***Grace Age Giving
Romans 15:22-29
RO188-02***

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Please open your Bibles once more to Romans 15. We are looking at Romans 15:22-29. Our subject is To Rome by Way of Jerusalem - Segment Number 2.

**Paul's Reason For Going To Rome**

For many years, the apostle Paul has wanted to go to Rome to teach believers there Church Age grace doctrines. He wanted to reinforce their progress toward the level of Super-Grace maturity. He wanted to explain to them the divinely provided power system for victorious living in the Devil's world (which no believers previous to the time of the Church Age possessed), namely Bible doctrine in the mentality of the soul and the empowering of God the Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer as He is free to work when that Christian is in temporal fellowship.

Paul's ministry in the Word of God would prepare the Roman believers to serve effectively in daily angelic warfare. He was uniquely qualified to prepare people in that way because only believers who have a thorough and consistent instruction in doctrine can remain combat ready and not fall victims to Satan's devices. God's work of witnessing, Paul understood, could only be done by believers who are well prepared with doctrine. He wanted to help the believers in Rome to have that preparation. Such prepared believers will prove to be loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ, producing good works and for themselves earning eternal rewards in Heaven.

In the past, Paul said he had too many un-evangelized fields, to be able to break off, to visit and evangelize a field like Rome. But now he was on his way to Spain, so he told them that he planned as he moved toward Spain to stop off at Rome along the way.

**Paul's Reason For Stopping in Jerusalem**

However, he said before he even did that, he was going to go to Jerusalem in order to deliver a special offering which he had been collecting among the churches that he had founded for over a year now, an offering to help the starving Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem. Jerusalem at this time, and all of the area of Palestine, was under an intense famine condition. Believers there were suffering. Believers there were often the poorest of the lot in the society. So, the suffering from the famine was the most intense upon them.

The Gentile Christians themselves felt indebted to these Hebrew Christians for the knowledge of salvation that had been brought to them concerning Jesus Christ. So, the Gentile churches were very eager to help the Jerusalem Christians with their money, and they were eager to do this in spite of the fact that they were not all that well off themselves financially. Paul said it was entirely proper for the Gentiles to share their temporal material goods with those Jews who had provided them with eternal spiritual enrichment. Paul pointed out that this was in keeping with a principle which he enunciated in Galatians 6:6 where he said, "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." Let the one who receives doctrinal instruction, share his material goods with the teacher. And that was the principle upon which Paul was operating here with these Gentile churches.

**Grace Age Giving**

The Gentile Christians of Macedonia were viewed by Paul in 2 Corinthians chapters 8&9 as the classic example of Church Age grace-giving. This is a tough subject; for many people it is offensive. For many people it is confusing because we have powerful forces. We have a very famous pastor in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex, which once a year has what he calls his tithing sermon. And he'll fill that church with thousands and thousands of people and they will sit there as he pulpit-pounds into their brains that they should be tithers. The horrible thing about that is nothing could be further from the truth. It just ain't true; that is not Christian giving. The problem that Paul faced here, gave him an opportunity to explain Church Age giving, which is night and day different from Old Testament legalistic tithing giving.

The classic instruction on Church Age giving is to be found in 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9. And this special offering is the background of what we read in Romans 15:26-27 where Paul said, "For Macedonia and Achaia." If you remember the nation of Greece, up here at the top is Macedonia, the province right underneath it is the province of Achaia, in which Corinth was located and Athens was located. In Macedonia up above you had churches like Thessalonica and Berea, Philippi. And Paul is comparing these 2 provinces and the churches within them. So, he says, "For Macedonia [which was a poorer area] and Achaia [which was a richer area of Greece,] have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things." This collection is the background of that particular statement.

And indeed, in Hebrews 13:16 we read that one of the sacrifices which Christian priests are obliged to bring to God is the sacrifice of their substance. Hebrews 13:16, says, "And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased." And he's talking about sharing your money with God's work. A church age priest makes many spiritual sacrifices. One of them is the sacrifice of his substance, a sacrifice of his money. So, giving to God's work in the Church Age is a grace act in contrast with the legalistic tithe requirement of the Mosaic Law under Judaism.

