**The Grace Way of Giving, No. 6 – BD35-02**

We are studying 2 Corinthians 8 as we pick up the exposition of these two major chapters concerning giving for Christians under grace. We pick it you this morning at verse 10. We’re going to look at verses 10 through 15. In these verses, the apostle Paul takes up directly the Corinthians, and their performance and their part relative to this special fund which has been being gathered for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem.

**2 Corinthians 8:10-15**

Verse 10 says, “And in this I give my advice, for this is expedient for you who have begun before, not only to do but also to be willing a year ago.” The Corinthians had a desire, and “in this” refers to the subject of the context, that is, their giving to this Jerusalem relief fund. The Jews in Jerusalem who were believers were under persecution. They were under great financial pressure and they were in great need. Therefore Paul was promoting among the Gentiles of the New Testament world a sympathetic offering for a relieving of the pressure and of the financial need upon the Jerusalem believers.

Paul has been talking about this relative to the performance of the Macedonian churches, and the example of grace giving that they were. Now Paul says, “In this thing that I’ve been speaking about (that is, this special offering) I give you my advice.” In verse 7 he had urged upon these people giving commensurate with their high level of functioning under the grace system of receiving spiritual things. In verse 8 Paul has urged support of the fund because of their genuine love for God. In verse 9, Jesus Christ on the cross is presented as the ultimate example of grace giving which Paul is urging upon the Corinthians.

**Paul’s Opinion**

So he says, “Relative to this whole subject of giving to this particular fund, I have some advice to give you.” The word for “advice” is “gnome” in the Greek. This word has the connotation of mind. It means a deliberate opinion. It is in contrast to that word up in verse 8, the word “commandment,” where Paul says, “I’m not commanding you to give.” Here he is saying, “I’m giving you my mind. I’m giving you my thinking, but it is in the form of a judgment. It’s my opinion.” Again his point is, “I am not giving you a command. You can never command people when it comes to Christian giving.

Paul’s advice comes however from a mind that knows what he’s talking about. Paul isn’t getting up and saying, “Now, Corinthian Christians, I feel that you should do this. I feel that because of this and this and this.” He’s not giving some emotional appeal relative to the disaster and the sufferings that he could picture for them of the saints in Jerusalem. But on the basis of these doctrinal principles of grace giving, Paul who understands grace, who understands doctrine says, “Now I have an opinion. I have a judgment to give you.”

Sometimes you might be inclined to go to want to go to some Christian for advice. That can be very very dangerous. It is well for you to remember that most Christians are very hazardous sources of guidance. You better make sure that the opinions that these people give you are opinions that come from a mentality that is saturated with God’s viewpoint. There are Christians who can lead you far astray from the mind of God.

So when the apostle Paul comes along and says, “Now I’ve got an opinion to give you,” he is giving this on the basis of a mind that is oriented to God’s thinking. You be very careful about how wide a circle of Christians you trust; whose opinions you will cast the course of your life on; and, whose fellowship you will enter into such depths that they will be influential upon the things you do and the things you enter into. Unless they really know the Lord, and unless they are sharp in doctrine, they’ll hurt you because they’re operating on their emotions, and the apostle Paul is our example in advice that’s worth listening to.

Paul says, “I give my advice. I’m giving you my mind. As a spiritual leader I cannot command you to give.” Any giving which is in response to demands, to threats, to intimidation, to humiliate, or to emotion is not grace giving, and it is not acceptable to God. Only a free people can practice grace giving, and you as a priest of God are in a free priesthood. Now God gives salvation in grace. No one demanded of God that salvation, or could demand of Him. Because he gives in grace, we give in grace.

So Paul says, “I have some advice to give you concerning this matter of giving to God and your handling your money, for this is expedient for you. “Expedient” is the Greek word “sumphero.” This word means “advantageous” or “profitable.” What is profitable? “For this” refers to their giving in this offering. This is what is profitable for you.

