is not a bad thing; that is a good thing. I always like to know where I stand. I do not like surprises. I like to know what I am up against. When I deal with people, I would just as soon have somebody say, "Bob, I am with you. I am going to help

you." And somebody else say, "Bob, I am not going to do a thing around here, but I am just going to come to church." I can appreciate that. I could live with that very clearly, just knowing what I have. I am just that kind of guy.

You go out there and you get going to Starbucks, and you get some of the God-awful coffee you ever saw in your life. You get that mocha cream upside down, whatever it is. I just take mine black. Thank you. I am a simple man. My name is Bob, leader among men. I told you it meant "standard for truth" last week. I watch you guys eat ice cream. You make some of the scoopiest, goofiest stuff when you go eat ice cream. You get this peppermint, or marshmallow, whatever it is. I am a chocolate and vanilla guy. That is all I need. If that chocolate and vanilla is in Walmart in life, I could get along just fine. I would not need anything else because I am a simple guy. To me, it is black and white. I do not get real complicated with things because I am not a very complicated person. I have a hard time understanding a lot of things, and I just learned over the years to let God show it to you, but it is not complicated. It is not complicated. I would just as soon have people say, "Bob, I am with you, man. I am going to serve you as God. Let us go get it done." Somebody else said, "Bob, I love you a lot, and I am good, but I am not going to do anything. I am just going to come." I can live with that. I just like to know what I have. The mixed multitude crowd will always get provoked the wrong way. That is a good thing because it shows us where we are at. I do not ever get mad at those people. I do not think they are terrible people. I just think you are worldly people, and that is just where it is at.

I told you this before. I confessed this to you a couple of nights ago. I have a real passion for ministry, and some of you do too. The difference, as I said earlier, between me and you is I never got over mine the day I got saved. Some of you have. That kind of passion will have an effect. It will provoke people, but it will provoke people two ways. Some of you folks that I am talking about—and I would not call your name out this morning because you would not want to be embarrassed—you have let the Lord use you to bring in your families, and your aunts, and your uncles, and your brothers, and your sisters, and your dog, and your cat, and your canary, and everybody else. You did that because you allowed God. You got on fire for God. You got a zeal for God, and God provoked many with your zeal. But I guarantee you—I am going to have you guys get up and tell the story and tell it out right now—I guarantee you there are just as many people in your family that do not like you because of it this morning who love you. At some point in life, you have to realize that your job is to have a zeal for God and put that zeal out, and then let the chips fall where they fall. You cannot make everybody happy. You just cannot. I gave up a long time ago trying to. I just do what the Bible says: love people unconditionally, try to help them any way I can, and the rest of it takes care of itself. But I think it is a good thing because it forces people to either get in or get out. I think that is a good thing. I know when you start talking like that, we are such a lovey-dovey Christianity. This is most churches today. That is not the case here. This lovey-dovey, "we all get along," "hold hands, Kumbaya" approach, it does not work that way in the real world.

Now, both my shoulders are out of joint, and I have to preach in pain the rest of the service this morning. I know somebody says, "Well, I just do not understand how he would say such a thing," because it is true. It is true. I told you a couple of weeks ago that good people who commit to the

ministry never leave good churches. In fact, I got a phone call this week, and she is here this morning, and I will not embarrass you. But I got a phone call this week, and a lady called me on the phone, and she says, "You are right. You are right. Oh, Bob, you are right. You are right." "Well, tell me something I do not know," I said. "I am always right. What do you want? What are you talking about?" She said, "You were right." She said, "You said last week, or last time I preached, you said that good people never leave good churches, and worthless people, or bad people—I do not even know what I said—bad people are the only ones that leave good churches. You were right. You were right. You were right." She said, "I went and got my directory that was done two or three years ago, and I got me a red pencil, and I went through and marked all the people who are not here anymore." And do you know what? "When I got done and flipped the pages, you were right." So, we are selling red pencils for a penny apiece this morning. People get in or people get out. It is just the way that it works. They get mad at truth, and then they find another church that they will not go to. They find another church they are not going to get involved in.