For some time, Paul had been promoting this offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He'd been promoting this collection among his Gentile congregations because of the famine that existed in Jerusalem. The Corinthian Christians were by and large pretty well off financially. Corinth was a great commercial metropolitan center. There were plenty of jobs. There was a good life there. People were well paid. So, it was not a poor area of the empire. But the Corinthian Christians heard about Paul's collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. So, they contacted Paul and asked if they could have a part in the Jerusalem relief fund. And Paul wrote back to them in answer to that question. We have it recorded in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1 Paul says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints." You should be able to understand this sentence now. It's the background of collecting money for the starving Christians in Jerusalem, which has been going around many churches in the Ministry of Paul. This has been going on for now over a year. Paul is answering their question about this Jerusalem relief fund? 1 Corinthians 16:1 says "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ['Here's how you collect this money.' And in this, we have a clue as to how we collect money for God today.] [Continuing with 1 Corinthians 16:2] "On the first day of every week [Sunday] let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Paul says, 'When I come with my associates to pick up your contribution to this fund, I don't want any collections to be made when I am there. I don't want to stand up and have to promote finances. I don't want my presence to be a pressure on you to give. I do not want the pastor-teacher elder to stand up in my presence and to intimidate you because I am now here to squeeze money out of you for this fund. When I come, we're not going to be collecting anything. The collection is to be made ahead of time. You are to look at what God has given you. You do understand that you are his steward. A steward owns nothing. The Old Testament Saints were not stewards of God.'

Please understand that only New Testament saints are stewards of God. The minute the word steward was interjected concerning Christians into the Christian experience, that indicated that you don't own the thing. If God enables you to get a job and to earn money, it is in order to deliver to you as His banker through that means that over which you are to be His steward. It doesn't belong to you. He expects you to take some of it out for your personal needs, for your family needs, for your reasonable comforts, for your reasonable lifestyle. But you must understand that what He gives your breath and capacity and physical well-being to earn money, He does it so that you may serve Him.

That also gives you a clue concerning about how He will cause you to earn money. Al Capone style was not a good way to earn money for God's work, even though it might be a very lucrative way to do it.

Furthermore, God is not going to pull you out of a Christian service activity in which you have a critical major feature and give you a job to earn money so that you can give to God's work. God does not pull you out of Christian service opportunities so you can earn money. That's nonsense. It's stupid. It's wrong. You should know by critical judgment as a Christian, that would not be the way God works.

God brings you funding without causing you to have to compromise your integrity of the reason you are getting the funding, which is to serve Him. He doesn't cause you to get money and, in the process, cause you not to be able to serve Him. Be sure to teach your children never to take a job that undermines their Christian service opportunity. That's number one. What do you think Jesus meant when He said to His disciples, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." 'Your service to Me and all these material things will be added unto you.' Either you believe that or you have not risen to the capacity to believe it. There are always people who haven't. But at least you should know the principle.

1 Corinthians 16:2, "On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." 1 Corinthians 16:3, "And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem." From the church in Corinth, Paul says, 'I will ask you to appoint a committee to take the money so that we may be sure that the money gets to the point for which you gave it. There'll be no question about the integrity of handling these funds.' Paul has been picking up representatives from all the churches who went as the watchdogs. They rode shotgun on the funds which the church had delivered to be taken to the Jerusalem elders.

1 Corinthians 16:4, "and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me." Paul said 'I may just accompany them to Jerusalem with this large collection, which has now been accumulated from several churches.' Indeed, eventually that is what he did.

So, here these verses in 1 Corinthians 16, he gives the answer to their question, 'Can we be part of the Jerusalem relief fund? How do we do it?' And you see that the main point was that Paul was hitting here was it has to be a non-pressure system. He did not say 'On the first day of the week, you siphon off 10 percent of your gross income and you give it to God.'

