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# Abounding by Grace

## 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

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#### Summary

**Principles** of Christian grace giving as observed from Paul's interaction with the church

#### Introduction

A few months ago your elders were caring for you in prayer. We empathized over your pain as we asked God for his grace. We were concerned over your confusion as we asked God for his grace. We rejoiced over your obedience as we asked God for his grace. Coming out of prayer and planning a series emerged. It was September Stewardship; how we are to glorify God with God-given resources (especially as it relates to money).

The first message was delivered by Pastor Ed. He set structure. What biblical giving looks like and how to measure obedience in our giving were some of his concerns. This was followed up by Pastor Greg whose message was on worry. His burden was to demonstrate that when we are not giving due to worry over finances we are not believing God; not trusting Him. His message was to dislodge us from fear in order to launch us into faith. Following this message Pastor Russ came and delivered two messages; the former was an overview of the theology of giving. He desired us to notice how the Old Testament and the New Testament have more in common than some think. He labored to show that the pattern of individual giving was to make Christ appear through our lifestyles as He actually is; **LARGE AND GLORIOUS**. Sacrificial liberality is this pattern. He concluded that the way God will look important and valuable in our lives through our giving is when we are satisfied / content in Him and not money. Out of this contentment in God comes generous, regular, proportionate giving.

I was asked by the Elders to come to you this morning with the next message in our series. This message is titled *Abounding by Grace*. Its purpose is to motivate us toward grace-producing, joy-generating, trouble-alleviating, God-glorifying generosity. And so, as Titus came to Corinth in his own accord with zeal given by God for their well-being I come to you. Let's pray that I will speak truth and that God will perform this truth and that we will be transformed by this truth.

Let's pray

**It's just natural.**

Let's think together over a natural phenomenon. It is my observation that *when misery increases ministry decreases*. It's just natural. During periods of tension in our family we tend to pull back from other relationships until home is in harmony. When we are sick we focus on getting well. When our job is threatened generosity is calculated. When conflict needs resolution we play it safe with others lest additional conflict start. When interactions go sour at work interactions go silent at home (and church). I think our general movement when hardships come is inward until the storms of trouble blow by. This is just natural.

The flip side seems to be generally true too. *When suffering goes down serving goes up*. When the stock market is up generosity is up. When the meal is tasty and the chest x-ray is clear, we like to serve. When primary relationships seem warm and engaged we give of our time. This is just natural.

Now someone might say at this point, "What's wrong with this? You seem to be building up to introduce a problem. What you've talked about is simply a normal thing. It's just natural".

If the trend I just described is even marginally accurate can you see the primal, most basic problem we face in relation to generosity? Are to able to detect what fundamentally hinders proportional, sacrificial, regular giving to the local church of the money God has entrusted to us?

The message for this morning is called Abounding by Grace. The arch enemy to generosity is not outside us. It is not hardships and income loss. It is not busy lives and pressing responsibilities. It is this: Thinking that Christian giving is just natural. God is watching. People are wanting. And I take inventory of my resources to see whether or not I can help. Beloved, listen to the Bible. (cf. Pr.3:5,6; Matt.6:33; Phil.4:19; 2Cor.9:8).

The book of the Bible from which we get today's text starts in an amazing way. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 tell us that suffering is meant by and used by God to wean us off of self-reliance and to fix us upon the All-sufficiency of Himself. (quote v.9; see also 2 Cor.8:1-8). That all of the Christian life starts by and is sustained by and is stopped by God is clearly demonstrated throughout the Bible (cf. Rom.11:36; Acts 17:25). What does Abounding **by** grace mean? In what ways does the idea that "Christianity is supernatural or it is nothing at all" affect our tithes and offerings? What facts must renew our minds so that we will be motivated toward generous giving?

Open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. (Read and pray)

In order for us to abound by grace, we need to be aware of grace giving. First, we need to be aware of and believe the principles of grace giving. This is found in vv.6-11.

## **The Principles of Grace Giving (v.6-11)**

We can observe from this passage key principles which are to guide our thinking and doing of giving. Notice with me v.6.

### **Foundational Principles (v.6)**

“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”. Here we have a basic farming principle or proverb. It was a simple observation from an agrarian society. The Apostle Paul is motivating the people in the church at Corinth toward generous giving. He desires to fuel their generosity by using a commonly known event.

But the more one ponders this principle and does a word study on its key terms the more one sees. The two basic words Paul uses to motivate generosity are “sparingly” and “bountifully”. The contrast Paul is making is clear. On the one hand the giver who gives sparingly (that is, cautiously and thinly) will receive back small portions. But, in contrast with that type of giver, the one who gives bountifully (that is, generously or abundantly) will receive back ample supply.

The word for bountifully is a curious one. It is used in other contexts to talk about praising or blessing. The word is εὐλογίαισ from which we derive our English word eulogy. In effect, what Paul is talking about is not merely the quantity of the gift. It has much to do with the quality of the giver. The source of giving is not the checkbook. It's the heart. The Corinthian church is to give not merely much but praisingly with an eye on blessing the recipients.

