**The Grace Way of Giving, No. 2 – BD33-02**

We pick up the story concerning personal Christian stewardship with the subject of the grace way of giving. This is number two. It is crucial that we as believers in the church age thoroughly understand the grace principle of stewardship. Human viewpoint giving will degrade us. Divine viewpoint giving will ennoble us. Giving under grace is a very specialized kind of activity and it does not come to us naturally. It is something that we have to learn on the basis again of the revelation of the Word of God. Out of the Bible we find the principles by which we are to function in this, just as we find the principle by which we are to function in all the other areas of our Christian life. But giving is essential to our understanding because it is part of the exercise of our Christian priesthood. We never fully enter into the fact that we ourselves are independently the priests of God until we learn how to give by the grace technique.

We looked last week at tithing, and we pointed out that that is not Christian giving. The use of tithing may be something that you come to by personal choice, and that’s alright. The problem, however, is that you may fall into the trap of thinking that after you have given God 10% of your income, you have nine-tenths to do with as you please. Tithing from an expanding income is generally an indication that you are withholding God’s money from Him. In other words, if you have been tithing over the years, and God has expanded your income, and you’re still tithing, then you’re probably out of line with what God expects you to do. If you think of your income as an expanding cornucopia with the wide end just overflowing with God’s increasing blessings, what you’re trying to do is to justify increasingly enjoying and using what comes out of that wide end of cornucopia and blessing while giving God a simple 10% which becomes less and less in comparison to what you yourself keep.

So tithing is something you may choose to do but it is a hazardous position to maintain over the years because as our incomes increase, our giving, in all likelihood, God would expect us and lead us to give as well. We are not forever to justify using the abundance of the wide end of the cornucopia of financial blessing. We are not forever called upon to justify that by buying more things, by making more investments, by securing the things we think we’d like to have or should have, and therefore justify that we have these expenses to pay for.

**1 Timothy 6:10**

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 6:10. I want to look at a verse that is a very important revelation from God about money. In this verse, God the Holy Spirit says that an emotional attachment to one’s money is expressed in the words “love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” The word “love of money comes from a compound Greek word that connotes an emotional attachment. So an emotional zealous attachment for money, God says, is the root of all kinds of evil.

When it speaks here of the love of money, this refers to a weakness in the spiritual maturity structure of our souls. We spoke about the spiritual maturity structure in terms of a pentagon because it has five basic sides. God says that we are to grow in grace. We are to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity is the goal of the Christian life. We studied Bible doctrine as the basic building materials by which to build this spiritual maturity. A who lacks a mastery of the details of life is going to be a person who has an emotional strong deep attachment to his money and everything that his money has purchased for him and is able to purchase him. Remember from our study of spiritual maturity that the details of life are important, and money is important, because is the means by which we do things. But the point is that we are not slaves to our money; that we are not slaves to these necessary details of our lives. Instead, it is the Lord, and it is doctrine that bears our supreme allegiance, and toward which we direct our supreme affection. We are slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are slaves to His Word, not to these details that He will supply in His grace.

Now the “love of money” is the cause of all kinds of evil. In the Greek, the word “root,” which comes later in the English sentence, “for the love of money is the root of evil,” in the Greek sentence stands right at the very first of the sentence. In Greek, whenever you want emphasize something you put it first in the sentence. This is the word that the sentence begins with: “root of all kinds of evil is this emotional attachment to money.

What this is saying is that we can trace back our wrongdoings to an emotional attachment to money. Our human viewpoint thinking which has led us to oppose the will of God can be traced back to our emotional attachment to money. Our money obsession will destroy this facet of our maturity—the grace orientation in our souls, so that we become dependent upon ourselves. We are preoccupied with self rather than Christ. It neutralizes our love for God. Matthew 6:24 says, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve and money.”