I watched a preacher who brings money in by the fistful on television again this week operating out of Carrollton. He looked them right in the eye and he said, 'you take 10 percent off of your gross income and you send it to me. It will be planted thereby, and God will prosper you and make you rich beyond your dreams.' Then he got into the healing and he put his hands up. 'You put your hand on the television, put it on mine. Oh, the power God is flowing through me. Do you feel it? You feel that?' And then he started naming all kinds of diseases he learned the names of. There was a man getting this, a man getting that. You know what? All over the Metroplex, there were handprints on television screens as suckers, probably some of them Christians, were getting conned into putting their hands and getting a dose of radiation off the electronic screens to heal their ills and ailments, and for this man to convince them to give him money and he gets it. He gets it by the train load.

The apostle Paul, you see, gave no pressure system. He gave no percentage system. He said 'You see step back and see how much God has given you. And when you understand you are a steward (Which makes some of you a little sad... I know you wish you were back in the Old Testament where you had nine tenths to go for yourself and you had only be steward of 10 percent. But here you're a steward of God, and the whole 100 percent is His.), now God says, 'How much do you really need, how much do you need to carry on, how much do you need to put aside for your future, and how much does God's work need right now and what do you do with it?' That's the basis of a free-will offering. Each believer led by the Holy Spirit, not by some legalistic percentage system.

Paul wanted this donation to be completed before he arrived, and therefore he encouraged them to get on with it. Well, time passed and the word got back to Paul that the great enthusiasm among the Corinthians for making a donation to the Jerusalem relief fund had somehow bogged down. They had made a good start, but now people were not contributing. For some reason, they had gotten sidetracked. One of the things perhaps we can suspect is that Corinth was a hotbed of false teachers, false apostles, false teachers coming through constantly. They were the original television charismatic con artists center of the world and people, we may suspect, were draining money off from the saints for themselves.

So, Paul sent Titus to Corinth to try to get the Corinthians back on track to carry through with their good intentions of this offering to the Jerusalem relief fund. Titus was a trouble shooter. He was a splendid man in this respect. Timothy was a more laid-back type of person and he had sent Timothy to them. But when he sent Timothy he said, 'Now Timothy is young. Please don't scare him by being unkind to him.' He had to really try to get them prepared to be nice to Timothy, as Timothy tried to solve this problem. Paul turned to the great Apollos, the evangelist. He said, 'I've got this problem. These people need to get on with this intention. God has laid this on their heart. It's wrong for them not to carry through.' Apollos said, 'Don't look to me. I want nothing to do with that good time crowd in Corinth. I know all about them.' Apollo said no to Paul, 'I won't go.'

So, Paul turned to the one man he knew he could count on, Titus, the hard-nosed 'Pastor/Teacher' 'DI instructor' in Doctrine. When Titus got through, there weren't as many members left in Corinth, but the spirituality level had risen enormously. He taught, he buttoned it down, and people knew that they had heard the voice of God and they knew what to do and what not to do. So, Paul says, 'Titus you've got to handle the job.'

So, he sent him to stress, in part, that they were doing the right thing and also to stress that they probably would agree that it was the right thing, but the need was now. This is the same problem we have today: Christians who know that this is a right thing to do, to give money to a certain cause in God's work, but they're going to do it someday, but the need is now. So, cut out your personal ambitions and take care of God's work now, and someday, maybe get around to yours too. This was the message that Titus is bringing. The need is now. Paul was reinforcing Titus's mission.