A guy called me. This has been, oh, I do not know, maybe two years ago. I do not know. I lose track of time. When one turns 70, it is kind of hard to remember all those things. He called me one time, and he was really provoked. In this case, I had done my job well. He said, "I am not happy with things at the church, and I am not happy with you." I said, "Okay, I understand." He said, "No, no, you do not understand." He says, "I am leaving the church. I am not coming back." I said, "Okay." I said, "I knew this guy." I said, "Okay." And I said, "I will inform your prayer group leader that you are not going to be in prayer group." "Whose prayer group are you in?" "Why, I do not work with anybody." I said, "Then what is the point? What do I care if you do not come back? If you do not do anything, and you are not going to be a part of anything, what is this big 'I am not coming back to church' about? So what?"

I do not like cowboy movies. But my favorite cowboy movie—and I know I am going to get a big amen on this one because I know you will like it too—now, I do like the old ones, "John Wayne," "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon," "Horse Soldiers." But I am not a cowboy guy. I am not. But my favorite cowboy movie—and I know you are going to know this now, and if all of you that love this movie, now is the time to speak up: "Tombstone." Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer. You know what I am talking about. That is it. Yet I have to tell you, do you know what makes that movie? It is the one-liners in that movie. You have Doc Holliday, who is a drunk and a whoremonger and everything in the world, and you have Ike Clanton, who is the same thing. But Doc Holliday is educated, speaks Latin; he is a doctor. Ike Clanton could not find his socks in the morning; he is just a dope. The idea that Doc Holliday, he is like so tough, but Doc Holliday, maybe he has tuberculosis, he could not win in a fight, but he is ten times smarter than the other guy. I love it when he challenges Ike to a spelling contest. I like when Ringo gets up and does his things like that, and Doc Holliday is standing there watching him. Everybody puts that down there. What does he do? He knows he cannot do that. So what does he do? He makes him look like a fool. He takes his little whiskey cup and completely undoes everything that he did. I like that. My favorite line is what he says to Ike Clanton when he says, "Well, Ike, I just do not know what I will do if you will not be my friend." Do you know what I said to that guy on the phone? I will not tell you his name. Most of his name is "never mind." I will not tell you his name; I will

not even get close to it. I said, "Well, you know what? I do not know what I will do if you will not come to my church." Provoke him. What really changes if you decide you are not coming back anymore, other than we have an extra seat? Really. I do not want anybody to leave. I am not trying to get anybody to leave. I am just telling you the bottom line is when you preach the truth or when you live your life, it is going to provoke people one way or the other. I preach all the time, people get provoked. I walk down the street, people get provoked. I am sure when I wake up in the morning across this country, people get provoked. Paul said, "And your zeal hath provoked very many." You, through your commitment to Christ and your separated lifestyle, provoked people to good works. That is a good thing. In that same lifestyle, based on truth and the Word of God, when it provokes people to get mad at you and provokes them the wrong way, that is a good thing. Do you know why? Because the Bible is about a wise man and a foolish man. That is why. That is just the way it goes.

We have a lot of medical people in here. I watch some of you people wash your hands a hundred times a day because you know what happens. You touch a door. You touch a car. You touch this. You forget. And next thing you know, you get sick. It is just like that. I know I watch you guys. I guarantee you, and I will tell you what, let us be honest today. How many of you women in your purse right now have a bottle of hand sanitizer? May I see your hand? There we go. My daughter, Jamie, she goes to a motel, she takes her own bedding. She strips the bedding, takes off her own pillows. She will not sleep in a motel in the bed. One time we had a canoe trip, and I have to tell you, the place we stayed was not the best place in the world. She wore her shoes to the canoe trip, wore them in the canoe, and then threw those shoes away because they had walked on that carpet. No. That is a little extreme, but that is my point. I watch you folks. You go into every store; there is a little bottle there. You go to a hospital; they are all available things. You are not satisfied with that; you have to carry your own. You wash your hands 40 times a day. You shake hands with somebody, and they look like they just came out of a tuberculosis ward, and you are over there, "Nice to see you." You have already got it out, man. I know how it works.