Now that’s a basic principle of life. When we have this emotional attachment toward money, it is the beginning of every kind of imaginable evil in our thinking, in our feelings, in our expressions, and in our conduct. This attitude toward money, 1 Timothy 6:10 says, leads us to the sin of covetousness. “For the love (the emotional attachment to) of money is the root cause of all kinds of evil, which while some coveted after…” And that’s what happens. We begin coveting. We develop a frenzy for a growing bank account and for security for some anticipated economic disaster. When we get that kind of love for money, our thinking becomes extremely distorted.

In Matthew 6:33, we read the principle that the Lord Jesus lays down instead of this kind of a frenzy for a growing bank account and security: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be therefore not anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself, sufficient unto the day as its own evil.” How often do we fail to live for the day that is before us, for the opportunity of service before us, and for the investment of our funds that is today? Instead the pattern proves to be the purchasing of things without rhyme or reason relative to you our needs or to the use of the things. We see it, so we buy it. Somebody else has it, so we have to have it.

Luke 12:15 says, “And He said unto them, take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Yet we constantly act as if our lives consist of what we own, what we possess, and what our money will secure for us. Covetousness is the result when you have an emotional attachment for money. This is turn, 1 Timothy 6:10 says, causes us to err from the faith. “They have erred from the faith.” That is, we begin to deviate from God’s thinking—from what Bible doctrine has to teach us. It is amazing how people get attached to some thing. This becomes the crux. This becomes the testing point between them and God of the mastery of the details of life. It is fantastic how hell bent and determined they will become to hanging onto this thing is so self-evident. It should be to them. It obviously is to others around them that this is leading them on a destructive course. This is serving to neutralize their spiritual effectiveness. If somebody sounds off about it, they go negative to him, even though he may be just as right and true in what he’s saying as can be, but they strike out him because they will defend this thing that they covet so fondly. The emotional zeal for money, the things that we can buy with it, has a built-in hazard because it leads, I have seen, to Christian retirement.

Somebody mentioned to me the other day the bulletin from the American Board of Mission to the Jews. One of their executives getting up in years wrote an article condemning the practice of Christian retirement from active participation in the Lord’s service. He made it clear in his article that his years being as they may were not to him a signal to start retiring from what he had been doing all the years that he’d been in the Lord’s service. I think that’s right. But when we get this emotional zeal for money, what do we do? We go to covetousness, and covetousness causes us to err from the faith. The first thing we’re doing is that we have something that in order to hang onto that thing, we’re going to have to start retiring from the Lord’s service. It causes some kind of conflict or problem, and pretty soon we’re neutralizing ourselves in effectiveness in the way the Lord can use us, and that’s pathetic. Now we may continue doing all these junk things in the Lords work that Christians do under the guise of Christian service, but many a faithful Christian warrior has slipped away from God’s plan because of some temporary thing that he possessed, that he coveted, that he became deeply attached to, such that he became resentful of any suggestions that maybe this is not the best thing in the world to have and to pursue. Then he gritted his teeth and bit in hard and hung on, and the result was neutralizing himself in the Lord’s service. For what? For a temporary thing that he’s going to die pretty soon and leave behind to somebody else to take anyhow.

Matthew 6:19 says, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither most or dust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” My dear friend, whether you like it or not, whether or I like it or not, if something that money can buy, or money itself, is our treasure, that’s where our heart is going to be. Your treasure will be with that thing that is precious to you and it will not be the Lord’s service or the sacrifices or the demands or the inconveniences or anything else that’s involved in serving the Lord.

The ultimate consequences of this emotional attachment to money at the end of 1 Timothy 6:10 is personal grief: “and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here’s the chain: We begin with an emotional attachment toward money and the things it buys. The result is that we begin coveting after things that our money can make available to us. We hang onto those things and consequently our covetousness for things leads us to err from true doctrinal practice, and then we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows. This is the Greek word “odune.” It means “pain” or “a consuming grief.” The sorrows and pain of our souls can be traced back to our love for money.

What sorrows and pain have you born in your life? What griefs do you look back upon? What regrets? If you think carefully enough, you can trace those back to your love, your emotional attachment to money.

