***Funding God's Work in the Church Age
Romans 15:22-29
RO189-01***

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This morning, we are in Romans 15:22-29. Our subject is to Rome by way of Jerusalem. This is segment number 3.

**Funding God's Work in the Church Age - Grace Giving**

The work of God on earth from the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ and the apostles has required the financial support of believers. In the early days of the New Testament church, Christians therefore supported local church ministries with their time, their talents and their treasures.

When New Testament Christians fell on hard times for various reasons, they helped each other get back on their feet. Those in the body of Christ who were helpless, weak, and in need, were cared for by their fellow believers. Today, the local church ministry in its various expressions still requires the financial support of God's people. That is a self-evident fact. Very often in practice, really overlooked by Christians or very indifferently participated in.

The funding of God's work in the Church Age, however, is totally different from funding God's work in the Jewish age under the Mosaic Law. Tithing, which was the system under the Mosaic Law, was in fact a religious tax which was imposed upon all Jews for the support of the temple ministry. The tithe, as the law, was imposed on everyone without exception; there were no exemptions for anyone. It was not a free-will offering system. Whether you were rich or poor, 10% of your income went to the temple support. Nowhere, however, in the New Testament is this Jewish Mosaic Law of tithing system applied to church believers.

Preachers who do impose tithing on Christians do so arbitrarily and not by the divine authority of Scripture. Any time you hear a preacher promoting and preaching about tithing as God's method of raising funds for church ministries, you know he's teaching you false doctrine. And whatever else, he may teach you that's sound, at that point, he has become a false prophet. Giving to support God's work in the Church Age is totally non-legalistic. It's a free-will offering system.

Now, the apostle Paul had for over a year been gathering a Jerusalem relief fund from the Gentile churches under his apostolic authority. This fund was being raised to help with Jerusalem Jewish Christians who were suffering at that time under a famine condition. Paul encouraged contributions from the Gentiles to this fund, but not on the basis of the Mosaic Law tithing system. He felt it was quite proper for Gentiles, who had become the beneficiaries of spiritual blessings through the Jewish people, now to come to the aid of their Jewish brethren. But he did not say that we do this on the basis of a 10% system.

The Gentile churches in Corinth heard about the need and they got very interested in having a part in it. They wanted to make a contribution to the Jerusalem relief fund. However, their good intentions somehow got sidetracked so that one year later the gift still had not been gathered.

Paul therefore sent Titus to the Corinthian Christians to encourage them to carry through on their desire to have a part in helping their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem. When Titus left, he sent along with him the Book of 2 Corinthians in which Paul explained how funds are to be raised for God's work in the Church Age in contrast to raising funds for God's work under the Mosaic Law system. The passage on the Doctrine of Christian Giving is found in 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9. The Corinthian Christians were generally a prosperous people, but they proved to be very bad stewards of God's provisions to them. Paul uses the free-will giving, which was demonstrated by the poorer Christians of the province of Macedonia to demonstrate the Doctrine of Grace Offerings for the instruction of the Corinthians.

**The Doctrine of Church Age Giving**

**Christians Are 100% Stewards of God's Grace**

The Doctrine of Church Age Giving then, is what we continue to look at this morning. Christians, we have pointed out, are God's stewards of all the material wealth they possess. And I hope you've listened carefully and got that point number one, that's the starting point. Christians are the stewards of God of all the material wealth they possess. You don't have it as nice as the Jews had it. The Jew only had to worry about being responsible for 10% of what God gave him. Christians have to worry about being accountable for 100% of what God has given you.