But do you know what I would wish, honestly? I wish some of you folks would take care of washing your heart as much and as often as you do washing your hands. You see my daughter go into a building after she washed her hands; she elbows her way in. I did not know you could open a whole door with your elbow; she can. I watch some of you wash your hands 20, 30, 40 times a day. You carry all kinds of sanitizer, and you have the thing. You have the living water right here that you want to wash your heart 100,000 times a day, and you will not do it. That is the way it goes.

I saw YouTube this week, and I get a lot of World War II stuff on there where they go back to the battlefields that were fought, and it is incredible stuff. They do it. They show the picture where it was then and where it is now. It is incredible stuff. I guess when you get on YouTube, it does not matter. Everybody wants to send you stuff on YouTube. I got this YouTube video of a woman who had a 300-pound tumor in her, and she was no bigger than Jamie. How a woman that size has a 300-pound tumor when a woman does not weigh more than 90 pounds, I do not know. But they showed a picture. It showed the movie. I could not watch the movie. That was the ugliest, grossest thing I ever saw in my life. But then I thought about it. You medical people here, we are

talking about the church. We are talking about wise people, foolish people. We are talking about provoking people, good or bad. I am going to tell you something: we are talking about getting in or getting out, and the Word of God will do that.

Let me ask you something, you medical people. We have nurses here today. We have—I am a trained physician—we have people here all over the place today. Let me ask you a question: What do you think the doctor told this woman when he said, "You have a 300-pound tumor inside of you"? Do you think he said, "Let us just check it in another year"? She had a tumor in her that was 300 pounds, and that thing was cancerous. Do you know what the doctor tells her? You know what he tells you. You nurses know exactly what that doctor is going to say. You did not have to be a nurse to know. He is going to say, "Let us cut it out of the body. Let us get it out." Do you know why? Because if you leave the tumor in the body, and it is cancerous, it affects everything else in the body. Well, what do you do when you get a 200-pound tumor, or 180-pound tumor, or 120-pound tumor in the body of Christ? Anybody? Thank you very much. Amen. Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, we are going to do surgery here any second. I am telling you.

I do not know what is so hard about that. If a man preaches the truth to you of what God did for you and what you should do for Him, and you develop a zeal for God, and you love God, and you love truth—I am not saying you all have to resign whatever you are doing and go out and be a missionary tomorrow—but I am saying you understand in your heart what God did for you, and you get that in your heart, and that passion begins to build into your life. I am going to tell you something: what does it matter what any man says to you as long as it is truth?

Proverbs 27:7

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

You want truth. You do not care what a man says to you. You want truth. You do not care how it rubs you the wrong way. If you know you are wrong, and that is right, and it is truth, you love truth. Wise people will embrace truth. Wise people will love truth. Wise people, godly people, good people will apply truth. Foolish people do not. Bad people do not. Paul said in verse 2, "Your zeal hath provoked very many." That is always a good thing whichever way it goes, and that is a great verse. Some of you are living that verse as I speak this morning, and I want you to know I am proud of you. I am proud of you.

IV. The Universal Law of Sowing and Reaping

Now look at verses 6, 7, and 8 here, and here is some more great material. This thing is loaded with them.

2 Corinthians 9:6

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Now take that verse right there. If you do not have it marked in your Bible, what you want to put next to that is Galatians 6:7, and then you want to go to Galatians 6:7 and put 2 Corinthians 9:6 because Galatians 6:7 says:

Galatians 6:7

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

These two verses form one of the universal laws in the Bible, and there are seven of them. There are seven laws in the Bible that everything runs by, everything: every man, every woman, nature, the animals, everything. One of those seven laws is the law of sowing and reaping. There are seven absolute laws in which all life and laws of nature are all based and bound in the Word of God to follow. Galatians 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And verse 6 says, "For this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Boy, those are two great principles; they really are. Knowing and understanding how they work and how they play into your life and the lives of others is a great key to a lot of things in your Bible.

