

The Grace of Giving

2 Corinthians 8 - 9-9

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Introduction Listen to the Old Testament text for our New Testament text this morning:

112 Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!

² His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.

⁷ He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!

The occasion that gives rise to 2 Corinthians 8-9.

The need in the Judean churches...

The promise to give to meet the need...

The concern that Corinth was not going to carry through...

The occasion that gives rise to our message this morning:

Agreement and assignment by the Elders...

Tradition of beginning year with stewardship challenge...

Teaching new attenders and members at the Chapel...

Financial hardship experienced by many with accompanying giving trend...

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

So a message on the grace of giving that will be centered on Christ and aiming for your maturity, a labor of love through God's strength and enabling Spirit

The Grace of God (v.1)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

Definition God's free favor in giving us the desire and ability to do His will with the result of thanksgiving in the heart of one so favored.

Expression Paul wants to exhibit the grace of God actually *given* to a church ...

The Pattern of Giving Grace (v.2-8)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

Their Personal Poverty (v.2)

This church gave in the midst of persecution, affliction and poverty. Their situation was not conducive to giving. Their own needs were great. But God's grace was even greater. So the grace of God mingled with abounding joy overflowed in amazing generosity.

Their Sacrificial Generosity (v.3-4)

³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

Ability purposed to give!

Attitude pleaded to give!

Their Spiritual Maturity (v.5)

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

They gave themselves as gracious gifts:

To the Lord as the one who owns them and oversees them;

By God's will understanding what God desired and required;

To the ministry as the ones who sustain it and supply its needs.

Their Grace Giftedness (v.6-7)

⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

Notice how Paul compares the grace of giving with all the other grace gifts. He wants them to excel in this gift as well. Probably some irony here, but it does strike us right where we are – do we excel in this gift as well?

The Principles of Grace Giving

(v.10-15)

In encouraging them to carry through with their giving as promised, the Apostle brings the Old Testament concepts of giving through the cross and what emerges is not law, but grace.

Motivated by the Example of Christ's Grace

(v.8-9)

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

The Test of Sincere Love

(v.8)

Our care for others is exhibited in our willingness to give. Theirs was a special offering going to alleviate the difficulties of the Judean churches - ours is regular giving to sustain ministry.

The Test of Sacrificial Giving

(v.9)

Here is the grandest expression of grace, Christ's sacrificial giving of Himself. He became poor in earthly loss in order to provide for heavenly riches.

In grace, sincere love is proven through sacrificial giving like Christ's.

Matched by the Enablement of God's Provision

(v.10-12)

God has provided so that you can give

¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

☞ One should not give more than he is able

☞ One should give all that he is able

Is it possible that we have spent our giving on something else? In essence, Paul says give anyway. Do not compound the sin.

Maintained by the Equality for God's People

(v.13-15)

¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

Within the church, no one should be wanting for basic necessities.

God will provide our needs and often through one another.

The quote is from Exodus 16:18, the story of the giving of manna and instructions for its collection. It shows how God in the midst of giving the manna requires work in the collection and equitable distribution in its use.

The Precautions in Grace Giving

(v.16-24)

Shows their concern that the handling of God's money be honorable, accountable and with no questionable methods.

The Appointment to this Ministry

(v.16-19)

¹⁶ But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. ¹⁹ And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.

An individual who desired to be involved – Titus

A general recognition of their involvement – the churches

The Appearance of this Ministry

(v.20-21)

²⁰ We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹ for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

Not only that we are *doing* what is right, but that all that we do *appears* to be right. It should give no grounds for questions. With a view to this, we aim to be careful, honorable and accountable in our handling of what is given.

The Approval for this Ministry

(v.22-23)

²² And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

Those placed in this ministry had proven themselves in terms of Christian character and service. Their Christian character was their first qualification. Ability in giving and managing was important, but not primary.

The Attestation by this Ministry

(v.24)

²⁴ So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

You will spend your money on what you love. Just as God's giving to us is an expression of and proof of His love, so our own giving is as well.

The generosity of the commitment the Corinthian church had made had been expressed to other churches – now, would they carry through?

We have been open, above-board and conscientious in our handling of this gift. Now you do the same in your giving. This is how you do that, chapter 9.

**Transition to
Chapter 9**

The Prompting for Grace Giving (9:1-5)

Though it is grace, there is still planning and preparation.