The Macedonian believers gave liberally to the Jerusalem relief fund, but they did this in spite of a great deal of personal poverty and of suffering that they were going through under persecution as Christians. The Macedonian Christians, however, found great joy in giving to God's work, so they gave as liberally as possible from their limited means. The Macedonians did not give out of a sense of a legalistic tithing duty, but they understood the principle of giving out of love for God. So, the Macedonian believers gave beyond what they would have been reasonably expected to do. They gave entirely on a free-will basis, motivated by doctrine in their minds and the Holy Spirit, who indwelt their bodies, guiding them in making the decision of the percentage they should give. The Macedonian Christians begged to have a part in the Jerusalem relief fund to help their Jewish brethren and to store there by their treasures in Heaven as eternal rewards for this divine good service.

However, to Paul's surprise, the Macedonians did something else. They not only gave of their meager means in a very liberal fashion, but first of all, they gave their very lives to God's will and service. That indeed is the first step in Church Age Grace Free-will giving. It is not the gift; it is the attitude of the giver. This is what most Christians don't understand.

The first step is not the amount you give to God that is at issue. The first step is have you given yourself. It is your life, it is your soul, it is your capacity, it is the breath in your body and all that you're able to do placed in the hands of the will of God. Don't kid yourself by saying that you are in favor of that and thinking that you have done that. Most Christians would say, well, that I think I must agree with that. But you will find that not many Christians really have come to the point where they wake up in the morning and say, 'Now, what do I do? I am at your service God; I wait for your direction.'

Paul was very pleased to see the Macedonians first gave themselves and then they proceeded to give their material possessions. The emphasis with God is first on the giver, not the gift. Because you see, anyone can give to religious causes and a lot of people do. But only a grace-oriented, born-again spiritual believer can give his life to God and to do God's thing rather than his own thing. So, there's a big difference between just giving money to religious causes. All the world does that. But to give as a grace-oriented believer who has first given himself to God, that is a system that exists only among those who are born again and who have been instructed on Grace Giving. Titus was sent to Corinth to try to get the Christians there to imitate the example of the Macedonian Christians in their stewardship as they were led by the Holy Spirit. It is obvious that without the steady and generous supply of funds to God's work from grace-oriented believers, the proclaiming of Bible Doctrine to mankind will be greatly inhibited.

**Christians Should Abound in Grace-giving**

So, please turn to 2 Corinthians 8. We have now come to 2 Corinthians 8:7 and in 2 Corinthians 8:7-9, we have the example of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also." Paul observes that the Christians in Corinth super-abounded in many spiritual, in many spiritual virtues. Among them, the faith in God, utterings, knowledge of doctrine (they knew the word and they proclaimed the word), in their earnestness or their diligence in serving God, and in mental attitude love which permeated their lives. These Christians with these good virtues, Paul says, should also abound in one other virtue, and that is in generous financial giving to the work of God, the principle of generous grace giving.

In 2 Corinthians 8:8 Paul says, "I am not speaking this as a command." You see, in the Old Testament, God says, 'I'm telling you as a command you better give Me 10% or I'm going to burn the bearings in your chariot wheels and I'll take it out of you that way. You give Me the 10% and I'm not asking you. I am telling you that 10% is what you will fork over.' A totally different picture, you see, it's horrendous. I don't care if the big preacher in the downtown church as he does, does stand up and have his annual tithing sermon. He is insulting and degrading the grace of God when he does that. He is misdirecting his vast congregation who should be ennobled by their giving to God and not degraded by this kind of a commanding, legalistic principle.

Paul puts it right up front. I am not telling you that you should abound in liberal financing of God's work as a command, "but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also." Paul says, 'Your giving is to be a demonstration of your love for God, of free expression of your soul.' And Paul is comparing the Corinthians love for God with that of the Macedonians who have demonstrated their love and their giving to the Jerusalem relief fund.