Our whole world operates on laws. We do not see it because they are invisible laws. But you go to KCI airport, and you see a plane sitting on a runway. That plane is sitting on a runway, being held down by gravity. You get in that plane, the pilot taxis you down to the end of the runway, gets on the runway, and gets the clearance to go, pushes those throttles forward. He starts to go about 180 miles an hour, gets about three-quarters down that, and the law of gravity now ceases to exist. The law of aerodynamics takes over. He puts his flaps down, he gets the right speed, he gets the right end of the wind, and up he goes. Now the law of gravity held him on the ground. But once the law of aerodynamics took over, then the law of gravity ceased to exist. The moment he runs out of runway, the law of aerodynamics ceases, and gravity takes over again.

We have what we call the law of thermodynamics, two of them. Everything in this universe is based on those two, hands down. You have the law of gravity, as I said, the law of aerodynamics. You have laws in science. We just saw last week that big meteor that almost hit the planet come by 17,000 miles. Do you know how that thing works? That thing works on a law system out there, out of the Oort cloud out there on the other side between the planet of Jupiter. It all works through the laws of science. There are laws of nature, all kinds of laws in the Bible. There are laws in everything we do in life.

Some of you men last week learned the law of Valentine's Day. Yes, you did. That was not pretty. Many of you learned that lesson the hard way. I put all these things together over the years of dealing with people, and when it comes to all these laws, the law of Valentine's Day has five parts to it. You do not ever want to miss it.

- 1.) Do not forget it: February 14th.
- 2.) The second law of Valentine's Day is no candy. Men buy candy for the wife because men want to eat the candy because they know the wives will not eat it. Not a good move.

- 3.) Flowers are okay. But do not get them at a discount store where she knows she got two dozen for \$9. Do not do it down there. There is a law. You are laughing, but you screw them up, and you will find out.
- 4.) Dinner is a wonderful idea. But not at McDonald's. You do not want to find yourself violating this law, standing at McDonald's on Valentine's Day, and then nuzzling down next to her and saying, "Honey, it is a special day, supersize whatever you want." That is not where you want to go. Not how it works.
- 5.) Lingerie can be a great thing, but do not buy it at Walmart. But if you do find a place to buy it, do not get the one size fits all. That is not a good move either. I think one of them big teddy bears would be great. You see them on television every Valentine's Day? Man, I want a sucker six feet tall. He is taller than I am. Let him get a job and pay the bills.

But those are laws, you see. There are laws in everything we do. I do not have time to give the laws of Christmas and Thanksgiving, but there are laws to all of them. But since Valentine's Day was last week, now learn those things. You want to learn those things.

It is an incredible concept. If God's people would learn to obey these laws, life would be much better for them, especially this one here on sowing and reaping. Now folks, especially you folks in the people ministry, and for anybody in general, when it comes to this law, there are four concepts you want to grasp. Boy, they are incredible, and you need to see and understand them. I want to tell you something, folks: there is not a day in my week that goes by that I do not see this, have to deal with this in people's lives to some aspect. Many of you today, bless your hearts, and I love you. Many of you today have done phenomenal things in your life from where you came from. I have the utmost respect for you. I have the utmost love for you. I think you are trophies of God's grace. I know many of you have come through some really tough situations. Many times your marriages were on the brink. I told a guy one time, "If your marriage is on that clock, if your marriage, divorce, or breakup happened at 12 midnight, you are right now at 11:58." There have been some tragedies. Yet in many cases, you have done everything you needed to do, and you have turned your life around. You have turned your families around, your marriage around, your children around, or your personal life around. But I am telling you right now, almost in every scenario, and the people that you are going to work with, especially if you get into the turnaround, you want to know this: you are going to realize that the people are in the problems they are in because very simply and basically they have violated this principle of sowing and reaping. Many of you, the struggles that you have had in your marriage or your family or your children or your personal lives, are nothing more than a violation of this law with its disastrous consequences. It is real simple. Sin never leaves a man any better than it finds him. In God's law, it is the law of sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:8