“Who have begun before not only to do but also to be willing.” “Who have begun before,” and this word “who” is the Greek word “hostis.” This is a word that indicates “quality.” “You people who are of such a quality. You Corinthians who are of such a spiritual quality that you have begun a certain offering.” The Corinthians were of a quality that they were ready to begin this offering to the Jerusalem relief fund. “You have begun this before,” that is, in the time past. He refers to a prior beginning. In the context here it means sometime previous to the time that he is writing. Under the leadership of Titus they began this offering. It’s in the middle voice. This means that they were the instigators of this offering themselves.

He said they were not only the instigators sometime before this offering of which he now speaks to them, but they were not only to do but also to be willing. You might read that and think that seems to be backward. He should say to be willing and then to do. But he says “do” first, and then to be willing. Well, the word “do” is the Greek word “poieo.” This simply means “to do something” or “to accomplish something.” This word is in the aorist tense which means a point in the past when they began to take that offering. It’s active voice. That is, they are voluntarily choosing to do this. It’s in the infinitive mood which means it’s a purpose. These people purposed to do something. Furthermore, it says that they were willing, and the word “willing” is “thelo.” This word means “to be willing to choose” or “to desire” to do this. And this is present tense.

Now here’s something to notice: When it came to doing, the desire to do was there. The year before they said, “We want to give.” They made a decision and they started an offering. A year has passed and they have not completed the offering. In fact, it came to a dead standstill. But something did not change. Their desire is present tense which meant it continued. They still had the desire to give to the Lord though they were at this point not giving to the Lord. Their desire to give to the Jerusalem relief fund had continued even though the doing had ceased. So they were in the state of wanting to give but not doing it. Something was causing them to neglect this.

Here’s an interesting point for you and me as believer priests: Those of us who are oriented to the Word of God and who understand grace giving are always going to be in the present tense on our desire to give. You’re going to want to give to the Lord even when you’re broke. As a matter of fact, you’ll be wanting to give to the Lord even when you do not give for one reason or another. You may find in your heart a perfect desire to give to the Lord, but you don’t give to Him because you’re making too much money. As you look over that wedge of your expanding income and the chunk of proportionate expanding giving to God, it hurts you to think that you would give God so much more than once you gave when you were a mere tither. Or you don’t come to church very often, and your pattern of giving is such that when you’re in church, you give. When you’re not, you don’t. Naturally, that makes sense, doesn’t it? After all if you don’t stay for the show you shouldn’t pay for it. When you come to the performance, you pay. When you don’t come to the performance, you don’t pay. What could be more reasonable?” What could be more reasonable? And there are Christians who give on that basis. But even when they’re not here for the performance, they’re perfectly willing to give. They have this desire to give, but the doing is something else.

This is what was true of the Corinthians. They had a perfect desire to give to the Lord, as most of us do. But the doing, that they did not continually have. There was the point of the breakdown. For one reason or another, they were not coming through with the money that God had entrusted to them. Giving expresses our love for the Lord, and a quality of love which is genuine and has about it this continuous factor. This is just like a right woman will always want to give herself to her right man, whether she does or not, but the desire is always there. So a believer who is in a right relationship to the Lord through the Word and has that affectionate expression toward God will always have a desire to give though he may break down and fail in his performance.

So Paul says, concerning this special offering, “I give my advice (based on my doctrinal orientation), for it is profitable for you (this performance in this offering), who have begun before not only to do (that you made a determination), but you have continued to have the desire (though your doing has ceased) a year ago.”

In verse 11 the apostle gives his advice: “Now therefore perform (the doing of it), for as there was a readiness to will so there will be a performance also out of that which ye have.” “Now therefore” is a conclusion, and it uses the word “nuni” for the word “now.” It is a strong word connoting no more delay. Paul said, “OK, the desire is there. The point of decision was there in the past. You have stopped. Now let’s get started again to the performing, the doing of it, the completing of this offering.” The word “performing” here is “epiteleo,” meaning “completion.” It’s in the aorist, a thing that is completed and done with. It is active, you decide to do it. And very important, this is a command.

