

Grace Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Somebody well said, “Every time the offering plate is passed we can give away a little chunk of our selfishness.”

Author **Richard Foster** wrote, “Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon greed.”

Author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, **John Bunyan** wrote similarly, “You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you” (John Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, page 63).

C. T. Studd was one of England’s greatest athletes in the 1800s. Studd was a world champion cricket player who came to Christ. When his wealthy father died, C. T. inherited over \$150,000 which was a fortune in the 1800s. C. T. Studd said, “I don’t want that money to clutter up my life. I think the best way to use it is to invest it with God.” He then sent \$25,000 to Hudson Taylor’s Inland China Mission, \$25,000 to William Booth’s Salvation Army, and \$25,000 to D. L. Moody to start Moody Bible Institute. The balance C. T. Studd gave to his wife on their wedding day with these words, “The rich young ruler was asked by Jesus to give all.” Then the both of them sent all the remaining money anonymously to William Booth and the Salvation Army. After investing all of their money in the Lord’s work they invested their lives as missionaries in Africa.

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul calls this attitude of giving Grace Giving. Paul uses the word for Grace [Gk *charis*] ten times. Paul interchanges grace and giving.

I love **Alexander MacClaren**’s definition of grace: “The exercise or expression of love to the undeserving.”

1. That is what God did for us at salvation. In love He gave us what we did not deserve, eternal salvation through Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
2. That is what we do when we give to the truly needy.

Grace giving is not Law giving or mandatory giving. Tithing in the OT was more like paying taxes.

Grace giving is giving because we are thankful for the eternal life God has given us through His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the attitude Paul shouts at the end of this advanced theology of giving in 2 Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable or inexpressible gift.”

Paul spent six years collecting a relief offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem. These believers in Jerusalem were poverty stricken

1. Because of their conversion to Christianity
2. And because of a famine (Acts 11:27-30)

The Corinthians had promised or pledged to give one year ago (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The promise of the Corinthians to give to the suffering believers in Jerusalem had provoked the Macedonians to sacrificially give (2 Cor 9:1-2).

Now one year later, however, the Corinthians had not fulfilled their promise.

Ironically, Paul now is using the example of the Macedonians to motivate the Corinthians to give what they had pledged.

Paul holds up the Macedonians as models of Grace Giving. The Philippians had already given to Paul three times.

1. The Philippians gave twice when he left Philippi to go to Thessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16).
2. They gave a third time when Paul left Thessalonica to minister in Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:9).
3. Now they have given a fourth time to the suffering saints at Jerusalem.
4. The Philippians will give a fifth time when Paul is in prison at Rome (Phil 4:18).

Here are the Principles of Grace Giving as Modeled by the Philippians:

1. Grace Giving is Generous Giving (2 Cor 8:2)

A. In spite of Trials “a great trial of affliction.”

The Philippians were suffering because of persecution and a famine. Trials can make even believers self centered so that their hardships are the subject of every conversation.

B. In spite of Poverty “and their deep poverty.”

The Philippians were on welfare because of their faith in Christ. “Considering that there was virtually no middle class in the first-century Roman world of Achaia and Macedonia and that the vast majority of the population lived at or below the subsistence level...Roughly 70 percent of the population survived or below the subsistence level...At the very bottom were the outcasts: orphans, widows, and those unable to work because of illness or physical impairment” (Clinton E. Arnold, General Editor, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary, Vol 3.* pages 233-234). The Philippians were at this level of poverty and gave to others on this poverty level.

Poverty can make even believers selfish. Some believe our government has created a Nanny State mentality who believe the government should provide for them from the womb to the tomb from the cradle to the grave. This was not the mentality of the Macedonians.

C. There are two strong contrasts in verse two

- 1) These suffering believers were in a difficult trial with great joy
- 2) These welfare believers gave out of their poverty to other believers in poverty
- 3) There was no “You owe me attitude.”

2. Grace Giving is Willing Giving (2 Cor 8:3, 4)

We’ve heard it said, “That we should give until it hurts.” One church member allegedly responded, “Every time I think of giving it hurts.” If hurts when a believer gives, then that is not Grace Giving.

A. They were not forced to give (8:3).

B. They actually begged to give (8:4).

In Exodus 35, 36 we have an OT example of willing giving. This was like a Capital Fund Raiser Campaign for a building project: The Tabernacle or place of worship God. This giving was a free will offering above the mandatory tithe. The people gave so much that Moses had to stop the capital fund raiser campaign in 36:5-7.

