

THE HAND OF GOD, WALL STREET, AND YOU

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

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A.D. October 19, 2008

INTRODUCTION:

When God shakes the nations, or we think He is about to shake the nations, He does so in order that we might return to the basics.

THE TEXT:

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 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: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor. 9:6-11).

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT:

In this section of 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul is outlining the basic laws of generosity. First, the one who sows sparingly will reap in the same way (v. 6). The one who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. This should proceed from an understanding of the way the world is (because it was made by God, and He is a certain way). This means that generosity should not be grudging or because it is required, because God loves cheerfulness in generosity (v. 7). However your financial future goes, it will never be the case that God leaves you without the means to be self-sufficient, and—this is key—to abound in every good work (v. 8). As Scripture says, God has dispersed abroad; He gives to the poor; His righteousness is not like the stock market (v. 9). God governs the world this way. He gives seed to the sower, and He gives bread to you, and the opportunity for you to multiply your seed sown—through generosity (v. 10). We are enriched through His goodness, and enabled to multiply, which in turn enables us to multiply thanksgiving to God (v. 11). And that summarizes how our life together should be—in flush times and in hard times. We must be a grateful people, and we must be an openhanded people.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Like the rest of our lives, our financial lives are governed by certain, fixed inexorable realities. God is not mocked, and if a man sows morning glory, he will reap morning glory. If a nation sows morning glory, they will reap morning glory. If financial markets sow leveraged stupidity, then they will reap leveraged stupidity. If giant corporations bet the farm in the hope that the laws of farming will not apply to them, then they will lose that farm. The first principle for us to remember is that this is God’s governance of the world. This is the way He does it, and as His people, we must stand back and say amen. The judge of the whole earth shall do right. It should *delight* us that He does what is right. Note in our text that His “righteousness remaineth forever.” Delighting in what the Lord has determined to do with us is not masochism. We know that this is a hard providence for many, and we are not without natural affection. But we know that we are a stupid and foolish race, and that there are times when we need hard providences to prevent us from destroying ourselves.

As Nebuchadnezzar knew, no one can stay the hand of God and ask what He is doing.

THE NATURE OF PANIC:

When financial markets tumble, as they have in recent weeks, the panic is often driven by each person assuming that the disaster looms largest for *them*. In other words, they isolate and detach themselves from everybody else, assume that the worst will land on them (with whatever happens to others not really being relevant), and then they take (frenzied) steps accordingly. But in our text we see that, as we are called to life *together*, we will be equipped to weather this and other storms in *koinonia* fellowship. We are a community.

NEAR AND CLEAR:

We have previously studied the spiritual law that our duties, including our duties in the realm of generosity, are *near and clear*. And this is qualified, of course, by the recognition that “near” is not necessarily on your street, and that “clear” is not. But the principle is that we must start where we live; we must start with our neighbor, which “neighbor” being defined as whatever person God has put in front of us.

SUFFICIENCY FOR EVERY GOOD WORK:

If you lose your shirt, and you are sitting down to a meal of stewed carrots, and there are not very many of them, you need to remember that God has equipped you to abound for every good work. Now God adjusts according to scale, which means that if your only possession is that carrot stew, you are admirably situated to *share your carrots*. God sees this; He delights in it.

THE BASIS OF *BLESSED* WEALTH CREATION:

When a believer gives of his substance, in imitation of the God who gives from His bounty, God has arranged the world in such a way that what he has given is treated as seed. If you did not know how crops worked, putting edible seed into the dirt would not seem to make much sense. But putting seed into the dirt is not to be done grudgingly, or of necessity—such a person is just following a formula by rote, and does not know how God delights to govern the world. And when you don’t know *how God governs the world*, it is perilously easy to lose sight of where you are in that world. Open-handed giving is the best way to have an open hand available when God wants to return to you. Having a tight, closed fist is the best way to have a tight, closed fist when God would be willing to bestow on you.

SO LET HIM GIVE:

We are still in the early stages of this roller coaster ride. We do not know what will happen to global markets. We do not know what will happen to our stock market. We do not know what will happen to our auto industry, and so forth. We do not know. This means that we do not know *where* we will be in all this turmoil. At the same time, we can (and should) determine what kind of people we will be in all this turmoil. That means are two basic questions that we should settle in our hearts and minds. First, as individuals and in our families, will we respond to all this with a tighter fist, hoarding and grasping? or will we be open-handed and generous? Second, will we navigate this difficult period as members of a community? Or will it be every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost?

Every man, as he purposeth in his heart, without being second-guessed by generosity nazis, should determine to overflow. You may not have much, but you can always arrange to *overflow* with it.



Published by: Canon Press • P.O. Box 8729 • 205 E. 5th St. • Moscow, ID 83843
www.canonpress.com • orders@canonpress.com • 800-488-2034 • Fax 208-882-1568