Matthew 6:22 says, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be healthy, the whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil (that is, defective), thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.” Now it is sad that a Christian should find himself in the position where he is filled with darkness. When you start violating what the Word of God has to say about material things and our relationship to them and our use of things and our use of money, you are inviting darkness into your soul, and it will result in grief. The sorrow and the griefs that we suffer can be traced back to this love.

We have three great illusions about money that we need to get over. Number one is that we have the delusion that money is essential to happiness. But a Christian’s happiness is built on a spiritual maturity structure in the soul and his relationship through that to the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what makes us happy. There is no lasting happiness from these details of life that often so dominate us.

Luke 12:23 says, “The life is more than food, and the body is more than raiment.” Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased who eat them. What good is there to the owners thereof saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet whether he eat little or much, but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There are griefs which come to us as we become wealthy, but it does not mean happiness. The rich man has sorrows and concerns and problems that the man with less never faces. Your money will not give you happiness.

Another delusion we have is that money provides security, but it is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that provides security. When that woman walked up to that temple treasury and she put in all that she had, all of her possession financially in those two mites, do you think that she was destitute when she walked away? Do you think she went home and went without supper that night? I doubt it. What she still had left was her orientation to the grace of God. Because she had grace, she had the provision and the care of God. She was not destitute.

Money does not provide security, but the grace of God does. This was the rich fool’s mistake. In Luke 12:16, we read, “And He spoke a parable unto them saying, ‘The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. He thought within himself saying, ‘What shall I do because I have no place to bestow my crops?’ And he said, ‘This will I do: I will pull down my barns and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my crops and all my goods.’’” This is the old barn-building technique—the old adding another segment to the structure device that we love to follow in order to justify keeping what we have rather than giving out of the wide end of the cornucopia which has long since passed what we need to keep the blood flowing in our veins and the breath in our bodies and our bodies clothed and sheltered.

Verse 19 says, “And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said unto him, ‘Thou fool, this night shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Now this is what I’m trying to say—that the Bible takes a very dim view of anybody who is not rich toward God. I’m not trying to condemn wealth that God may have brought to you. I am trying to alert you and caution you to the use of the wealth that I hope God has brought or will bring to you. But if you are rich in things and in money and not rich toward God (and that money can make you rich toward God if used in the right way), then you’re in a bad way. It is an illusion to think that money is essential to happiness. It is an illusion to think that money provides security.

A third delusion is that money buys whatever we want. It will not buy you salvation. It will not buy you someone’s love. It will not secure peace for you nor make stability in your life. That’s not divine viewpoint. That’s human viewpoint. It will not secure rewards for you in heaven just because you have money with which to buy it.

That’s a very important revelation in 1 Timothy 6:10. I would suggest that we read that through several times and see where that emotional attachment for money will lead you to the end of the verse which is piercing yourself through with many sorrows—sorrows perhaps that you’ve experienced that you can never undo again, that you would have been happy now to have ignored and to have laid aside that love for the money in return for the love for doctrine or for what should have held your affections that would have brought happiness instead of the grief.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-2**

Now turn to 2 Corinthians 8. We’re going to begin looking at these two chapters this morning which are the core of the doctrinal instruction in the New Testament concerning Christian giving. We’re looking at a group of Christians who lived in Macedonia. We have described for us, first of all, the circumstances of their giving. In 2 Corinthians 8:1 Paul says, “Moreover brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.” He uses the word “brethren” because he is instructing Christians. Giving under grace applies only to Christians. Giving in the church age is part of our Christian priesthood.

Hebrews 13:16 says, “But to do good and to share forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” It is pleasing to God that you walk up to that offering box under the condition of being filled with the spirit, and guided by Him with the distribution of your funds. It is pleasing to God that you should do this, and it is viewed as a sacrifice of your Christian priesthood. A priest who does not bring his sacrifices is a priest who is under the judgment of God.