So, grace giving is love giving. It is never law giving. It is never bribe giving. It is never emotional giving. Grace giving is always the result of our love for God. Not because some preacher has bestirred your emotions so you come charging out or because you think that if you give God something, He will do something you'd like to have done for you, or that it is some kind of a legalistic principle. Paul says, "Through the earnestness of others (that is of the Macedonian Christians) you too will demonstrate the sincerity of your love as they have up there in Macedon.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." The supreme example, of course, of grace giving, Paul says, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Lord of Glory, who put it all aside and came in poverty, born in a stable, a manger for His cradle, and eventually dying on the cross without hardly owning anything at all. He left behind, however, the infinite wealth of Heaven in our hands as an exchange for our poverty, which He took upon Himself. He assumed mankind's debt of moral guilt, paid for it with his death on the cross. Now, since Jesus Christ became poor to make believers rich with eternal life in Heaven, is it indeed, Paul says, too much to ask you to finance God's work on earth in order to inform people of the doctrinal principles that they will never learn in any other way.

As a matter of fact, is it too much to ask you not to put your money in churches that are not doing the business of doctrinal proclamation and to put it concentrated in the few that are doing this so that our efforts are not diluted with all the churches out there that are running around helping the poor in one way or another, whatever that need may be, while they ignore the real poverty which is in the soul of the individual. The grace of Jesus Christ was sacrificial giving for our eternal enrichment.

So, sacrificial giving is indeed part of grace giving. That's what the Macedonians were demonstrating. They knew what Christ had sacrificed out of His wealth, therefore, they understood that it was not a big thing for them to sacrifice themselves to the borderline out of their limited means.

Grace giving, however, having said that, I must put this in balance. Grace giving does not mean that one is to deny himself the necessities of life or even the reasonable comforts of life. God expects you, indeed, to provide for your necessities. Expect you to enjoy some reasonable comforts. God expects you to plan for the future of yourself, your family, your children, your old age; all that is legitimate. The question is: how far do you go down that direction when we are confronted with God's work in the immediate context of history and the times in which we live?

**Grace Giving Is Between God and the Believer**

Since grace giving then is love giving, it is, of course, a private matter between the believer and God. What you give is no one else's business. It is, however, very much God's business. So, when we tell you it is not anybody else's business what you give and we don't want to proclaim what people give. (I grew up in a denomination where part of the Sunday morning service was the pastor standing up and reading what people had given to God's work the previous week. I've always rather enjoyed that system and have considered it several times. It had seemed to be one of the more interesting parts of the service, as I recall. But it's not a biblical system.) What you give is between you and the Lord. But I stress again that the Lord does know what you do. We may not know, but the Lord knows. So, don't think that just because it's private, you can be slovenly in your performance.

**Grace Giving Is Following Through With Desire to Give**

The next section of 2nd Corinthians 8 is 2 Corinthians 8:10-12. We have a recommendation now from the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 8:10 Paul says, "And I gave my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it." Now Paul says, 'I'm giving you this instruction on how to give in the era of the church of the Grace Age for your advantage,' as indeed I myself am doing with you this morning out of this authoritative Scripture. The reason we are doing this is to give you the advantage of a personal blessing and profit, if you pay attention to these 2 critical chapters. Paul says, 'I have given my opinion concerning your good intentions. I am not commending you to give generously to the Jerusalem relief fund. Giving is for you to do. But I am concerned over the fact that you have expressed a desire to do something that is a good thing, but you're not following through.'

It is to the Christian's eternal advantage to obey the teachings of the apostle Paul on grace giving. It is not to your advantage to follow the advice of some hotshot preacher who is promoting a tithing system for some personal aggrandizement and benefits and plans of his own. These Corinthians a year before they got this letter had desired (among the first of the Gentiles Paul said, that expressed a desire) to help the starving Jerusalem saints. For a year, however, something has been permitted to hinder their following through of gathering this offering. And Paul says, 'I commend what you decided to do a year ago and I'm trying now to show you how to proceed to do this, and to encourage you, indeed, to follow through on this desire.

2 Corinthians 8:11, "But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability." Paul urges the Corinthian Christians to carry through on their plan to give to this fund. He is not commanding them, but he is encouraging them to fulfill their own desire. Why is he doing that? Because he believes that the desire was placed there, as indeed it was, by God the Holy Spirit.