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

How much easier does it get? There is an automatic law in your life of sowing and reaping. When you sow your wild oats, you do not then pray for crop failure. It does not work that way. I used to hear Mel Sabaka talk about his own life, and he used to talk about how he was a young man, that he lived a careless life and did whatever he wanted to do and lived a riotous life. He likened it to going down and loading up ships with all the wild things we did and all the things that happened and all the bad things we did. He says, "I would fill up those ships, and then I would send those ships out, and then I would get down there, and I would do some more, and I would fill that ship up, and I would send it out. I filled up 10 or 20 ships and sent them all out when I was 20, 25, and 30." And then at 40, 45, and 50, do you know what happens? Those ships come back. Just as you loaded them, now you have to unload them. Sin never leaves a man any better than it finds him, and "be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

There is one truth in life, brother, and when it comes to God, and I have settled this one a long time ago, and I am telling you, there is one truth that is true about God in life that I can attest to the fact that I would tell anybody any place that is across the board to anybody: it is simply this, we all get what we deserve. When something happens in my life, good or bad, I never whine about it, I never complain about it, I never mope around about it. Do you know why? Because compared to what God had for me in eternity of burning in a lake of fire, compared to what I deserve to get, I understand that in this life with its imperfections and my stupidity, there are going to be things that we all do, and you know what? I can rest in the fact that when it is God's hand in my life, whatever hand He deals me, I will play it and never complain about it. Do you know why? I know I get what I deserve. The quicker you grasp that concept, the better off you are going to be in life. You really are. We always get what we deserve.

In most cases, you know what? In most cases, when you try to do what is right and you really want to turn your life around, you do not get what you deserve, even though you deserve to get it. God is the great shock absorber of life when you want to turn your life around. He makes some of those ships sink while they are out there. They never make it back to port. But you will have to unload some of them.

I have had people over the years in my ministry, and I deal with it all and just in stride. I have had people over the years in my ministry come to my church and be part of it and get Bible truth and learn the scriptures and get the Word of God laid out like they had never had it before. But the problem with them, you see, is they are selfish people. The problem is they are worldly people. The problem is they are foolish people. They are bad people. They are all about themselves people. They never do a thing. All they do is take from God. At some point, they get mad at truth, and they leave and try to find another church.

I had one woman, and I was not going to say her name, but you all would know who she is because just about every lady in this church worked with her. This woman never married. She complained about everything. I do not care what she started to do; it would wind up being a

problem because she just was all about herself. She had been in and out of my ministry for 35, 40 years. The only way I knew I could get rid of her is kill her, and that is against the law, and I know I could not do that. But I will tell you what, whatever she touched, it withered. Whatever she got close to, it got messed up. So finally, one time, about what? I do not know. Two or three years ago, she got mad about volleyball. It was volleyball season. She got mad about something, and then going back to church, which what a relief that was.

Anyway, I got a letter from her eight months ago. Now, when this lady left, she ripped me up one side down. They had to rip all your ladies up that were helping her every day, and we were the baddest people on earth. She was mad, and this was some demon-crazed thing. But that is just where her mindset is, you see. So she writes me a letter about eight months ago, and no apology for anything. She just wanted to know, "Hey, Bob, how are you doing?" I wanted to respond, "I have been doing fine for the last eight months. What is the point?" She is telling me, she says, "I just cannot find another church." She sort of listed them. In two years' time, do you know where she had been? She had been to six churches. She went to this church, did not like it. Went to this church, did not like it. Do you know what she all said? She all said the same thing: "They do not teach the Bible. They do not give anything. They do not believe the Bible. They do not do anything." No, no. You had a church that did, but you did not want to be here. You did not want to submit yourself. So, you know what? You got mad over truth, and now you are the... You talk about the walking dead, Kleon. This is it. She walks from church to church, never finding a thing. Do you know what I think about that? I think you get what you deserve. Do you know what God will do? God will give you a church and give you what you want, and then you get your nose bent out of joint because you do not want to do what is right. Do you know what God will do? God will give you a church just like you are. Enjoy it. Enjoy it.