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints,² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.³ But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.⁴ Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

The Challenge to be Prepared (v.1-3)

He wanted them to be prepared to give what was promised.

The Concern of being Embarrassed (v.4)

Was his confidence in them and their giving misplaced?

The Coming of the Team (v.5)

He encouraged the team to arrive early to work through issues, to ensure that the offerings were taken so that it would flow from a heart willing to give, not grudgingly.

The Provision for Grace Giving (v.6-11)

Giving is enabled and motivated by God's grace

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The Distribution of God's Provision (v.6)

Biblical and practical motivation arises from a core principle in God's economy. But there is a terrible misuse of this text in Christian circles today. Let me simply point out that verse 6 is paired with verse 10 so that our expectations are Biblical. We sow in gracious giving and reap in growing righteousness.

The Directions because of God' Provision (v.7)

Compare to instructions previously given.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Command | each one should as intended |
| Planned | work out what you can give |
| Attitude | sense of joy and freedom |
| Responsive | sense of responding to God |

Notice the "and" - Cannot separate verses 7 and 8.

The Description of God's Provision (v.8)

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

All grace, abound, all things, all time, having all needed, abound, every.

The Design of God's Provision (v.9)

⁹ As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Here is the quote from Psalm 112:9. Look at the whole Psalm. Do you see? Note how the Psalmist fears God, delights in Word, does not fear bad news, trusts in God and is thus able to give...

The Definiteness of God's Provision (v.10-11)

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

The whole sense here is an affirmation. God will supply ... will increase ... will enlarge ... will enrichen ...

But towards a harvest of righteousness (v.10) and generosity (v.11a)

The Products of Grace Giving (v.10-15)

This is how we know there has been Biblical giving. It really becomes a *reality test*.

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

Growing in Righteousness (v.10)

Explains verse 6 – we sow in obedience and reap in the harvest of righteousness.

Giving of Thanks (v.11,12)

Grace **always** ends with gratitude in the one so graced.

Supplying of Needs (v.12)

Grace giving sees itself as giving to God for one another in ministry.

Proving of Themselves (v.13)

Grace giving is a proof of our obedience to Christ. So often, all the *confidentiality* of our giving makes this impossible.

Glorifying of God

(v.13)

True grace giving brings glory to God not honor to men. When our giving is man-centered instead of God-centered it is not grace, but works.

Sharing in Prayer

(v.14)

Grace giving motivates and informs Biblical praying.

The Surpassing Grace (v.14b) they had experienced for generous giving.

The Indescribable Gift (v.15) they had received in Christ Himself.

More than the need! Flowing from grace! Ending in gratitude. God's giving is grace based and so ours.

Reflect and Respond

- Giving cannot be motivated by greed. Those who give in order to get more in return lose it all spiritually. Much of the Fund Raising done by TBN and other such "faith" ministries operating from a prosperity gospel perspective is unbiblical and ruinous to Christian people and ministry.
- Giving is an expression of grace.
- God has provided so that you can give. What did you do with it?
- Giving is first of all, a matter of the heart.
- Where you put your treasure, your heart runs after it. Part of the discipline of setting our minds on heavenly things is the laying up of treasure in heaven.
- Giving reveals whether or not you understand:
 - The gift of God
 - The grace of God
 - The generosity of God.
- If you are not giving, you may be:

- Not supplying others needs in the church
- Not glorifying God
- Resisting the grace God has given to give
- 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.)
 - Doing what God has commanded.
- All of the Scripture points toward giving that is proportional to God's house. From Abraham who, before the law, gave to Melchizadek to all the giving in the New Testament, God's people give through God's house. Please be very careful in giving to parachurch ministries, particularly to those who are wrong in their theology and practice.
- Are you expressing this grace of giving in your life?

A Heart that that is Graced for Giving

The following verses are the heart of grace giving.

8:1 ... we want you to know about ***the grace that God has given*** the Macedonian churches.

8:5 And they did not do as we expected, but ***they gave themselves first to the Lord*** and then to us in keeping with God's will.

8:7 But just as you excel in everything -- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us -- see that ***you also excel in this grace of giving.***

8:9 For ***you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ***, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

8:12 For if the willingness is there, ***the gift is acceptable according to what one has***, not according to what he does not have.

9:6 ***Remember this***: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

9:8 And ***God is able to make all grace abound to you***, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

9:11 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***.

9:14-15 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of ***the surpassing grace God has given you***. 15 Thanks be to God for ***his indescribable gift!***