And when you come up and say to me that you have a desire to fund something in the Berean work, I understand that God the Holy Spirit has laid that burden upon your heart. Then when I don't see you come through and do it, then I, like Paul, have some concern over the fact that God has moved you in a direction for your personal advantage and eternal blessing, and that you, by not following through, are denying yourself both advantage and blessing.

Paul says, 'I want you to be as quick to finish the gift as you were to promise it.' We have a lot of Christians who are quick to promise, to express an intention of something they will do someday, but they're very slow coming through with it, even when they able to do so, even when they have the means to do so. Grace giving is often used as a bribe with God. A promise or an intention to do something, to meet some need of God's work, is done on the condition that something else will come through for them. By which we are implying, 'well God, if you come through, then I'll come through.' And at the same time, we can have all the means at our disposal right then to do the thing. God doesn't have to come through with anything. We already have the means and super means to do something that is upon our heart. He is laying things on your heart to do with what you have, not with what you someday may possibly have.

These Christians in Corinth already had it. Paul says, 'There's no reason for you to stand around waiting for your circumstances to improve. God has burdened your heart to do a good thing here. Follow through. You were quick to promise. Be quick to fulfill.' However, he does again say 'I'm only asking you to complete it on the basis of your ability to do what you're able to do, not on the basis of what you do not possess.'

**God Provides For You to Give**

In 2 Corinthians 8:12, "For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have." Here is a very important principle. "For if the readiness is present," first class condition "if," meaning that the readiness is present, they really were ready to do this. Here is a desire to give to God. Paul says that desire is what is pleasing to God, and this is the means by which God will bless you even if you don't have it to give. First of all, 'I want you to have the attitude that out of what I have, whatever I have, God gets a share and He gets everything that I can possibly give Him. I will make my reasonable reservations, setting aside planning for the future. But the more He gives me, the more freedom I have to give, I will certainly do it.' That's what he means by the readiness to give. In the case of the Corinthians, it was indeed there.

So, a Christian who is broke but has the spirit of willingness to give has in effect given to God and will be the recipient of His blessing. Your willingness to give is measured in what way? Very simply, your willingness to give is by the percentage of what you give of what you have. That's willingness to give, not promises in the future. Your willingness to give is what you give on the basis of what you have. All of us can very quickly then say, 'This is what I have. How willing am I to give? Here is what I have, this big bag of gold. How much do I give to God? I will take this off here. That's what I give to God.' This demonstrates most unwillingness to give. How much of this bag goes to God, demonstrates how willing you are to give.

So, we don't have to kid ourselves. We don't have to pretend and we don't have to try to make up for anybody else to get impressions. It's between you and God. But how willing you are to give is not your words, is what I'm trying to say. How willing you are to give is what you find that you funnel out of that big pot of gold you have and how much of it is left legitimately for yourself. It's up to you. God makes that very clear.

God does not bless our good intentions to give, which never materializes even when we able to do so. Because time has a way of moving along rapidly, people are dying, going into a priceless eternity. Young people are growing up without the guidance of the Word of God. Christians are moving along without Christian education to orient them because Christian schools cannot make themselves attractive to the general public because they don't have the money to fund themselves, the facilities that makes them look good in the eyes of the world. Christians, indeed, could take over a big part of American society if they had the right people with the right money conducting the right ministries. The time is urgent and it is now and is not in the future. God says, 'If you're ready to give, I'll bless you and I ask you to give on the basis of what you have, not what you don't have.'