Of course, most people... Every time you get some people with some character and some quality, but most people, they know they are wrong. They know they made a mistake. They are not going to do anything. They are just going to keep on walking dead. They all want the same thing. I am telling you. I have had people come to my church, come to my ministry, get the Bible, and then get their nose bent out of joint about something. Then, you know what? They go to some big, dead church and a big mausoleum. They go to some big place where they have no Bible, no preaching. It is just a bunch of marshmallow-like stuff, and they sit there, and they try to pretend it is wonderful. They will talk about all the music program, the praise music, all—they will talk about the big building, everything but the Bible they do not have. Now they are miserable. They are stuck. Do you know what I say to it? We all get what we deserve. That is what I say to it. That is the way life is. That is how I look at it, man. I never complained about anything bad in my life. I just know, hey, somebody said, I like Dave Ramsey when somebody says, "How are you doing?" He always says, "Better than I deserve." Boy, that is the truth.

V. The Compounding Effect of Sowing and Reaping

Not only do you reap what you sow, you always reap more than you sow. Bad choices in life will kill you. In a life of sin with all of its disasters, this is what we call, in counseling, the compounding effect. I read in the Kansas City Star a couple of weeks ago about those two

prostitutes who were killed up in the Northland, one of them 40, one of them 25 or 26. I was reading that story, and one of the moms, the mom of the 25-year-old, was interviewed. When she started talking, I thought to myself, "My goodness, this is exactly, this is exactly, this is exactly what I see every day of my life." That mom said—now keep in mind that she was found half nude, buried, choked, overdosed on drugs up in a field someplace. So was the other 40-year-old. But the mom said about this little 25-year-old girl that was her daughter, she says, "I do not understand." She says that when she was a teenager, she went to church. She was involved in her youth group. Then the mother began to say it, and boy, it became so clear. Do you know what she said? But then she said, "Here it comes." "Then she got with the wrong crowd." The wrong crowd will always kill you. "Then she started smoking. Then she started drinking. Then she went to marijuana. Then she went to heroin. Then she got hooked on crack cocaine. Then her addiction forced her into prostitution on the streets of Independence Avenue, and then at 25 she wound up dead in the field." See how it compounds? Sin never leaves a man any better than it finds him. Here is a girl that was in church, part of the youth group, just like some of you in church carrying your Bibles. But the wrong crowd comes in. When the wrong crowd comes in, it begins to go downhill. You get the smoking. You get the drinking. You get the marijuana. You get the heroin. You get the crack. You get all the way down the line. Some of you say, "Well, I will never do that, and I will never wind up in the field." No, you probably will not, but you are just as dead spiritually as she is dead physically. Sin never leaves a man better than it finds him.

I have seen people married five and six times in life. What a mess. What a compounding mess. I think the record of our church is one woman was married seven times. Boy, she knew the number was seven with perfection, but it did not work out on that one either. I have seen families completely destroyed by this compounding effect. I have done marriages where there have been so many in-laws and ex-laws that I do not even know whose mother is whose. You are laughing. I am sitting there. I am saying, I want to say, "Bring the mother down." And I say to myself, "Which one?" You have four different mothers, three different fathers. It is bizarre. Then it is like my fault because I cannot figure it out. I have seen guys or a woman sometimes go through two or three bad marriages, have kids by all of them. Sometimes they have kids and are not married to any of them. They finally try to settle down, and a man wants to get his life together. Do you know what? He is facing. I know one guy in particular I talked about years ago. He was facing, after he wanted to settle down, he wanted to get his life back down. He made a mess. But every month he is facing \$1,500 in child support for kids you do not even have anymore, for a wife he is not even married to. It compounds. You always reap more than you sow. Add to that the exes, the fight over the kids and the property. Now you have a new wife, and she is a sweetheart wife. You want to make it work, but she has to go get a second job so you can pay your ex-wife her child support. How long do you think that is going to work for you? In other words, before you pay one bill, before you do one thing, before you spend one dime on yourself and your family every month for the next 18, 20 years of your life, \$1,500 goes to somebody else, and you start \$1,500 in a hole every month. It compounds, brother. Not only do you reap what you sow, you reap more than you sow. Oh, it always goes that way. This law has a compounding effect to it. Add to that, as I said, the bills, the car payment, the house payment, your medical insurance, all the things that your kids need after the \$1,500 is paid. Yes, brother, I will tell you what, I have seen it and could tell you some horror stories.

