generosity

moving toward life that is truly life

a four-week devotional by

Gordon MacDonald

with Patrick Johnson of The National Christian Foundation

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“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:20-21

What does it mean to store treasures in heaven? Obviously one cannot ship gold, securities, and foreign sports cars there. So treasures in heaven must mean, first of all, a new kind of currency.

We use dollars in the United States, the peso in some of the Latin countries, euros (more and more) in Europe, and yen in Japan. Currencies appropriate to the country. The generous giver wisely maximizes his investments in the currency of heaven.

Heaven deals with the currency of love, grace, kindness, mercy, and benevolence. It recognizes the currency of humility, service, and witness. It honors the currency of defense on behalf of the widow and the orphan, the weak and the poor, the sick and the aged. These and all other attitudes and actions in the family of godly behavior are seen by heaven in the context of currency exchange.

As we grow in our adoption of these convictions and values, the God of heaven (dare we call Him the Grand “Banker”?) takes note of these things and records them to our account. At first it seems an almost silly perspective, to think of righteous transactions in such a fashion. But we live this way on earth. Why not, for a moment, see its heavenly parallel? At least that is the way Jesus appears to be thinking here.

The good thing about treasures in heaven is that there is no depression or devaluation there. Our treasures on deposit in heaven are not susceptible to those original erosive agents: moths, rust, and thieves and other things like them.
Furthermore, and here Jesus shows that He has our number; He knows that one’s heart is always inclined in the direction of the stored-up treasure. That is why so many of us call our brokers, check the Dow Jones Average, and subscribe to newsletters with their economic forecasts. That’s where a large part of our attentions are focused, where our “heart” is. But if the real treasure is being stored up in heaven, the heart will follow.

How are you seeking to cultivate an eternal perspective in your life that will impact how you spend and give your treasures?
Life prosperity

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

2 Corinthians 9:11

Following the plan of cheerful giving comes the promise. It is a promise made by God, who originated the notion of generous giving.

“You will abound in every good work,” Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Clearly, Paul had seen this sort of thing happen over and over again. When a person begins to give on the basis of enthusiastic generosity, all sorts of things in life begin to fall into place. Blessings abound, one’s effectiveness as a Christian increases, and spiritual maturity deepens into Christ-likeness. Abundance flows from the generous life.

Paul suggested that there is every reason to believe that God will restore to the giver that which was previously given away. Of course, we must be careful not to fall into a “tit-for-tat” mentality; not every gift comes back. However, Paul noticed that generous people often discover all kinds of new wealth (spiritual and material) that permit them to expand the parameters of their generosity. Generous giving is often its own reward as one becomes increasingly excited about giving of self and the spiritual gifts that God has invested in us.

The final result is that thanksgiving will be given to God. One person’s gift becomes the cause of a cry of praise from a score of others. What more could a generous giver want than the satisfaction of knowing that one small sacrifice caused a bountiful number of others to lift their hearts to heaven in worship?

But what else happens when a person gives cheerfully and sacrificially? The needs of God’s people are met. Resources moved from one place to another can alleviate the suffering and deprivation in other parts of Christ’s body. Imagine the changed life and destiny of a child,
the healing of someone desperately ill, the rearrangement of life for someone who would not have been able to see, hear, or move. Think of families rejoined, communities rebuilt, churches renewed. Rejoice in the notion of people encountering the love of Jesus Christ for the first time and discovering the power to break addictions, patterns of sin, and ways of destructive life. Yes, the needs of God’s people are met.

A concert of thanksgiving rises toward heaven. People rise from their lethargy and begin to exalt the name of God, for they have felt His love through the actions of His people.

The genuineness of Christian witness is underscored. “Men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession...” To put it another way, the world has discovered that the religion of the generous giver is not a religion of words but of loving action.

Those whose lives have been touched will lift up prayers of praise and Thanksgiving for the generous giver. The loop of blessing is completed in such a fashion. Love given abounds in love returned, and the body of Christ revels in its circle of giving and thanksgiving.

This lovely symphony in praise of generous giving is Paul’s benediction upon the man or woman who finds it a joy to be gracious. In contrast to all the selfishness so easily found in our world, this is a refreshing contrast – a testimony to everything Jesus died for and meant to establish when He called a company of generous givers to follow Him.

Read the Real Prosperity story (next page) and answer:
What does life prosperity mean to you? How does generosity contribute to this?
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