The important lesson which Paul is urging upon the Corinthians at this point is that to give is to sow. What is given is not lost but like the seed sown by the farmer, contrary to all appearances, it possesses the power of life and increase. Giving is not decreasing but rather increasing ones resources. Generosity does not take away but rather multiplies the storehouse of the giver. It does not decrease but rather develops reserve. Giving IS sowing!

In order for us as a church to abound by grace in giving we first must believe the foundational principle of v.6.

We also need to be clear on faithful practices of grace giving. What practices spring from belief in the principle found in v.6? Faithful practices of grace giving are seen in v.7.

## Faithful Practices

(v.7)

Giving is to be...

### Collectively

Notice how Paul starts his teaching on the practices of giving. He says “each one must give”. It is for each of us (“Each one”). And it is non-optional (“must give”)! Whether we have much or little the Bible commands us all to bountifully sow. Grace giving is not just for the mature or well-to-do. We all are commanded to enter into the happiness of giving sacrificially. We all get the bumper crop as we all respond by faith through obedient giving.

### Purposefully

The second thing we notice about faithful practices is seen in the phrase “as he has made up his mind”. This phrase highlights the importance of purpose and intention. The emphasis lands on planned giving done on purpose with thought and conscious obedience to God’s Word. This giving should be done on Sunday at the meeting of the gathered church as seen in 1Corinthians 16:1-2.

The Lord through the Apostle is telling His people that giving is to be thought through. The issue at hand is placed squarely on the shoulders of the individual believer. We know that giving is like sowing. And so, there is no need of fear. We also know that giving is to be faithfully practiced by everyone of us. And now we know that it is our responsibility (and opportunity) to think about and decide upon how much we are to give. Beloved, proportionate giving does not lock us into 10% of our income. We look at the ability and generosity of the Great Giver; Jesus Christ himself (cf. 8:9). We look at how he has prospered us. We ponder the faithfulness and ability of our God. We discern that giving is to be done by faith bountifully. We then, by faith, come to a decision over what we will give. No vacillating! Stop wavering! Away with our two minds!

Resolve to systematically give generously.

### Cheerfully

Thirdly, we see that faithful practice of grace giving is done voluntarily. Notice with me the phrase that captures some of this way of giving; “not grudgingly or under compulsion”. As we have been thinking over our discipline of giving these last few weeks, we are to decide to give regularly, generously and sacrificially. And this decision is not to be done either resentfully or to be done under pressure from the outside. No sadness. No regret. No guilt trips. No passing the offering basket by you twice. We are to delight in the glory of God and let loose gladly of God’s money that He has entrusted to us. We

are to be “cheerful givers”. This demonstrates that God is our treasure; not money.

### **Worshipfully**

Listen again to how the Apostle teaches God’s people of faithful practices of grace giving. “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, FOR God loves a cheerful giver”. The little word “for” connects how we are to give (i.e. not grudgingly nor under compulsion) with why we are to give (i.e. God loves a cheerful giver). Grace giving is to be done worshipfully.

As we grow in grace giving we will become more and more aware that it is a most precious form of worship. It is a component of God’s happiness. When God sees His grace effectually changing us into cheerful, purposeful, steady, sacrificial givers He sees His Son in the midst of His church. He sees the very center of His joy; the likeness of Jesus. God Almighty loves to see and smell (cf. Eph.5:1,2) the fragrant aroma of such giving. Faithful practices of grace giving are all about God. It is to rejoice the heart of God!

What we’ve seen thus far is that abounding by grace is done by believing the foundational principle (To give is to sow). We then noticed that abounding by grace is seen through faithful practices. What we haven’t talked about is capability. What is the spring from which all faithful grace giving flows? From where do we get the ability to do all that we’ve noticed?

This leads us to vv.8-9 and the topic of “the power for grace giving”.

## **The Power for Grace Giving**

**(v.8-9)**

God gives the inward and outward ability to give as we ought. Grace does not nullify requirement - it just makes us able to do the requirement and to do it with gladness. Let’s see this by first noticing the enabling power of grace; v.8.

### **Enabling Power of Grace**

**(v.8)**

Look at v.8 carefully. Notice the heaping up of the words *all* and *abound*. The sense of the verse seems to be that if we are willing to give, God will always make it possible for us to give. If the arch enemy to generosity is self-reliance as we asserted at the beginning of this message what is the arch friend of generosity? If we are not to look to ourselves for sufficiency to whom shall we look? Should you be ready to order new checks for your family consider printing v.8 on every check. GOD IS ABLE should be written over all our hesitancy. Is there anything in view here that we are not enabled to do?

The power for grace giving enables us to obey. It also encourages us when we face uncertainties.