So only a Christian can give to the Lord’s work. It’s an expression of worship and unbelievers cannot worship God. A local church should never seek funds from unbelievers. A local church should never try to secure offerings out of those who are unbelievers. As a matter of fact, you should make it very clear to unbelievers that you are not inviting them to give. For this reason it is important that a local church has some system of giving which removes the temptation to be making appeals to unbelievers for financial aid—that is, to put anybody on the spot within the service. That’s why here a Berean we don’t pass an offering plate. That’s why we put boxes at the door so that you can exercise your Christian priesthood in perfect privacy and in perfect freedom.

I was reading through one of the volumes of Dr. Chafer’s Systematic Theology that I used when a student at Dallas Seminary when Dr. Chafer was still alive, and I noticed a note that I had written in on one of the pages under the subject of tithing. Dr. Chafer had said in class, “Passing a plate is a pious holdup.” That’s exactly what it is.

Some of you have gone to churches and have come out of denominations where everybody had to give. I did this as a child. It was unthinkable that the plate should come by and you should not put something into it. One day I was sitting in church away from my parents and it was time for the offering and I discovered to my horror that I had no money whatsoever. I was in a panic as I watched those ushers come down those aisles with those plates in their hand. Well, I did something. As the plate passed by I just jabbed my hand toward the plate pretending like I was putting something in. The usher looked at a little fishy-eyed—I think he thought I took something out. That was a traumatic experience—sitting in church with the plate coming down. I could see it getting closer. Its big mouth got bigger and bigger as it approached me and I had nothing to put into it.

Dr. Chafer was very sensitive about giving under grace, with no pressures, and that only believers should give and they should give in perfect privacy and freedom. He told us on one occasion when he was an evangelist he would make this clear to the pastors in whose churches he would run evangelistic meetings. He said that he came to the last night of one service of one evangelistic campaign. As he sat on the platform the pastor got up and, in spite of what he had told him, began making a strong appeal for a love offering for the gifts with which to pay Dr. Chafer for his week of services as an evangelist. Dr. said he was so infuriated at this public promotion and appeal that he got up out of his chair on the platform and stormed down the steps, and there was a little door right at the bottom of the steps and he opened the door and walked through it and slammed the door behind him to leave. He said, “In a few seconds I came back out because I discovered it was the janitor’s closet and I had no place to go.” So your indignations and your championing of grace can be embarrassing sometimes. But it is better than embarrassing people with a plate under their nose and carrying on a pious holdup.

Now Paul is writing to the Corinthian Christians here in this book, and the Corinthian Christians were pretty well off financially. Corinth was a great commercial center, and the Corinthians by and large were well off, whereas the Macedonians of whom Paul speaks here were comparatively poverty-struck at this time. There were three churches particularly that we know about in the Macedonian area, this area above Greece. Macedonia included the church at Philippi, the church at Thessalonica, and that splendid church at Berea.

Now Paul says to these people, “You who are Christians, you who are my brethren, to you I make known.” The Greek word is “gnorizo,” and it means simply to give information. It is in the present tense and Paul is saying, “I continually am stressing the fact of what God has done with the Macedonian poverty-struck Christians relative to the matter of Christian stewardship. He said, “Wherever I go, I fondly remind people of the fact of what the grace of God has done among you people. It is an inspiration throughout the Roman world of my travels.

In Romans 15:25, for example, he refers to them. He says, “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints, for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints who are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily and their debtors they are, for if the Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” Paul says, “This is a good thing that the Macedonian Christians were doing in their giving to relieve the persecution and the famine and the results that the Judean Christians, the Jerusalem Christians, were living under.” He says, “That’s right. These are the people from whom all of their spiritual heritage came from in the first place, and those who are the source of our spiritual heritage under the hand of God deserve our material care, not our browbeating.”