**Christians Are to Give to Christians in Need**

Then in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15, we have the principle of equality. 2 Corinthians 8:13, "For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality." Paul says, 'And I want you to understand that having said this, I do not mean to imply that I want Christians in need to get financial relief while their donors are suffering privation themselves.' The Macedonian Christians chose to do that. Paul says, 'This is not what God is asking. Those people had that much of a love for God that did that; they denied themselves so that others had what they really needed themselves.' Paul wants the provisions and the sufferings to be borne equally. That's his point. He is not saying that you should give so that others are so much better off than you are. He's saying, I'm trying to equalize among us as Christians.' Then in 2 Corinthians 8:14, he says, "at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, [that is your abundance in Corinth being a supply for the want of the saints in Jerusalem.] that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, [that when they're better off than you are, then their excess becomes your advantage] that there may be equality." Christians are to supply each other's basic needs in life as necessary. The principle of the haves voluntarily helping the have nots in the body of Christ.

Equality is sought in terms of consideration for one's need, not of equal possessions and luxuries. When he says, 'I want you to be equal,' he doesn't mean 'I want you to have the same kind of car or the same kind of luxuries,' he means 'I want you to be equalized in your necessities of life. Whatever you have beyond that will be very unequal. But the basics should be there so that when believers have necessities in life, they need clothing, they need shelter, they need food, we need to equalize that out of our shelter, out of our clothing and out of our food.'

**Grace Giving is Not Communism nor Socialism**

He does not mean, however, that the poor have a right to neglect supporting themselves and to call upon some force like the government to forcibly take from others to support them. The principle in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 makes it very clear that the Christian who will not work to take care of his needs when he is fully able to do so should be permitted to starve. The Christian who will not support himself when fully capable of doing so, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 says you let him starve.

This indeed is not a call for Christian Communism. Acts 5:4 in the case of Ananias and Sapphira makes it very clear that Christians own what they have and they are free before God to make their own decision what to do with it.

This is not a call for socialism. Socialism never works. It always creates poverty and it certainly creates loss of freedom. Talk to anybody in Eastern Europe and you understand how true that is.

2 Corinthians 8:15 says "as it is written, [then on this principle of equality,] 'HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK.'" Here Paul uses the illustration of the Exodus generation gathering manna in the wilderness. The person who gathered more than he needed, he just kept busheling it up. It was everywhere. But God said 'This is going to be an equal system. Every day I'm going to provide you with what you need. You can live one day at a time. I'm going to take care of you one day at a time,' just like we do today. And the Jew who thought he'd get a little reserve for his future, piled up more than his family could eat of the manna, and that they needed, found that he had a lot more protein in the bushel then the next day than he had the day before, because the manna had turned into worms. Worms are very high in protein, but they're not palatable. So, he dumped his bushel of worms out and he learned, take what you need, leave the rest for what God has planned for others. And in fact, the person who did not take enough found that some other family had what he needed a little more so that they always all had what they needed for that day's sustenance. God-manna provided an equality by its very nature among the believers.

But we can, we must remind you that the manna did not appear by itself in the household. They had to go out and gather it up themselves. All Christians have an equal right to give to God's work. The problem is that some lack the capacity to do so. But if all Christians did, then the needs of God's work and of God's people would be equalized very readily.

**A Lack of Grace Giving Reflects a Spiritual Problem**

In 2 Corinthians 8:16, Paul refers to the mission of Titus. In 2 Corinthians 8:16 Paul says, "But thanks be to God, who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. 2 Corinthians 8:17, "For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord." Titus himself was concerned with what he saw reflected on the spiritual condition of the Corinthian Christians. When you have Christians who do not give consistently and regularly to God's work, you've got a spiritual problem. And it should concern you when that Christian is able to a great deal and does very little. You've got a spiritual problem that should concern you here. Titus, like Paul, knew that these people had been led by God the Holy Spirit, to make a decision, to have a part in a contribution to this fund. They were not carrying it through. Therefore, Titus himself was as concerned as Paul was that there is a spiritual condition that needs correcting or this will get worse in other areas.