He did this further by sending along with Titus the book of 2nd Corinthians. And in the writing of 2nd Corinthians, Paul dealt with other problems. In 2 Corinthians 8&9, he zeroed in specifically on this problem of how a Christian in the Church Age of Grace handles his money and sustains the work of God. It is the classic passage. It is an invaluable area of Scripture for your eternal blessing and for your personal integrity and personal well-being. Few things corrode a Christian, few things depress a Christian, few things make a Christian feel low, like mishandling the stewardship that God has entrusted to him. Few things enable a Christian to feel ennobled to grow in the grace of God, to find himself growing in the image of Jesus Christ, and to find himself indeed being prospered even materially, than handling his prosperity with integrity before God. So, this passage is an area of Scripture we need to remind ourselves of frequently and be well acquainted with. In this passage, 2 Corinthians 8&9, Paul uses the churches of Macedonia, the poor churches, the poor Christians, as an example of Christian giving. Well, the result was that the Corinthian Gentile Christians indeed did get back on track. They did complete their intention of supplying a generous offering to the Jerusalem believers, and they were well able because of their financial position to do that. So, turn to 2 Corinthians 8. This is the background of what Paul is referring to in Romans 15. In 2 Corinthians 8&9, the Holy Spirit teaches the method for financing God's work in the Church Age of Grace. It is a totally different method from the Mosaic Law tithing system, legalistic demand era. You didn't have any choice, you see, under tithing; it didn't matter how much you had or how much you didn't have, you gave 10 percent. It was a very grievous sin if you didn't give it and there was no question about it, you had no choice. If after that you wanted to give an offering to God, you could do that. But you had no choice about what God demanded of you. You could do what you wanted with nine tenths, but one tenth had to go to Him.

2 Corinthians 8:1, "Now, brethren [Speaking to the Corinthian Christians,], we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches in Macedonia." Paul speaks to them as Christians. The Christian priest is required to offer financial gifts to support God's true ministries, as we saw in Hebrews 13:16. Unbelievers are not included here. He is not saying 'Dear brethren and your unbelieving friends.' We do not go to unbelievers to ask for financial contributions to support God's work. We only look to God's people for financing the Lord's work.

Paul is writing to the Corinthian Christians who are financially much more prosperous than the Macedonian Christians, but they were bad stewards in their offerings. They were stingy and they were erratic. A lot of them in that Corinthian congregation never gave. They floated as freeloaders on what other Christians who were more mature spiritually were giving to the Lord's work to carry the load. Those who were erratic and stingy and nonparticipants were eternally going to pay a price of loss. While those who carried the extra financial burden from out of difficulty, the eternal rewards to them are going to more than make up the burden that they had to carry.

So, you had both kinds here in Corinth. Paul is making known to these Corinthian Christians what a grace-oriented group of people the believers in the province of Macedon were relative to their possessions. Grace-oriented Christians, Paul understood, give voluntarily and generously to support God's work without anybody having to make emotional appeals to the sin nature or for any legalistic tithing pressure. It's wrong to do both. It's wrong to raise money by pressures to your Sin Nature, for the preacher to get up and to get very emotional in some way over some cause so that people feel compelled to run to the offering plate or the box to contribute, or to put upon you the impression that God requires a certain percentage from your giving rather than the fact that He requires something of you and He'll tell you what percentage.

**The Meaning of "Grace-Giving"**

No Christian, you understand, possesses any money except by God's sovereign provision. He gives it to you as His steward. He can wipe you out of your job. He can wipe you out of your health and capacity to hold the job. He can just completely shut off all access to material well-being to you just like that. So, when you get it, it is His provision. Giving God's provision to God's work is indeed the grace-oriented disposition which God the Holy Spirit has placed within us. The reason we give out of what He has given is because the Spirit of God gives us that disposition. That's what we mean by grace. Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 8:1 here, 'I want to tell you about the great, marvelous work of grace which God has done within the Macedonian churches.' The grace disposition was widespread in these churches. They gave their salvation and they gave the money that they possessed.

2 Corinthians 8:2 says, "that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality." Here's something very interesting about these believers. The Macedonian Christians gave liberally to God's work in the face of adverse circumstances: under great afflictions, which tested their devotion to Christ. These people in Macedonia were persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ. You can read about that in Philippians 1:29&30. 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8. They suffered a great deal just because they were Christians.