Now you might say, “Wait a minute. This “epiteleo” is a command? He is commanding him to perform this? I thought he couldn’t demand in grace.” That’s true. He can’t. But here’s the difference: This command is not wrong because it is a command for them to complete what they had freely chosen to do previously. What Paul is saying, “The Word of God has led you to the point of making a right decision. Now I, as your spiritual leader, command you to get with what God has put upon your heart to perform.”

The Bible constantly does this. This is what is called in the book of James “being doers of the Word and not only hearers.” What James is saying is that “God has led you to a position of understanding of the Word, and now I command you to do it.” It is right to command people to do what God has laid upon their hearts and directed them through the Word to do. That’s what Paul is doing here.

Salvation was planned in eternity past, but it was completed later in time. So you and I, for any plan that God leads us into at some point of our lives, should in time be completed. It is wrong for you to start at a certain point in your life, and maybe you have started at some point and said, “Someplace down the line, I’m going to have enough money to finance this particular project in God’s vineyard.” This is perfectly in order. That’s where you made your decision. Then the years have passed and you still have the desire to see this good thing performed, but you have not done it. Therein you are in error. If God has led you to a plan, He is also leading you in time to the fulfillment of that plan. As God performs the fulfillment of salvation, so we perform the fulfillment of very plan that He leads us into.

For these Corinthians, the plan to complete this offering, which they were now to proceed to do. “Therefore perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness.” Now the word “readiness” in the Greek is “prothumia.” This means a deep desire. There was a deep desire on their part to perform this giving. This connotes a certain eagerness. Just as there was once a willingness and an eagerness to perform, now he says, “Let there be a willingness to do it.”

In our English Bibles the words “there was” are in italics, meaning that they are not in the Greek. This is because the apostle Paul is saying this in the Greek in a very strong and pungent way. What he is saying actually is, “That as a readiness to will, so a performance.” By dropping the verb , it makes it a stronger impact that he wants them to get off and get moving from what they were willing to do, to now what they are ready to be prepared to perform.

I don’t think we can fault many Christians in the circle of our acquaintance who express a willingness and a desire to do something for the Lord. Sometimes I hear some harsh remarks from some of you against somebody who is forever talking about doing something—who is forever expressing a desire to perform something for the Lord and never getting moving. The thing that we need to do is to alert that person and to uphold him before the Lord, that the good thing that God placed upon his heart should now be performed. The willingness should be converted into a performance as well. That’s what Paul is saying here in verse 11. Perform the doing, “as there was a readiness so that there may be a performance as well.” This is his purpose.

Now this performance needs to finish. That’s what the word “performance” here literally means, to finish. This is the Greek word “epiteleo, and it simply means “to finish.” Get on with the thing that you have begun. Some Christians have a desire to give but they never get on to completing it. That’s what he is calling upon these people to do.

He points out that their giving is to be “out of that which ye have.” Literally, it’s “out of the having.” These Corinthians are to give out of the resources that God in grace has provided to them. God is not asking you to make commitments to His work out of what you do not currently possess. This is what is wrong about a church doing pledges. Sometimes churches do an every-member campaign. A certain body of men from the church will come around and knock on the door of every church member, and they will say, “Now we are drawing up our church budget and we would like to know how much you plan to give to underwrite this budget.” They ask you to make a pledge. Now what do you have to do? You have to sit down and say, “I’m going to project myself out here for the year before me, and I’m going to say that I’m going to have that much and I’m going to give that much.” The Bible says you have no right to do that. God only asks you to give out of that paycheck that you have in hand. God asks you to give on the basis of what you have. For somebody to come along and ask you to give and to commit yourself to giving on the basis of what you do not have is a sign that they are out of line with the Word of God.

The question always arises, “Does God have a perfect plan?” Does God in all things have a perfect plan? If God is perfect, His plans must be perfect. Therefore, every plan that God has, and God does have a plan, and it includes all the facets of life, including yours and mine. This means that God has a perfect plan for you and me in every respect that we are related to Him and to other people.