## Encouraging Purpose of Scripture

(v.9)

Verse 9 quotes from Psalm 112:9. Perhaps you are sitting here this morning with thoughts haunting you. Your age is a strike against you. Your body and employment are more frail today than they were in your prime. When you think of giving it scares you; for how will you take care of your needs. You might be here this morning without work or with little hope that you will enjoy gainful employment. Bad news greets you in the news papers and over the nightly news. You hear these words this morning and there is a flicker of hope. Now you need encouragement to overcome your fears. Listen to what Paul is doing in order to motivate and convince the Corinthians for generosity.

Quoting from Ps.112 listen to these words. “It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever”. Paul is using this as a means of actually communicating the enabling grace of verse 8 and of encouraging obedience grounded in Scripture. We are learning this morning to take our gaze off of ourselves and situations and place it upon the all-sufficient, all-happy, all-gracious, all-powerful, all-generous God.

We will not be afraid of bad news; for our God is able!

## Enriching Provision of God

(v.10-11)

Not only do we have the enabling power of grace and the encouraging purpose of Scripture, we find in vv.10-11 the enriching provision of God.

“He who supplies” must echo around constantly in our souls; lest we lean upon our own understanding in financial decisions. This is a God-centered concept. The word for supply is used only in 1 Peter 4:11. It is a curious word meaning *to lead a chorus, to sponsor a performing group, to meet its needs*. In other words, God is seen as giving us grace to sponsor the unified response of giving and the harvest of righteousness. A God-sponsored choir in which and through which a symphony of grace-produced giving resounds to the good of man and the glory of God. This is the enriching provision of God!

It is a symptom of our very materialism, that we hear these verses in terms of money. “If we give to God, then God will prosper us.” Notice though that the sowing God does in our lives bring **first** a harvest

of **righteousness**. In the end, our very prosperity is in order that we might be generous and liberal in our giving.

To this point we've covered what the fundamental principle for grace giving is. We saw that grace giving increases; not decreases our resources. Giving is sowing. Next we put some hands and feet to the principle by showing what faithful practices of grace giving are. We saw that grace giving must be done by all of us, done cheerfully, done purposefully and finally done worshipfully. Giving is all about God.

Next we pointed out that the capacity to do grace giving is not found in us. Self-reliance is deadly. Rather we look to God who supplies us with all we need; both the money to give and the heart to give it come from God. He is developing a choir of grace givers; for the good of his people and the glory of his Name.

## **The Products of Grace Giving (v.12-15)**

Now we come to the end of this paragraph in the Scriptures which talks about the products of grace giving. How do we know that we as a church are actually giving according to the grace being given us? The answer we see in vv.12-15 is by what it produces.

### **Supplying of Needs (v.12a)**

The first product (i.e. result from grace giving) Paul alludes to is found in the first part of v.12. When we are involved in grace giving needs will be supplied. Grace giving allows ministry to function. Frankly, we will have what we have a vision for and are willing to give in order to have. When your elders cast vision and we catch the vision and we rely upon God this God-produced choir of grace giving will see to it that the vision is realized. Supplying the needs is the first result of grace giving.

### **Motivating of Gratitude (v.12b)**

Secondly, Paul points to thanksgiving. Remember our definition of grace? "Grace does not nullify requirement - it just makes us able to do the requirement and to do it with gladness". So we would expect thanksgiving somewhere in all this! Grace giving produces thanksgiving.

### **Glorifying to God (v.13)**

Thirdly, we see the primary result of grace giving. Glory to God is the produce of all that God does for us in Christ Jesus! As Dr. Piper frequently says, "the giver gets the glory". When we believe that all ability; both change in the pocket and change in the heart come from God we give in such a way that makes God look like he really is.

People around grace giving recognize and relish the fact that supernatural living is occurring. The One who contributes gets the tributes. God is magnified and we are satisfied when grace giving happens.

## Encouraging of Prayer

(vv.14-15)

Fourthly, we come to Paul's last item in his list of results from grace giving. Paul often uses this word *to long for* to express his relationship with other believers and his yearning for heaven. Grace giving produces prayer; a desire for more God!

## Lessons

I'll land this message this morning with lessons gleaned from this passage.

- Giving is to be:
  - ☞ Collectively
  - ☞ Purposefully
  - ☞ Cheerfully
  - ☞ Worshipfully
- If you are not giving, you are:
  - Not supplying others needs in the church
  - Not glorifying God
  - Resisting grace
  - Disobeying the command of God
  - Disregarding the example of the church
  - Misspending a portion of God's provision
- If you have already spent that portion you should be giving, you need to do what is Biblically necessary to do God's will. This involves:
  - Confession of sin
  - Correcting the financial problem (may involve the selling of something which is keeping you from doing what God wants.)
  - Trusting God for change.
  - Doing what God has commanded.
- All of the Scripture points toward proportional giving to God's local expression of Himself; namely the local church. God's people give through God's house. Please be very careful in giving to para-church ministries, particularly to those who are wrong in their theology and practice.

It is our prayer that your God-honoring giving comes from a glad heart that has experienced the grace of God.