So, this is what Paul means that under a great ordeal of affliction, instead of being discouraged saying, 'oh, this Christian life is not cut out for me, all I had as a Christian is suffering,' in spite of that, the doctrine in their human spirits created a basis of inner happiness, happiness which was not built upon their material accumulations. Furthermore, they were people who suffered poverty for a variety of reasons. And so Paul says, 'in deep poverty, under personal privation and suffering for their being Christians, lacking comforts, there was a time, Paul said, that they couldn't even help him. Philippians 4:10 refers to a time when they wanted to help Paul in his ministry and they were so on the marginal line of what they possessed, that they couldn't even carry out this good intention. Yet Macedonian Christians, under persecution with little material possessions super abounded in giving liberally to the limit of their means to finance the Jerusalem relief fund. They were not wealthy in money, but they were wealthy in the grace of God. That's what Paul means. I want to tell you about God's grace among them.

**Desire to Give is More Important to God Than What is Given**

The non-grace-oriented Christian is not liberal in his giving. He would much prefer a tithing system because that limits how much he gives. If he can tell himself 'God only wants me to give a tithe,' then immediately he is at ease to keep ninety percent for himself. But you cannot hold that for yourself as a Christian. The first concern of a Christian is not what he has to give, but his grace orientation, his willingness to give. That's the first question. More important than the amount that is given to support the local church ministry is the mental attitude of wanting to give generously.

As you see, Paul is going to stress the first thing that's important is your attitude toward being willing to give, not whether you have to give or not. He said that's what was true of the Macedonian Christians. They didn't have a lot to give, but boy, were they eager to give. They look for every way they could figure to be able to make a contribution. They raised their finances in every way they could so the maximum was going into the Lord's work. It is more important your attitude of willingness to give than what you give. The Macedonian Christians are a prime example of the spirit of Grace-Giving, no matter how well or how poor one is.

In 2 Corinthians 8:3-4 Paul says, "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord." The Macedonian Christians were like the poor widow that Jesus observed, giving everything she had at the Treasury while the wealthy men stood by and were complimenting themselves about how much they had given, which was infinitely larger than this poor widow had given, but in comparison was nothing because they had so much left. These people in Macedonia lived in hard financial times, under personal oppression from Jews and pagans, and what they possessed determined the ability level of their giving. That will rise and fall; sometimes you're in a position to give a lot, sometimes you're not. It rises and falls with your circumstance in life. They gave here by choice, not by pressure appeals or by some legal percentage.

**God Cannot Be Bribed**

What a tremendous thing to be able to say 'they gave of their own accord.' They didn't give because somebody got an emotionally high, they didn't give because somebody put them under the obligation of a percentage, they gave of their own accord. Grace-Giving in the Church Age, you must understand, requires personal freedom to decide even whether you will give or not give. You must understand that. Grace-Giving includes the freedom for you to decide you're not going to give a cent; the Jew couldn't even consider that. Grace giving gives you the permission to decide that you're not going to contribute anything to God's work. The Bible says, 'that's wrong, but you are free to make that choice.'

The Christian is indeed called upon out of his love for God to give not in order to bribe God, out of appreciation to desire people to be brought to the knowledge of the Word of God. Please don't become so gross as to say 'if I give to God, he'll do something for me. There's something I want in life and God, I'm going to make this great gift to you if you give me this thing.' That's bribery and God does not work on that basis. You should know that.

These Macedonians went beyond their ability in giving. But they did it by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, not for manipulation, not from the promise of more prosperity. The television evangelists are getting people to send their money in because they're promising them that if they invest their money with this evangelist, it will be like seed that will grow and give them multiplied amounts back. And people will understand eventually that that is a con. That is not the truth. That is not the case. The Bible never promises that. >p>God promises that you will be blessed. Does God promise that if you invest money in His work, He will give you more money? No! Does He promise that if you invest money in His work, you will have blessings that will last for all eternity? Yes, he promises that! Now, that is generally true, that those who are good stewards with the money that God has entrusted to you will also find that they have a constant supply of money, that they have a constant supply of funds, more than they need for themselves, and ample to help others, and ample to take care of all of the needs of their own lives and great amounts for contributing to the Lord's work. Grace-Giving then is free will offering. It's a free will act. It's spontaneous. It's inspired by your understanding of doctrine in your mind, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Macedonians eagerly ask Paul to let them help the starving Christians in Jerusalem. Notice what he says, 2 Corinthians 8:4, "begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints." Isn't that something?