Titus wanted the Christians in Corinth to do right in their stewardship of God's money. He was eager to go to Corinth as Paul's agent to instruct the believers on this principle of grace giving. It was not a pleasant job. People don't like to hear you talk about money. People don't like to be confronted with their responsibility before God, so some of the other members on Paul's team begged off from this particular mission. But Titus was the ramrod that Paul could always fall back upon and count on to come through in a pinch. So, the mission of Titus is to come through to help these people to carry through on their intention.

**Handling God's Finances Should be Honorable in the Sight of God and Man**

In 2 Corinthians 8:18, we read, "And we have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches." Some brother is sent with Titus to help him to administer their contributions to the Jerusalem relief fund. This is a matter of doing things honestly, keeping track of accounts. So, they sent from their church a representative to go with Titus. He was not identified here, but he's certainly known to the Lord.

And in 2 Corinthians 8:19, "and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness." The brother was sent with Titus, and other churches sent representatives to supervise the delivery of these funds. Paul wanted to remove any question about anything being mishandled, just to be honest before God and man. 2 Corinthians 8:20-21 therefore says, "taking precautions that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." That's why churches try to conduct the handling of the finances that God's people give in a very orderly fashion.

That's why we try to have 2 people who count the money. That's why we have a treasurer who never handles the funds, but is only told how much is in the account and then directed to be paying the bills. I had a Dallas Seminary professor that told about having a deacon who used to count the money at their church and was shocked one day to find that the local gambling establishment, brought a check, an offering check to the church that this deacon had siphoned off in order to take down to get more money for the Lord at the gambling establishment. And nobody knew it because only one person was there counting the money, not 2 people reinforcing each other and helping each other and supervising each other to remove questions of doubt. That's the sort of thing that can happen if you have dishonorable people.

Paul has gathered representatives from all these different Gentile churches and they said, 'You're on my team. All of you will be part of supervising the fund. The money that your church is given, you will be handling it and we will be helping each other to stay honest as we deliver the money to the Jerusalem church.' It's very important that sort of thing be done.

The next section is 2 Corinthians 8:22-24. 2 Corinthians 8:22 says, "And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent, because of his great confidence in you. [This man, left unnamed, who has been sent along with Titus,] As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ." So, he says, "These people are sent now on this mission from the various churches. 2 Corinthians 8:24 says here's how I wish you will treat them now: "Therefore openly before the churches show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you." The team that is delivering the money, Paul says, 'Please treat them in love, extend to them every hospitality that they need and treat them with respect as agents who are handling the very money of God. Because remember that the money that Christians have given represents their very lives. You're handling the very life of believers when you handle their money.

**No Christian Can Out-give God**

Coming to 2 Corinthians 9, Paul in general in this chapter makes this statement, 'No Christian can ever out-give God, no Christian can ever out-give God.' Having said that, I do not mean to imply that the more you give of your money to God, the more money He will give you back. That's not true. In the Old Testament, it was true. In the New Testament it is not true, but God will never forget what you give in terms of eternal rewards. I guarantee you that a few years down the line, you're not going to care what money you gave. You will only care, you will only rejoice in the fact of what's up there in Heaven as a reward for you to enjoy for all eternity. That's what's going to count. The money you give you're never going to miss. But the rewards up there had you not given that money, that you will miss forever. The apostle Paul is making the statement that while you may, like the Macedonians, even push yourself to poverty by what you give, you will not be poor when you get to Heaven. God will not forget what you have done. That is a very important principle. Giving is a very personal matter, a matter of personal blessing.

2 Corinthians 9:1-5, "For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints." Paul says, 'I don't have to give you a speech about helping out those starving Jewish brethren in Jerusalem. You know about the need. You have already been moved by God to do something about it.'