That means therefore that God has a perfect marriage plan for you, for example. That’s what we call your particular man or your particular woman. God has one particular person He intends for you to marry. Now suppose that you come along and you marry somebody else’s right man. What have you done to the plan of God, which of course God has taken into His plan also? Your volition has come along and you stepped over the bounds and you’ve taken somebody else’s right man, and you’ve married that person. Now you have disrupted the relationships that God has that were the best relationships in society. God then has a secondary right man for that right woman. But you have stepped out of line over what is God’s best and primary blessing.

Now the question comes up also, “Does God have a place where I should go to church?” If God has a perfect plan, does He have a right church and a right pastor for me? The answer is, “Yes.” He has one church and one pastor and that’s the only place you can go. A lot of Christians have never really learned this. I really have great concern within me when I listen to some Christians talk about churches, like they were visiting shoe stores. “I go in this place and say, ‘Let me see your shoes.’ Yeah, I like that style. I don’t like that. Well, I’m going to go down the street here.” They act you can just shop around. Sometimes Christians even say, “I’m going to shop around for churches.

Well there are many questions that will have to be answered to decide which is your right church and which is your right pastor. By the way, if you’re not in that right church and right pastor, you’re done for. You have really done yourself in. Usually people leave the right church and the right pastor because God is using that right church and right pastor to get across to them the information that they need, and they resent it to high heaven. So in their reaction, they go someplace else where they can escape it. Then they become something. They get quite involved and they become quite a star where they are. But don’t ever be deceived that once they’ve left the right church and the right pastor that God is in any substantial way using them further. Now you may not like that, but you start reading through the Word of God and you start taking into account the sovereignty and the plan of God and you will see that there is no other position than that.

Now there are many questions to answer who is the right one, but I can tell you one way you can eliminate a lot of them: If you walk into a church and they are not explaining the Word of God, if they are not giving people a chance to learn doctrine, if they are not sheerly devoting themselves in a very rigid way to teaching Bible doctrine service after service, as hateful as this is to many people, and explaining it in understandable terms, as hateful as those terms are to many people, you can eliminate that church. Now right away I know what you thought of. You said, “Well, my goodness. On that basis I can look across this city and the vast majority of churches are automatically eliminated as not possibly being a church that God would lead a person to.” That’s right. You can look across the city and see how many hundreds and hundreds of people are sitting in churches that are not God’s right church for them, or God’s right pastor. You know that God is not going to lead a person into a place where he is being given straw and where he is being fed chaff and where his soul is being permitted to shrivel in its spiritual expression. You know that God is not going to lead you into a place like that.

I’m sorry to say there are not many churches in this city (a few) where you can sit down and learn the Word of God and come out ahead spiritually. Now in your witnessing I think you ought to alert people (other Christians) to that fact. I think you ought to alert people that God has a right church and a right pastor, and that the first sign is that that church and that pastor are teaching out doctrine. This is going to be hard for most people to understand, but after a while you might be able to bring them around to where they know what you mean by “teaching,” and they will catch on and they will be horrified to look at themselves and see what they’ve been in.

Some of you are sitting here this morning and you have deep-seated feelings over what was once done to you when you sat in churches where your emotions were played and where your mentality was ignored, and the Word of God was never brought to you. You now look back and you say, “I sat in a church where they preached the gospel all the time, and that’s all I heard.” I can tell by the way some of you talk that you’re on the very verge of being bitter about it. You have a problem with the root of bitterness because of the damage and what you were robbed of, buy at least be grateful that you’re not still sitting there. You are the princes and princesses of God that have been honored. Hundreds of God’s royalty are sitting this morning under chaff. You could do people a great service by alerting them to that one sign of telling, “Is this my right church?” And it would be value in just alerting people that there is a right place.

Now Paul says, “What I want you to give is out of what you have.” If you hear a church that tells you to give out of what you don’t have, you know that’s not the place that God wants for you. It probably is a signal of a lot of other things that are misconstrued. They are to give on what they have. The principle here is a percentage of your income, as 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, and it is up to you to determine that percentage. You have to take into account your financial responsibilities and meet them, but you also have to take into account why you have those particular responsibilities. Use your possessions to complete God’s plan that He has for you and your giving.