So Paul says, “Everywhere I go, while it is right that they should do this, yet I do commend the fact of what the Macedonians are doing.” This verb is in the active voice which means that Paul freely himself is delighted to choose to commend them. It’s in the indicative mood which means it’s a statement of fact of what God has done with these churches relative to their giving.

Paul says, “I make this information known to you,” which in the Greek is the dative of advantage. It’s advantageous for these Corinthians to know about what this church is doing. “I make known to you the grace of God.” Now this is the dynamics of Christian giving. It is this facet of our maturity spiritual structure we call grace orientation. If you do not have this developed in your life to any degree, I can tell you right now you don’t know the first thing about giving under grace. You can hardly approach that offering box and even begin to give under grace. Grace orientation is the directive power. It is part of this spiritual maturity structure, and it is recognizing that everything we have is from God. Everything we own is his. We don’t deserve anything of His kindness. He is everything and we are nothing. It is recognizing that what we accomplish is the result of the power of God in us. That’s grace. It enables us to give to the Lord without strings attached. Unless you have grace orientation in your soul, you will give with strings attached, and your strings will be revealed in certain phrases you may use. The concept of grace, if there’s anything that grace means, it means no strings. When God treats you and me in grace, we don’t deserve it, we can’t pay for it, and we don’t owe Him anything after He has given it to us. Please don’t go up to the offering box and say, “I’m going to give this this morning because I owe it to God,” because that’s blasphemy and it insults the God of grace. Grace means we don’t deserve it, we can’t pay for it, and we don’t owe Him anything for it, because God says, “It’s entirely of what I’m going to do for you.”

Until you get hold of that, you’ll be running around giving with your little strings, and you’ll say to somebody, “After all I’ve done for you… After all I’ve done for this church, is that how you’re going to act? After all I’ve done, aren’t you going to pay attention to me and my opinions?” But grace doesn’t add up what it gives in order to prove a point of merit. You won’t be adding up and proving yourself by your past performance because you’ll have long since forgotten everything that you did for the Lord. That’s grace giving, and unless it is giving without strings, there’s no reward for you for what you’ve given. You have squandered your money.

I’m amazed how I can see Christians who are very frugal and very careful with their money on this earth who squander it when it comes to eternal rewards that could be theirs for the use of that money, and they blow it here. It’s terrible to blow a big sum of money on this earth when you need it for something else, but it’s even worse to blow it when it comes to eternal reward because of the condition under which you gave it here. God’s grace gives us the most with no strings attached.

The big contributors among us as believers in Christendom today, I’m afraid, tend to think in terms of strings that they have a right to pull because they are the big givers. If you cut the strings, the giving stops. A certain type of pastor is very tempted to soothingly stroke the big givers and the money men in his congregation, and he does this with a certain Cocker Spaniel-like expectation of what they’re going to give him in return for his soothing petting. But nobody has any money except what God has provided by grace. He hasn’t given you this because you have some persona merit, because you’re a sharp businessman or a sharp investor, because you have applied yourself, or because of your diligence. None of that is true. Now all of that is worthy and all of that has merit, but you could have done all that and God, unless He chose to open the doors of blessing, could have kept you just as poverty-struck as the day that you began applying your diligence, your application, all of your talents, and all of your gifts.

Now you can see that only a spiritually mature Christian is going to be able to give in a grace way. It’s easier for pastors to ride on tithing. The money is there that way, and everybody is happy. The same people who are happy to have the bills paid should also be the people who say, “Wait a minute. I want to know how this money came in here to pay the bills. I’m as equally concerned that this money came here by God’s grace provision and technique to pay these bills as I am that the bills get paid. In fact, I’m a little more interested in how it got here than I am that it is here. When you get oriented to grace, that’s the first thing that will come into your mind. That will be the supremely guiding and controlling factor.