This is something like when Moses in the wilderness said 'God wants us to build this tabernacle, it has to be top quality. We cannot have any warped boards in the floor. It has to be well-designed. Walls have to be painted and the ceiling has to be right. We need money to do this.' So, they brought all that wealth that they got from the Egyptians. Finally, Moses says, 'Folks, things have gotten out of hand. Don't give us anymore. You're bringing too much.'

I have prepared that speech myself. I practiced it many times in front of a mirror. I have not had to use it yet, but I do have it on the line if necessary, so I'll not be caught short. Isn't it something, "begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" to give to this fund! I have yet to have my experience, anybody begging me to allow them to give money to the Lord's work, begging to have a part in something. I just wish they would. I wondered how would I act? I would say, 'Well, how much do you want to give, that's not enough.' And when they got up, then I'd said, 'OK, now you can give.' I see great possibilities in this.

These were people who knew how to grace give. These were people who understood that even in the little they had and the suffering that they went through for being the loyal servants of Jesus Christ, that it was all His and they were not going to see a need pass by that they could have a part in helping. And the more they had, the bigger part they could have, the happier they were.

**Grace-Giving is a Privilege**

"With much entreaty," in the Greek sentence, you might be interested to know, that this expression in 2 Corinthians 8:4. "With much entreaty," comes first in the sentence. What you put first in the Greek sentence is the most important emphatic thing. So, the Holy Spirit is stressing to us that these people really, with many expressions of request to help, sought to be part of this offering. In spite of hard times, in spite of the limited funds, they're having a part in giving to the poor in Jerusalem.

Christian giving by grace is a privilege, remember, which stores eternal treasures in Heaven in the form of divine rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That was the favored participation that they wanted. They knew that they weren't losing anything. You can never out-give God. That does not mean that He will prosper you financially by the more you give. That is not true for Christians. It does mean that He will return in eternal rewards beyond your fondest dreams, far in excess of what you've ever given to Him. They gave to God by ministering to the support of the Saints in Jerusalem. Paul himself, I suspect, probably thought that the Christians in Macedonia were just too poor for him even to approach with the idea that they should give to this fund.

**Grace-Giving is First Giving Yourself to God and God's Work**

In 2 Corinthians 8:5 he says 'they did give and then he said they surprised me. They did something I didn't expect them to do.' "and this, not as we had expected [and this giving on their part, not as we had expected], but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God." "Not as we had expected," the word expected is a Greek word, "elpizo," e l p i z o. "elpizo" is a word for "hope." Paul says 'I had a hope that they would do something, but I did not dream that they would do what they did. That was beyond my fondest hope, because what they did was not only requested to have a part in helping the poor believers in Jerusalem with a monetary contribution, but they said, first of all, they gave themselves to God's work. They gave themselves to the Lord, and by giving themselves to the Lord, they also gave themselves to us to help us in God's work.'

So, here's an interesting principle we should not let slip by. The Macedonian Christians first gave their lives to God's service and then they gave their money. That's the problem. People who have trouble really giving their money to the Lord's work now, when it is needed at the moment of great opportunity, are the people who have not given themselves to the Lord first. When you come to the point in life where you say, 'I am your child, I am your servant, and the only reason I take my next breath is for your will. What's next? What do I do? What do you want me to do? I do not take my next breath primarily for something of my personal interests. My life is yours to use.'