So this verse says, “Now therefore also finish doing it in order that just as a readiness to will, so a completion also of the having.” Verse 12 says, “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man has, and not according to what he doesn’t have.” “For if” is a first class condition which means that these Corinthians did have a willing mind to give. “If there be first” means “to be present.” If there is present, and there is, with you Corinthians…” The idea is to have something on hand. What did they have? They had a willing mind, a “prothumia,” as in verse 11, this readiness. They had a disposition to give. He says, “If you have this, it is accepted.” The Greek word is “euprosdektos.” This simply means “pleasing” or “acceptable.” It refers to a mind that’s willing to give.

“According to that which a man has and not according to that which he doesn’t have.” He’s acceptable if he has. He’s acceptable if he has not. God says that if there is a willing mind, and you see again that God says if your mind is right through my Word, and you have come to where you have a willing mind, you have a readiness of disposition, then, he said, you’re accepted. If you have a mind which is willing to give, and God in His providence has made you so poor that you can’t give, the very fact that you have a mind which is willing to give counts with God. You receive as much blessing as the rich man who has given the biggest gift imaginable. It is according to what you have, and not according to what you have not. Now giving is acceptable. Whether we have the money to give or not, it’s the willingness that counts. So if you’re broke but you have a willing mind, then in effect you’ve given. This which is the giving from money to doctrine in your soul. Giving without doctrine in the soul is like physical love without soul love coming first.

So God measures our disposition to give according to a percentage of what we have. This is like the widow’s mite. God looked at the rich men and according to what they kept they were poor givers. God looked at the widow and according to what she kept out of what she had, she was a splendid giver. A small gift, for that reason, may by comparison with one’s positions a much greater gift, indicating a much greater willingness than somebody who gives a much larger gift. Your willingness to give is not reflected by the size of your gift. It is by the size of your gift in comparison to what you have left over. God says, “Let there be first a willingness of mind, and then you are accepted whether you have anything or whether you don’t.”

Then in verses 13 through 15 Paul goes to another principle, the principle of equality. Here’s the clarification that Paul wants to make. Verse 13 says, “I mean not that other men be eased and you be burdened.” “I mean not” is a strong expression in the Greek. “I do not want you to misunderstand me,” he is saying. “My purpose in urging you to complete the Jerusalem relief fund:” literally, “not that there be relief and ye burdened.” Again we have a sharp way of presenting this, with the verb omitted, simply the pungent pointed statement. Paul says, “Other men should not be eased.” This “other” is the Greek word “allos.” That means “another of the same kind.” So he’s referring to Christians. He said, “I don’t mean that other Christians, other believers—the ones in Jerusalem here in this context, should be eased, should have relief, but you should be burdened. The word “burdened” here is the word “thlipsis” that we met before. “Thlipsis” was a burdening by pressures, by outward circumstances. He said, “I’m not asking that you should have the circumstances that pressure you as a result of your giving.”

In other words, what Paul is saying is, “I’m not calling upon you people to give to such an extent that you make yourself destitute. Just because you Corinthians have money, God is not saying that you should give to such an extent that the Jerusalem saints are made rich and you are made poor. For the collection is not that there is to be relief for others and pressure for you.” While the Lord Jesus Christ came to make us rich, he did not make Himself spiritually destitute so that He was of no help to sinners. Paul is not recommending that rich Corinthians should make themselves destitute in order that the impoverished Jerusalem saints should be rich.

Sometimes people try to convey that idea. People who have money are always under a certain attack, that they should be impoverishing themselves, that they should be making themselves poor while others are being made rich. That isn’t what the Bible means at all. Paul makes it very clear that I do not mean that others should be eased and relieved and you should be burdened. But, he says, “… by an equality,” in verse 14, “that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundant may be also a supply for your want, that there may be equality.”