So Paul says, “Moreover brethren, we give you this information concerning the grace of God which was bestowed…” The word “bestowed” in the Greek is perfect which means that it’s the grace of God that the Macedonians experienced and it continued on. Perfect is something that begins in the past and its effects continue on. To this very day we are delighted to read about these Macedonian Christians and all that God has been doing through them. What these believers did in Paul’s day resulted in great blessing. It resulted in blessing for those impoverished Jerusalem saints. It’s a great inspiration. It has lasting effects upon us today. It’s passive which means that the Macedonians didn’t just decide to do it, but God the Holy Spirit moved them. It’s in the participle which means it’s a law of God. It says that how He bestowed on the churches. This is by means of the churches. It refers to the churches of Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica of Macedonia, this Roman province up in northern Greece.

Verse 2 says, “How that in a great trial of affliction.” What God did with the Macedonian Christians was a seeming contradiction. In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. It seems that these people were poor and yet giving liberally. “In great trial” means in the midst of great trial. The word “trial” is “dokime,” and it means “a testing that they were approved.” It was a testing to show the merit and the value of these grace oriented Christians. They were tested when they were under poverty to show what kind of grace orientation they really had.

These people were tested by a trial of great affliction. The Greek word is “thlipsis.” This word is an interesting word because it means “pressure.” Here the thought is pressure by their circumstances. The idea is something which burdens a person from without. At this time, the historians tell us that the Roman army had devastated all of Macedonia. These churches found within this Roman province had gone through a considerable economic disaster, and that’s why they were so poor. Now these were the circumstances that surrounded them. These people were struggling for a livelihood. This was the pressure that was upon them, and now they hear about what’s happening to people way over in Jerusalem, their fellow believers, who are starving. And they say, “We have to do something about this.”

So we have this translation, in effect, that in the midst of much testing of pressure—testing in the form of pressures that came from without. “The abundance of the joy.” In the midst of their severe pressures, of all things, they’re happy. Now how can that be? Abundance. And this word “abundance” means super abundance. In the Greek it is “perisseia.” This word means super abundance. These Macedonian Christians were overloaded with happiness. That is an inner happiness. Now what is that? As part of the spiritual maturity structure of their souls they had developed inner happiness. What is their inner happiness built on? It’s built on the Lord. It’s not built on people. It’s not built on possessions. It’s not built on circumstances. What they had was joy. The Greek word is “chara,” which means “happiness.”

Now this is a happiness that is based on Bible doctrine in our human spirits, which God the Holy Spirit has taught our human spirits, so that from within us swells up this happiness. This is happiness based on doctrine. If you’re ignorant of doctrine, you’ll never be happy. 1 John 1:3-4 says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you (Bible doctrine), that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things write we unto you that your joy may be full (that your happiness may be complete).”

In John 13, the Lord is preparing His disciples for His departure. John 13:17 says, “If ye know these things (the doctrine He has taught them), happy are ye if ye do them (positive volition toward doctrine). John 15:11 again the Lord says, “These things have I spoken unto you (Bible doctrine) that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full.” Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Thou words were found and I did eat them, and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts.” Now if you want happiness, it starts with knowing the truth of the Word of God, and you will never be happy without it. This happiness is not affected by external circumstances. You’re happy if you have money, and you’re happy if you don’t have money. You cannot build your happiness, and I cannot warn you enough about this: You cannot build your happiness on a person, on a thing, or an event. It’s not on something we do, something we seek, something we have, or something we create. Yet for the person out in the world, all of the advertising you hear on TV, it’s happiness built on just that very thing—a person, an event, a circumstance, or something you possess. The person, the thing, or the event that makes you happy today can also make you very unhappy tomorrow. You’ll be bored by that person, by that thing, or by that event tomorrow. Or you may be downright miserable by the absence of that person you love, by that thing, or by that event.

Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, ‘I will never leave thee or forsake thee,’ so that we may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper’ and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” Now man can take away all of these things that make for happiness, and then you will be unhappy. Inner happiness is not delirious one day and then depressed the next day. If you try to build your happiness on money, you are really asking for trouble. That’s what the Bible is trying to say.