Now, of course, God gives us a lot of our own lives to use for ourselves. We have great freedom in doing many things in life that we enjoy and all that's legitimately right. Great freedom in accumulating things we enjoy and all that's perfectly right. What God wants first of all, though, is for you to understand that He wants to be free to call upon you. That is an ennobling quality. There's few problems in life that human beings have that cannot be resolved by a person who has placed himself into the hand of God for God's use and for God's glory. That is a very ennobling, peace creating quality within the human breast. 'I am the servant of the most-high God. I belong to Him. His plan is my plan and I rejoice in it.'

Paul says, 'These people are trying to keep body and soul together. I'm reluctant even to suggest to them that they might like to give something to help the starving people in Jerusalem. But here they not only give out of their poverty, but they come to me and say, "Paul, what do you want us to do? We have capacity, we have talents, we have ability, we have time. As for our aid, we have strength. We are yours to use in the Lord's work. What do you want us to do? First we give ourselves and we will give our money as well. This is God's plan and this is the grace-way of giving."'

**The Blessing to Believers Because God's Valuing of the Giver More Than the Gift**

The grace-way of giving, you see, is this: what's important - the gift or the giver - not the gift. The giver is what's important with God.

You see what this means? So, now you're broke. You're in a situation in life where you really can't give. Yet you have given yourself to God's mission, to God's purposes, to God's service. You know what God says? He said 'by the very fact that your attitude to give if you had it to give, you have given, and I will reward you because of your attitude.' That, folks, is grace: a God who rewards us for our attitude and willingness to give when we can't and then gives us the capacity to give so that we may indeed fulfill that dream. In Church Age giving, the giving of one's life must precede the giving of one's money. That's important.

Do you not think that unbelievers and carnal Christians who only live for themselves do not often give money, and maybe in substantial amount, to God's work, but they keep their lives for themselves? They don't let God interfere too much with their program. Of course you do. You know very well that there are many unbelievers that give great sums of money to Christian causes. You know that there are carnal Christians who give great sums of money to Christian causes. But they have never given themselves, so they have not been a participant in grace giving, even though they may have been very gracious in what they gave.

First of all, 'I am your son. I am your daughter. I am your child. I am a member of the royal family. You are my liege Lord. My father and I subject myself to your direction.' That is the way we recognize God is our king, God is the one who does possess our lives. Boy, does that make it easy to know what to do! Does that make it easy when we have to make decisions between material and spiritual things between Christian service and self-service! Oh, that makes it so much easier because we know where our top priorities are and we don't have to ask questions. All we have to do is decide to be as true and loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ as our Commander-in-Chief has been loyal to us.

So, what Paul is stressing is that in Church Age giving, the amount of giving is secondary in importance with God to the gift of one's life as a believer and to your attitude of willingness to give. Once a Christian decides to give his life to God's plan, to God's service, it'll be very easy for him to give his money very generously to the Lord's work. Once indeed, you have given yourself to God's purposes, he'll find it is the easiest thing in the world to give your money to God's work. He'll find it's the easiest thing in the world to see a need, run through your mind, what have I got? I have this money; I have this sum; I have this credit card reserve. And you make the move; you get the salaries paid; you get the expenses paid; you get the bills paid; you make the move. It's the easiest thing in the world. God comes in, takes up the slack and you're ready to go again. You'll never out-give Him!

**Grace-Giving Is a Result of a Positive Attitude Toward God's Will**

The dedication of one's time, talents and treasures to God's word is, of course, the result of your positive attitude toward doctrinal instruction. Your positive attitude toward this great passage this morning will make the difference. Your mind filled with the Word of God, you will understand the eternal benefits of storing treasures in Heaven through Grace-Giving. Your emotions will be pleased to finance God's work because you will find that you have a great appreciation for God. Your will will be in positive volition to financing God's will because you are delighted to do to the limit of your resources, what you are able to do. The Christian who has not given his life to the Lord will be cheap in his financial support, will be erratic, will be most ungenerous, and will someday have all eternity to regret that he did not take advantage of having given himself to the Lord and then to use what he had as a steward of maximum returns.