C. Just as God was not forced to give His Son on the cross for our sins and just as Jesus was not coerced to give His life a ransom neither are believers who are grateful for God’s love and Christ’s death forced to give.

3. Grace Giving is Personal Giving (2 Cor 8:5-6)

A. First, We give ourselves to the Lord.

When we give ourselves to the Lord we realize all we possess belongs to the Lord anyway and we just the managers.

1) Psalm 24:1 expressly declares this principle: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

2) Paul has already reminded the stingy Corinthians of this stewardship principle: “What?”

Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, who you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

B. Then, we give of our means to the needy.

C. Titus is another example Paul uses in 8:6.

1) Titus has just returned from Corinth having delivered Paul's severe letter of rebuke referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:1-4 and yet is willing to immediately return. Obviously, Titus had given himself to the Lord and now is giving his time and service to others.

2) Someone said, "If it were not so hard on the ushers we should get into the offering plates as they are passed."

A little boy who was about to be baptized accidentally left his wallet in his pocket and one of the men noticed it and said he needed to take it out. But another man spoke up and said, "No leave in there. His wallet needs to be baptized and dedicated to the Lord as well."

4. Grace Giving is Evidential Giving (2 Cor 8:7-8)

A. The well to do Corinthians abounded in talent and the poverty stricken Philippians abounded in trials.

B. The well to do Corinthians abounded in spiritual gifts and the poor Philippians abounded in spiritual giving.

C. Paul challenges in 8:8, he does not command, us to prove the sincerity of our love by our giving. The government can command us to pay taxes, but we cannot be forced to Grace Give.

Mark Twain said on one occasion he was so sickened by a long appeal to give that he not only did not give what he had planned to give, but he took a bill out of the plate.

5. Grace Giving is Christ like Giving (2 Cor 8:9)

A. Paul has used the Philippians and Titus as examples of giving.

B. Paul, however, saved for last the supreme example of Grace Giving: The Lord Jesus Christ.

1) The "Grace Giving" of Christ is mentioned or the love He exercised for us who do not deserve His love.

2) When was this grace expressed? Paul says that “he was” before “he became.”

To understand Christmas or the Nativity we must first go back into eternity past. Christ “was” before He “became.” He was and is the eternal God. John in his Gospel in which he does not narrate the birth of Jesus as do Matthew and Luke but informs us of its doctrinal significance: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

3) Paul also says that Christ “was rich” but “became poor.”

a. Christ was rich in His deity. Paul elaborates in Colossians when he says “in him should all fullness of deity dwell” (Colossians 1:19). Christ was rich in that He possessed the totality of all the attributes and the glorious manifestation of all the attributes or as the writer of Hebrews writes “the brightness of His glory.”

b. Christ became “poor” in His incarnation and His crucifixion.

Paul will further develop this grace in Philippians 2:5-11. This great Kenotic or Emptying passage does not emphasize what Christ subtracted in His incarnation but what Christ added: Humanity to His Deity. “Who being in the form of God...took upon him the form of a servant.” God became not just become man, in the incarnation God became the God/Man.

Just as we cannot appreciate the birth of Jesus at Christmas and the Nativity without understanding His eternal existence before His incarnation neither can we comprehend the importance of Christmas and the Nativity without deeply appreciating the cross. Yes Christ became poor at his birth when deity took on humanity, but the ultimate poverty of Christ’s love was on the cross where He became sin for us: “For he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Warren Wiersbe said, “Hell is eternal poverty.” In Hell the rich man begged for one drop of water. The rich man in Luke 16 who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, in Hell could buy one drop of water. On the cross Jesus became the poorest of the poor when He suffered our deserved Hell and eternal punishment.

“That you through His poverty might be rich.” If Hell is eternal poverty Heaven is eternal riches. Before salvation we were beggars, totally bankrupt spiritually. Just as the rich man in Hell could not purchase one drop of water to relieve his torment we could not earn salvation but God in grace gave us what we did not deserve: eternal life through His Son. Now we are no longer beggars on the street but we have been adopted into the family of God and are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Shout with Paul, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable or inexpressible gift” and give yourself to God and then to others.