[continuing with 2 Corinthians 9:2,] "for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia [a province in which Corinth was located] has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them." Paul says, 'I have been up here in Macedonia. These churches and these people are not nearly as well off as you are down in Corinth and Achaia. I have been bragging about you. I said "you down in Corinth, you were the first of the Gentile churches to say "we've got to do something about helping our brethren in Jerusalem. They are off scouring the garbage of that society because they are Christians. Therefore, it is even harder for them to secure the daily necessities of life. But money will buy it for them. We must do something to help them.'" When I tell that to the churches in Macedonia, the people of those congregations rose up and said, "Amen, and we've got to do something to help too," even though they had considerably less from which to work.' So, Paul says, 'I kind of put myself on the spot about what you're going to do.'

[continuing with 2 Corinthians 9:3] "But" he says, "I have sent the brethren, that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared." The Macedonian Christians could not match the amount of the wealthier Corinthians but they could match their willingness to give.

### Grace Giving Is Not Pressured Giving

Now Paul is concerned that the Corinthians have been procrastinating in getting this fund together so that when the delegation arrives from Macedonia expecting to see the big churches of Macedonia really coming through, nothing has been done. Paul did not want the Corinthians or himself to be embarrassed in front of the Macedonians. Paul says, 'If you don't come through, you're going to make me all talk and no show.' So, Titus and his helpers were sent on to Corinth before the rest of the party with Paul arrived so that the fund could be completed that they had promised to gather. The advance party would get the good intention of the Corinthians to give generously completed, keeping their previous intention to do so.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to give as a blessing, not as a forced frustration of their covetousness. He says [in 2 Corinthians 9:4], "lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence. [continuing 2 Corinthians 9:5] So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness." What he means by that is 'I want when I arrive that this has been a free will offering, you've had time to think it over. You really want to do this. You really have given this because the Lord has led you and not because I, Paul, arrive. Now I give you a speech and maybe read you out about your slovenliness and your carelessness and then you give. But you grit your teeth because your covetousness does not want to give this. Because your covetousness wants to hang on to this, but you feel embarrassed, you feel pressured, you feel you must do this.' Paul says, 'I don't want any of that. When I come, I don't want to be part of raising this money.' Paul says, 'But by the time I get there, my influence is not going to be brought to bear to put any pressure upon you.

Giving in the grace age is strictly a no pressure situation. If you want to be covetous with what you have, if you want to be greedy, that's fine. You will bear your own consequences, but you are absolutely free to do that.

If you want to be like the story of the old woman who, unbeknownst to her while she sat making a meal, was approached by the Lord Jesus Christ and who asked for a bit of the bread she was making. And she made a flat piece of bread, a pancake bread. She finished it and she looked at it and she thought to yourself, this is too big to give to Him. So, she put it aside, made a smaller one, and each one was too big to give to him until she had something the size of a half dollar. She says, "I really don't have anything left to give to you, because by that time she had run out of the dough and she had ended up because of her covetousness, not giving anything to the Son of God who could have given everything back to her in terms of eternity.

So, Paul says, "I want you to give as a blessing, not out of forced frustration of your covetousness. Many a Christian who could and should give generous, large financial gifts to God's work because he's free to do so does not do so simply because of his covetousness for his personal wealth.

**Eternal Rewards Are Commensurate With Grace Giving**

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 Paul says, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver." Miserly giving in comparison to one's possessions receives a miserly reward in Heaven. Do not interpret 2 Corinthians 9:6 to say that if you give God a lot of money, He will give you a lot of money back. That is not what it is saying. It says that if you will sow in spiritual matters with your money bountifully, you will reap bountiful rewards in Heaven and you are free to do what you wish to do in your own heart. Miserly giving as expressed in comparison to one's possession will receive a miserly reward.

You see, this was reflected, you will remember, by the account of the poor widow who is bringing her money to the treasury along with all the very wealthy men. Jesus is sitting there in the outer court of the treasury of the Temple precinct and watching this system of people bringing their money. He was aware exactly what they were bringing. You may remember this back in Luke 21.