I have seen people who could not afford a house, yet they just have to have a house because it was some big status symbol, and they wanted to have a big house. Do you know what? They had no more ability to pay for it than they could. Then the rest of their life, whining and squawking about not having enough money. Well, I wonder why. I have had people come into this church and say, "We do not have any food." You go back and investigate, no, because you charged \$2,800 for Christmas on your credit cards, and you had this going, and you bought this thing here, and bought that whole over there that you did not need. And now you want to come to us for food. That is how it works. Eat your big screen TV. "Well," say, "I cut my hand, and I am bleeding. I do not have any money to go to the hospital." Cut your TV open. It is plasma. Huh? Was that a good one? You will be using that on the floor tomorrow, won't you? I know you will. You reap more than you sow.

It is not done there, because by the time your kids hit 15, 16, 17 years old, you know what? It starts all over again because now you have the degeneration of the generation, that that generation of kids is worse than the last, and now you have five kids, and it starts all over again, and it is an amusement park that never ends. See it all the time. Sin never leaves a man better than it finds him. You reap what you sow, and you reap more than you sow. I have seen people with credit card debt, \$67,000, \$75,000. When you go back and look at that, it was stupid stuff that they did not need. I am telling you, man. It is easy. It is that old thing, short-term and long-term. But I know. I have a credit card. I know how easy it is to see something you cannot live without, and you walk up there, and it is so easy just to swipe that card, and you get to take it home. But at the end of the month, it comes in. You have to pay for it sometime. Well, we do not even do that anymore. We just file bankruptcy. This can be a good thing.

VI. Reaping According to How You Sow

Not only do you reap what you sow, not only do you reap more than you sow, but I will tell you something else, friends: you reap according to how you sow. Wise man and foolish man. The wise man sows the Word of God. The foolish man sows discord. There are only two types of sowing in the Bible. I do not know if you ever saw it or not. Only two types of sowing in the Bible: there is a sowing of the Word of God in Matthew 13, and there is a sowing of the discord among the brethren in Proverbs 6:16.

Proverbs 6:16

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

It is the one that God's people do the most: sowing discord among the brethren. You know words are very powerful; I am sure you know that. Proverbs talks about that, and we will see that when we get into the book of Proverbs. But words are very powerful. Words have only one of two effects. There are no neutral words. Words only have two effects. A wise man uses words as tools to build people. That is what he does. It is what I am doing this morning. It is what I do one on one. That is why I do not care what stupid things you have done in your life. I do not care where you have come from in your life. I do not care about that. All I care about is where you want to go from here. I will give you good, wholesome words, good, sound doctrine to help you get your

life where you want it to go. Because the job of a Christian is to use wholesome words, good words, God's Word to build people. Words can also become a weapon to destroy people. That is the foolish man.

Words are like a gun. We have this big gun debate going on in the world today. Police cannot protect you; nobody can protect you. But they do not want you to be able to protect yourself. They all think guns are bad. Guns are bad. Guns are bad. Booze is bad; drugs are bad. It is kind of ironic that President Obama last week went down to Chicago, which has the worst crime and murder rate on the planet. We are in there talking about gun control. We need to get better background checks. We need to get to this. Chicago has the greatest, strictest gun laws on the planet. It does not do a thing. You want to cut down crime? I will tell you how you cut down crime. You want to cut down murder? I will tell you. Put in capital punishment again and make it public. "Oh, you are too rough for me." Yes, I am, sweetie. Good work, Bob. I am a better man than you.

There was a time when that is what they did. Everybody went down to the courthouse and saw somebody get hung. It was a deterrent. Somebody said, "Well, it does not deter crime." Well, I will tell you what. You get your kids growing up, and they see somebody out there getting executed. I think they ought to put them in an electric chair and put it on TV. You have a lot of reality shows: you have your wedding, you have this, you have that, you have this over here. Put that on: Reality TV, Execution. Crazy.

Words are like an elevator. They will either take you up or they will take you down. Just like an elevator, you get to push the buttons, which way it goes. That is why when I get in an elevator, somebody says, "Which floor?" You want us to get out of there. I will push my own button; it might send me the wrong way. Do not let anybody in your life ever send you a way you do not want to go. You push your own buttons. You get to choose which way it goes. Just like the sowing in your life. You can either honor God with your words or you can dishonor God. You can be a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. You do not only just reap more than you sow, you reap according to how you sow.