Now what does he mean by “equality?” The rule in dealing with one’s possessions is not to try to create equality in the amount of property that each Christian possesses, but equal relief from the burden of want. What he is saying here is, “I want you to be careful to create the condition that there is no Christian among you who carries a burden of want—not that you make everybody equal in his possessions.” For this reason he says, “At this time of your abundance, you Corinthians are well off. The Jerusalem Christians are strapped with poverty. That’s their want.” So he says, “Here’s the nature of an exchange: You take care of them now because the time may come when you may be in reversed roles, that you will be strapped with poverty under the pressures of the Roman government as the Macedonian churches were, and that the Jerusalem saints will be in a position to share out of what they have to take care of your needs so that you are not burdened with want. This may also imply of course that the Jerusalem Christians were the source of spiritual blessing to them, and to sustain that church was very important.

This is another point of being in your right church. Do you realize what it means if God says this is your right church and you take your finances and put it someplace else? That’s a travesty. That’s spiritual adultery. God judges severely for that. This is taking your loyalty and your finances and your support from the place that God says, “This is the place that’s doing the job. This is the place that I want you to sustain,” and you take it and give it to someplace else? That is a travesty. That’s grotesque. This is exactly what happens when we ignore the fact that God has placed us in a particular right place. So there may be implied here to these Corinthians, “Your financial support of the Jerusalem ministry is very strategic, for out of it flow our basic spiritual well-being, the basic spiritual blessings that have been ours. So we’re going to equalize with our wealth their need, and they in turn our spiritual blessing.”

So each of these has an abundance. Each of these has a want. He says, “But by an equality that now at this time your abundance for their want, their abundance also for your want, that there may be equality.” The goal of Paul’s recommendation is that there come an equal freedom from want.

This is not a consideration for Christian communism. I think we should understand very clearly that the Bible does not promote communal concepts. The Bible says that what you have is your own to do with as you choose. Acts 5:4 says, “While it remained (concerning the property which Ananias and Sapphira sold) was it not thine own, and after it was sold was it not in thine own power?” The Bible always recognizes the law of private property. Guidance for our voluntary use of what we possess comes to us through the Word and through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Now all who are in want are to be taken care of. This is a work of mercy whether a person is a Christian or not, the Bible says we are to be concerned for people who are in material want. Nevertheless, the bible also says that the people who get your first claim are the Christians. Galatians 6:10 says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are the household of faith. For this reason I think it is legitimate for you as a Christian, who have many demands upon your giving by social agencies, for you to stop and say to yourselves, “Now just a minute. There is this vast world of unbelievers out here. They have money. What will they use their money for? For the sustaining of God’s work to advance spiritual cause? Never. But they will use it for social areas of need. They will use it for human good instigation. Therefore I think it is well for you as believers to say, “We let the world support and finance the areas that the world promotes, out of which the world can draw money, and we as believers put our money into the work of the Lord that the unbeliever will not put his money into.

Now this is good for the unbeliever because the Bible says that you are the salt of the earth. This nation is preserved as long as there are a maximum number of believers who are oriented to God’s ways and God’s morality. When that comes to an end, this nation is through, and the community chest and everything else goes down the line. Paul’s recommendation is to take care of believers above anybody else and to take care of them in a way that provides for lasting eternal benefits.

However, the Word of God also makes it clear that if you happen to be a person who is in need, and a poor person, you are not to look and lean upon the church members who are well off to carry you through. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some that walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them are as such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” The United States of America could learn an awful lot from these principles of doctrine relative to the handling of material things. If you’re poor, don’t lean on the Christians in your assembly and decide you’re going to slide along and serve the Lord and let others provide for you, but earn your own bread and eat it in the quietness of what God has provided. These biblical principles would prevent both idleness and want.

So Paul says, “By an equating at the present time, your abundance to their lack, that also their abundance may be come to your lack in order that there may become an equality.”

**Manna**

The last verse then gives us an illustration of this equality that Paul is trying to speak of so no believer is in want: “As it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over. He that had gathered little had no lack.” This is a quote from Exodus 16:18. “As it is written” refers to the Scriptures of the Old Testament which stand written, and the reality of this revelation. “Had gathered much” is literally “the one much” is the idea. They had gathered this manna. Every morning they went out and gathered it. Some gathered much. But they found that when they gathered much they had nothing left over. It is said with the strongest Greek negative, this word “ouk.” That’s the strongest negative and it says that they didn’t have anything left over, with never an exception. “He that had gathered much had nothing over.” On the other hand, the one who had gathered little discovered that he had no lack. He still have plenty for his needs.