Are you to impoverish yourself? No! Are you to hazard some security for your old age in some reasonable way? No. Are you to deny yourself access to some of the fun things to do in life. No. Are you to deny yourself things that make life a little more comfortable? No. All of that is legitimate investment on the part of a steward of God. The point is, who has first claim upon your time, your talents, and your treasure? As God's steward, He does. When you recognize that, He will also surprise you by how much He directs you to enjoy other material possessions that He has given you.

The Macedonian Christians gave themselves to the Lord's service by supplying funds to Paul's work with the poor saints in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8:6 Paul says, "Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well." Titus went on to Corinth. He appealed to the Corinthian Christians, who are comparatively well off, to go on and to complete the relief fund. Undoubtedly, the reading of these 2 chapters, 2 Corinthians 8-9 helped motivate them to do that. Titus got them to act once more on their Grace-Giving. Titus respected God's Grace-Giving method, so I can assure you that Titus did not come in with any gimmicks or some shakedown program to impose on the saints.

Titus taught these Christians the doctrine they needed to understand on Grace-Giving so they could practice this generosity. Titus got the Christians in Corinth to imitate the Grace-Giving Macedonians and to complete the plan that they had started the year previous to this so that they could now go on.

**The Principles of Grace-Giving**

Here are the principles of Grace-Giving.

1. **Grace Orientation**

Grace-Giving begins with a mental attitude of grace orientation that you have built in your soul through your knowledge of doctrine and your positive response to it. You are now a grace-oriented person. No pressures, no gimmicks, no devices. God the Holy Spirit permitted to work through you and in you.

1. **A Free Will Offering**

The second principle governing Grace-Giving is that Grace-Giving must be a free will offering apart from any human coercion devices.

That's one reason we don't pass an offering plate at Berean Church. We haven't done it for years. You should have seen the panic the first Sunday we told people there wouldn't be any more offering plates passed around here. You had to walk up to the box on your own and there wouldn't be anybody looking over your shoulder. That's not quite true. God was watching; God peaks all the time. You knew that when you walked up to that box, He knew exactly what you had written. You know what? While we had some people, back in that dark age so long ago, who thought that we were going to really take a bath and a beating on our finances, discovered how wrong they were. We kept records and it didn't make a bit of difference. I mean, from the very first Sunday, it didn't make a bit of difference. Everybody says, 'Well, you want me to walk to the box, I need the exercise. We use a box.' Free will offering became a way of life in Berean Church.

That's exactly what Paul through Titus was trying to teach the Corinthians. First of all, Grace-Giving begins with a grace-oriented attitude of your mind, your readiness to give. Secondly, Grace-Giving has to be apart from any pressures.

1. **Giving your Life to God's Will**

Grace-Giving requires giving your life to God's will, first as His servant, whatever.

1. **Grace-Giving is the Key Factor**

Grace-Giving is the key factor in doing God's work in the Church Age. Without Grace-Giving Christians we can't do the work of the Lord.

Yes, I know some of you dream like I do, wishing you had some nice Arab-chic friend who said, 'let me give you a couple of million here. I don't know what to do with all this oil.' Wouldn't that be great! And I sit around and dream of what we would do on this campus if such funds were available. I suspect we would do some turning upside-down of the world around us because this place has a message. It is the message of the living God. We know how to present it. We know how to enunciate it. We know how to speak it out in the simplest forms.

You should hear the responses after things like the other evening at the Academy program. We have people from all kinds of churches, a few simple closing remarks that I had about the program and these people coming up euphoric like they'd never heard such significant remarks in all their lives: the simplest, most elementary things about the marvelous grace of God and the Savior he has presented and provided for us, and the great times in which we live, and the sense of urgency with which we must act.

This is our day. This is the appointed day. And Grace-Giving Christians are the ones who are going to make it possible for a lot of people to enter the eternal kingdom of God and for a lot of Christians to enter with great and eternal rewards. You are the agents. You are the vanguard. You are the people in the know. May God enable us to rise to the challenge of stewardship in the finest sense of the Macedonian Christians.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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