Let's take a look at Luke 21. We have that account in Luke 21:1-4. "And He [Jesus] looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.'" That is true grace giving and that is true generous giving. She gave all the money in the world that she had, the very thing that she needed to live on. She had no means left for securing necessities of life after this act of truly sacrificial giving. It was what she wanted to do because of her great love for God. Even God had not asked her to do that, but her great love for God moved her to that extent.

Jesus sat there watching these proud rich men, dropping their money in, and making a big show of it. But Jesus said, 'You guys are a bunch of clowns. You're pretending and you're making out before people that you've been so generous. But I happen to know how big a bank account you have left. You've given nothing. You've made a little bite in your pot of gold and most of it you're still sitting on enjoying for yourself. You have given in accordance with the condition of your own souls. Because you are greedy, covetous, small souled creatures, you gave little to God.' There's nothing wrong with what they gave. They're free to do that. The widow's gift, however, declared, Jesus says, 'Is much more value than what the rich man gave, not in monetary, but in terms of the rewards that will come in eternity for each.

Your giving is tested in terms of what is left over. The rich gave out of abundance. They still had far more left over than they ever needed. The widow gave out of poverty and she had nothing left over for her needs. I guarantee you that she did not starve. The God of all grace came through and took care of her for her generous expression of love. God views the gift in terms of our total reserves. The widow reflected a condition in her soul, and the rich men reflected the condition of their soul. She loved God and she knew her doctrine, and she was grace-oriented. She gave gladly all that she had to the Lord. And after she gave everything, she still had the Lord. In reality, the Lord was her living, so, she wasn't destitute at all. She could depend on Him to take care of her.

Since the Lord was her life and not her money, it was no problem for her to give her money to God. The Lord was her life, not her money. To give the Lord away would have been a great problem for her, but to give her money when he was not a problem. It all comes back to who has your soul, you or the Lord. Gracious giving to God's work is actually a method of graciously storing your own treasures in Heaven for eternity.

Giving, however, has to be the result of the Holy Spirit's guidance for you to receive that kind of reward in Heaven. Legalistic giving such as tithing or spiritual rat hole giving, please don't do that. Some of you may have slipped into that. You've been attracted by the TV promoters to giving your money to rat hole operations. I can assure you there'll be no reward in Heaven for that. Christians are to determine in their minds what God the Holy Spirit wants them to give.

**Grace Giving Is Cheerful Giving**

Then he says [in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7], 'I want you to do it cheerfully.' [2 Corinthians 9:6-7] "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver." God does not want you to give in a way that leaves you reluctant, resentful. God has a special love and blessing for the generous, faithful steward. God wants you to give with the Greek word "cheerful," which looks like this, "hilaros," h i l a r o s, from which some people say we get the English word "hilarious." It means "cheerful," but it does not mean "hilarious" in the sense of giving like a drunken sailor on leave spending his money. And that's the sort of way that Christians are told they're going to give. 'Hey, let's have a great party here, give away.'

I have had people come to me on occasion when they were not people in our congregation, but outside who are sympathetic with our work, coming back from a party drunk as can be, and hand me 100 dollars for the Berean ministry. And I have to check with them later when sensibility has come back: 'Do you want to give this 100 dollars?' That's not the kind of giving that God is calling for here.

God blesses with rewards your free will, carefully considered, no pressure, Holy Spirit led, non-compulsive giving out of the positive volition in your soul toward doctrine, which calls for you to do this, and the Holy Spirit (who leads you to do this), and the love of God (which motivates you to do this). This is the way to be a winner for all eternity and to fulfill what Jesus said [in Matthew 6:20], "Store your treasures in Heaven where moth and rust does not corrupt them, where thieves can never break in to steal them, and which you will enjoy for all eternity." Consider first the needs of the Kingdom of God. 'And I assure you,' God says, 'That I'll take care of you from everything that you need from now until I take you home in My presence.'

Now, either you believe that or you don't. If you do, you have the guidelines given to you by which to act upon that. And we shall complete this instruction next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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