Well, what makes us happy on the inside? How do you develop this spiritual maturity? Well, this is a subject in itself. You can listen to it on one of the tapes, but in brief, it has three factors: Inner happiness comes from meeting certain conditions: 1) You must have the habitual filling of the Holy Spirit. There is no inner happiness outside of the inner circle of confessed sins. 2) You must have the daily functioning under this grace system of perceiving spiritual things that God has provided. Day by day taking in doctrine. 3) You must breathe out full knowledge toward God and toward man from all the facets of your soul—from your mind, from your emotions, and from your will—breathing out what doctrine has taught. And finally, developing all these facets of your spiritual maturity structure. If you have a weakness in one of them you will not be as happy. Maximum happiness is the result of having this structure firm and complete.

Now the Macedonian Christians were under severe pressure, but they had a great inner happiness because they had not built it upon those circumstances that were bringing pressure upon them from the outside. That’s how they gave. They gave as people who were under poverty but just as happy as they could be in their giving.

So what Paul says is that in the midst of much testing of pressure, the super abundance of their happiness, “and their deep poverty.” Actually the Greek says “their deep down poverty that they experienced.” Things were really bad for them because of what they had experienced. “That in the midst of much testing of pressure, the super abundance of their happiness, and their deep down poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” The word “abounded is the Greek word “perisseuo,” which means super abounded. It means an exceeding measure, above the ordinary. It’s to be abundantly furnished. It’s aorist: on the specific occasion of their giving to the Jerusalem saints they were delighted. It’s active which means they generously chose to do it, and they were happy to choose to do it. It resulted to the riches of their liberality. The result of their grace orientation was wealth. The word we have is a wealth that is described as their liberality. The Greek word for “liberality” is “haplotes.” This is a word that means “simplicity,” in the sense of a purity of mind, or as we’ve been saying, “a no-strings attached mentality.” This is the kind of giving that they had. It was a liberality that is grace generosity. If we were going to try to find a word to describe this, we would perhaps use the word “lavish.” They were lavish in their giving relative to the condition of poverty in which they found themselves. There were no strings attached to it. It was a purity of mind. It was mental attitude grace expressed in generous unselfish giving.

So Paul says that in the midst of much testing of pressure, because of the circumstances outwardly surrounding them, the super abundance of their happiness, which was an inner happiness based upon doctrine and spiritual maturity in their souls and not a person or a thing or a situation, and their deep down poverty super abounded to a wealth of generous giving.

So we sum up what these two verses, introducing us to Christian giving, tell us. That is that the basic factor in grace giving is your mental attitude. The mind of the soul has to be oriented to grace. The mind of the legalist is oriented to tithing. It is more important to be oriented to grace, to have the right attitude of mind, than the amount that you give. The first concern of you and me as believers is not having money to give, or the obligation to give, but being oriented to the grace of God so that we can give in the right way. What good does it do to have money to give and you can’t give in a way that God can honor, prosper, and bless.

I realize that pastors find it a lot easier to impose tithing on Christians than to teach doctrine so that these Christians can become grace-oriented. If they get enough members coming through with 10%, the bills are paid and everybody is happy, but nobody is pleasing God. The place that we begin in our giving is concern with our own hearts. Am I oriented to grace? Perhaps you never give. Until you are oriented to grace, better so. God’s work will be taken care of without your misgiving. Until it begins to concern you, worry about the structure maturity structure status of your soul. Perhaps it’s because you yourself have never realized how dependent you are entirely upon God, and that giving, even when you are poor, is God’s way.

You might say, “Well, I don’t have too much, so that’s why I don’t give. When things get better I’m going to do more.” No. That’s what I’ve noticed over the years: When things get better they don’t do more for the Lord’s work. The people who are doing more for the Lord’s work are the people who did a lot when they were poor. And that’s the Macedonians, and Paul said they were a delight: “Everywhere I go I tell people, ‘Now here is giving under grace.’ When I want to teach you how God wants you to give, I can point to the Macedonians and say, ‘There it is. Just follow their example.’”

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971