VII. God Settles Accounts Later

Then the fourth one: in some cases, you might not reap it all down here, but when you stand before God. I have an old favorite story I have told for a hundred years in my old preaching days that I do in the circuit preaching revivals. I used to use this story about an old evangelist that was going through the Midwest, and he was preaching in a town, and all the people were coming out, people were getting saved. The old guy who owned a town, a millionaire, and owned everybody's land, was unsaved and did not care about God. All he wanted was his barn being full and all that stuff, and he ripped people off, and he got his wealth by cheating other people. He was a very high status in the community. So he came to the church every night. But the pastor, the preacher, the evangelist knew that he was not getting through to him. He came every night, five, six, seven nights in a row. That man did not budge. People were coming around him getting saved, and the Holy Spirit came down. That old man sat back there with all of his money, with

all of his farms, all of his barns, all of his cattle, and all of his horses, and everything he had, and that was what was important to him.

On the last night, at the end of the sermon, that man started to walk down toward there after the sermon was over and wanted to shake the preacher's hand. The preacher knew what was coming. He had a little smirk on his face, and he pulled the preacher aside and said, "Preacher," he said, "I have come every night and heard you preach." He said, "I want you to know," he said, "I like you, and I like what you are saying. I like how you helped our town, but it does not work for me." He said, "Your message may be good for these people, but it does not work for me." The preacher said, "How is that?" He said, "Well, preacher," he said, "let me ask you a question. You preached all this week about God's judgment and God coming down and doing all the things." He says, "I am an unsaved man. I do not want to believe in God; I do not even think I do believe in God. And he had all these people coming down here that crying and whining and getting saved. They have nothing. And I sit up there in the hill in my house. It is ten times bigger than anybody's house here. My barns are full. It is September, and I have my grain in, and my fruit in, and my farms in, and my cattle in." And he says, "Not one thing bad has happened to me." And he says, "Now, how do you explain that after you preached all this week?" The preacher did not even miss a beat. He just knelt down, looked in his face, and said, "I will tell you how it is. God does not settle accounts in September. He will settle later."

Better be careful with this idea that you call yourself a Christian. You can live your life any way you want to and do what you want to do, and nothing ever happened. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:6:

Hebrews 12:6

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Be careful with that. Sometimes God takes care of the judgment seat of Christ. If you are an unsaved man, He will let you live your life. Do you know what I think? Personal opinion. I think it is the most tragic thing in the world. If you are saved and you live your life the way you want to do it, drink what you want to drink, smoke what you want to smoke, go where you want to go, and flaunt God and what He did for you, I think it is the most horrendous thing in the world and the funniest thing in the world. You go through your whole life, and God does not come down and whack you. It is either one of two things: either you are not really saved, or you just think you are. Maybe you are saved, but if you are saved, do you know what it is? God does not care enough about you to come down and whack you. He knows you are worthless. Now that would bother me.

As a child of God, you sow, and your reward is based on what you sow, and you reap what you sow. It will be based on your sowing. Your quality of life, the blessings of God, will be based on your sowing. Your family and its success will be based on that sowing. The secret to a happy, full, content, prosperous life filled with joy and family, all based on God's Word, it is real simple. It is in your hymnal on page 420. If you want success, if you want full contentment, if you want prosperity in your life, page 470 in your hymnal: "Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness, sowing in the noontime and the dewy eve, sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the

shadows, never fearing clouds nor winter's chilly breeze, and by and by the harvest and the labor ended, we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves." It is in sowing, teaching your family to sow. In what they sow: "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." Life is not complicated. Life is really simple.

VIII. Conclusion: Life's Investment

I want to close with this. Life, wise man and foolish man, but your life and my life is simply like the money you have in your wallet, the money you have in your pocket. It is your money. You can spend it any way you choose to, but you only get to spend it once. In your life, yes, it is yours, and you can spend your life any way you choose to. But only one life will soon be passed, and only what is done for Christ will last.

Every head bowed and every eye closed.