What is God telling us? It’s telling us that God said, “I’m going to supply for you Jews an omer measure of manna for everybody in the camp. All you have to do is go out and gather it. But the book of Exodus tells it that they were to go out and gather it according to their eating. Their eating is their capacity. God said, “Here is the eating. Go out and gather according to your capacity.” So every morning they would hustle out of their tent. The manna would come down every day except on the Sabbath day (Exodus 16:4-5, 22-27). They couldn’t keep it because if they kept it over to the next day it became odorous and wormy. On Friday they had to gather double to cover the Sabbath and that didn’t spoil.

This is an illustration of doctrine. Our manna is the Word of God and we have to gather it daily for our spiritual lives. The Lord has supplied us this manna in His Word, the means for us to learn it, the teachers for us to be instructed with, and everything that is necessary with a human living and God the Holy Spirit in order to provide what we need. As we look into the book of Exodus we find that those who gathered much manna had no more than those who gathered little because each gathered according to his eating; that is, his capacity. Under the law of equality, God always matches your capacity. The person who seems to have greater spiritual blessings, greater joys, greater satisfactions, and greater victories in his life is the Christian who has greater capacity. He is the believer who’s taking in doctrine. He’s the reader of the Word. He’s the one who’s analyzing and putting together and studying, and his capacity is developing.

Every one of us as believers has an equal position in Christ. We are all capable of the full spiritual experiences but some of us are very puny, and some of us have a very great capacity. Yet God wants to give us all fantastic spiritual blessings, and yet many of us simply lack the capacity for life. So we stink and we are wormy. The manna had to be used in the right way (Exodus 16:19-20). If you hoarded it overnight, it spoiled. And doctrine has to be used in the right way if it’s to be beneficial. You cannot sustain your physical life on past food, and you cannot sustain your spiritual life on past food. Some of us have not learned that. Some of us have not learned that the spirituality maturity structure of our souls can come to a magnificent level of development, and yet like any building it deteriorates. We begin to retrogress in our spiritual lives. The common word for that is back-sliding. That doesn’t say very much, but what happens is we start going backwards because we stop taking in the Word.

Every morning the manna melted under the sun (Exodus 16:21), and only doctrine which is absorbed will remain for our use. The manna that was in the tent was there for eating. The character who said, “Oh, I’m going to sleep in late this morning and I’ll collect my manna a little later.” He hopped out of bread all hungry and ready for breakfast and went out and the manna was gone because as soon as the sun came up it melted. When you get under the pressures of life, and you and I get under the prosperities of life, that’s when we need the manna of doctrine. If you don’t have it then, my dear friend, you’re not going to get it. It’s too late for you to run out.

This is why people come to pastors and say, “I want counseling.” What do they mean? “I want you to make some decisions for me because I haven’t informed myself on the Word so I don’t know what to do here.” They’re trying to get advice from you on the basis of doctrine that they lack, instead of having prepared themselves with the Word. Manna which is un-gathered is in the Bible as doctrine and it’s of no use to us whatsoever. It was interesting that the manna tasted good to some. Exodus 16:31 says that to some it was like honey, but Numbers 21:5 says that some of them loathed it.

Did you ever notice that about doctrine? Some people love it. Some people loathed it. But you don’t know that. You have to be in my position to find how people loathe doctrine—to know what abuse you can take for the fact that you’re presenting the Word better than you ever presented it before, and with deeper insights than ever before, and it has a better cutting edge than ever before. Like Paul says, the closer we get to that reality the more you despise the agents that are bringing it. It’s an old story.

Manna was God’s grace provision (Exodus 16:2-4). People complained that they didn’t have anything to eat so God provided them with it. He kept it coming on the basis of His character. The rejection of manna resulted in divine discipline (Numbers 21:5-6). A Christian who rejects the Word of God falls from grace (Galatians 5:4). He is failing in grace (Hebrews 12:15).

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971