

GRACE GIVING

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

We often struggle with an inverted view of giving.

We see giving as a sacrifice and get the impression that the church is out to take what's *ours*.

"The preacher's after my money!"

God wants to turn our view upside down and reprogram our computer.

He wants to get the garbage out of our minds.

Christ affirms:

"It's more satisfying to give than to receive!"

If that's really true, why do we spend so much of our time trying to RECEIVE more?

We think of giving in terms of "Give 'til it hurts!"

When we ought to think of it as "Give 'til it feels good!"

Paul, in 2 Corinthians wants to help us understand this principle.

He introduces two main thoughts about giving:

*** *Giving ought to be the most satisfying, joy-producing activity in life.***

*** *God delights in giving us more so we can afford to give to others and find out what real satisfaction is like!***

2nd section of letter (8-9) prepares the church for a collection to help their suffering brethren in Judea.

APPEAL FOR THE OFFERING 8:1-15

He appeals to the church to participate generously.

EXAMPLE OF MACEDONIA 8:1-6

A significant emphasis of this passage:

The opportunity to give is referred to as “grace.”

Notice how often he uses “*grace*” in this passage,
to describe the giving he asks us to do for others.

8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 19; 9:8, 14

It’s God’s grace that motivates us to participate in helping others.

In our day, our culture replaces “grace” with “gimmick.”

We give because of th gimmicks.

Emotional appeals, prosperity theology, and pressure tactics take the place of “GRACE” giving.

Instead of focusing on biblical motivation for giving, we come up with strategies and ways to make your money “work better for you.”

One preacher sent out an appeals letter stating: “You can’t outgive God. We’ve figured out that if everyone who hears our program sends \$67, we’ll have all the money we need. God will give it back to you five times over.”

An astute listener wrote back, “I believe you can’t outgive God. So here’s my deal: you send me \$67 and I’ll have the money I need, then God will give it back to you five times over.” They never sent him another appeal.

We don’t give up what belongs to us naturally.

God is “*the giving God*.”

When His Spirit lives in us, He produces that attitude in us also.

Rich generosity is the result of God’s grace at work in us.

It’s not the result of a legalistic attitude telling us what we have to do!

Legalism *never* produces a generous spirit.

Legalism always leads to giving the least we can get away with.

Legalism asks, “*How much do I have to give?*”

God’s grace asks God how much He will enable us to give.

“*How much CAN I give?*”

The church in Macedonia has its own financial needs, yet insists on giving generously to help others in need.

Nobody has to pressure them to give.

Chrysostom observed: “They did the begging, not Paul.”

They see giving as a privilege.

Being able to give is evidence of God’s *grace*.

The Macedonians gave:

During affliction (2) Voluntarily

In spite of deep poverty

= “dirt poor”) Begging to give (4)

With joy Giving themselves with their gift (5)

Beyond their means (3) As prompted by God's will for them

They are content–JOYFUL–in the midst of poverty.

Their extreme poverty contrasts notably with their rich generosity.

We usually think that’s an impossible combination.

You don’t have to be rich to be generous!

Their generosity stems from the fact that they have given *themselves* to God.

What they do with their money is the result of how they view their life!

Because they have given their life to God,
they give themselves to His children.

That’s what motivates them to be generous in helping others.

PETITION 8:7-8

Paul urges the Corinthians to follow their example.

He hopes the generous attitude of the Macedonian church will be contagious.

They abound in every other area of the Christian life, how about this one?

He desires that this “grace” will excel in them also.

He wants us to excel in the grace of giving.

The ultimate example:

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST 8:9

The example of Christ who gave up everything for us ought to encourage us.

Christ modeled grace by giving up His eternal riches for us.
That's what HIS grace was like.

"He became poor" = abject poverty

He became poor, so WE could become rich.

Are WE willing to share our wealth with others?

PREVIOUS INTEREST 8:10-11

**They were eager to give previously,
now they should fulfill their promise.**

When the need was first announced they were eager to help.

In fact they were the first ones to get on board to help.

Paul used their eagerness as an example for others.

Now it's time to finish what they started.

It's important to be known for both willing and doing.

Our giving should be consistent with the riches God has placed in our hands.

PROPER MOTIVE 8:12-15

A willing heart is of prime importance.

God is not nearly as concerned about *how much* we give, as He is that we give Him our life first.

Giving our resources is the natural overflow of a *heart* offered to God!

Kent Hughes: In a worship service, one participant accidentally put in a crown piece instead of a penny. When he realized what he'd done, he quietly asked for it back.

The usher responded "In once, in forever!"

"Oh well," groaned the giver, "at least I'll get credit for it in heaven."

"No," said the usher, "you'll get credit for only a penny."

God's focus is on the heart.

God desires willing hearts that are eager to give, according to what we have.

No one will be judged for not giving what he doesn't have.

God wants us to use the resources He has placed in our hands for His glory.

He asks us to give in accordance with our means.

He doesn't ask us to give what we don't have.

If we don't have resources to give, we shouldn't be embarrassed about it.

We're only responsible for how we use what God has given us.

Correct motive: that *all* have enough.

It isn't right for some to have abundance while others suffer.

God uses those who have abundance to supply the need of those who lack.

Right now they are the ones who have abundance.

The situation may be reversed later.

We may be in need when they have an abundance.

Our sharing with one another assures that there is plenty for everyone.

Paul cites example of God's provision of manna in the wilderness. **15**

Hoarding didn't pay. But God supplied ALL they needed.

Those who went out and gathered more than they needed, woke up the next morning to find it spoiled!

It did them no good to stock-pile it all for their own benefit.

God's plan is for us to have enough—to supply all we NEED.

But what's left over ought to be shared with others.

Hoarding as much as we can get for ourselves still doesn't pay.

God wants us to use our resources for the good of the body of Christ.

We ought to share the resources God has placed in our hands.

God wants us to participate together in carrying out His work around the world.

Paul appeals to God's people to participate generously.

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD WE LEARN FROM PAUL'S APPEAL?

*** God wants our church to function that way also.**

That's why we have a **Deacons' Fund**

–to help those who are in need.

God wants us to use our resources to help one another.

That's why we have a **missions budget**

–to enable us to share with those that God is sending as His ambassadors, to serve Him around the world.

*** *God wants us to give ourselves to Him first,***

then we give ourselves to one another,

then we share our resources with those in need.

*** Giving is the evidence of God's grace in our life.**

J. Vernon McGee: "Our giving should be a grace, a passion, a desire to share. Giving should be a joyful experience. You ought to be able to say to people, "You ought to listen to Dr. McGee. He's talking about the most wonderful privilege in the world. He's telling us how we can be happy by giving."