

The Grace of Giving

February 12, 2012

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

Vol. 2 Num. 7

Core Competency:

Giving Away God's Money- "I give away God's money to fulfill God's purposes."

Now as you excel in everything—faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this grace. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

❸ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

Introduction

During calving season a farmer came home quite excited and announced, "One of our cows had two calves. I think we should give one to the Lord." After discussion, the family wanted to know which calf was going to be the Lord's. The farmer said, "When the time comes to sell them, I'll know which one is the Lord's." A few days later the farmer came back to the house looking dejected and announced, "The Lord's calf just died."

This Week

This week we see how the Word of God, the Bible, addresses (to us) the delicate topic of our personal giving to the Lord. 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 & 9 contain the most extensive teaching on giving in the New Testament.

Although we probably are all growing weary of politics and debates, recent events were interesting. The news media had been pressing one of the Presidential candidates to release his tax returns. When he did, his critics were pretty much silenced in some respects. It was revealed that this candidate was not such a "villain" after all, in that, in one of the years in question, he had donated in excess of four million dollars – over 10 % of his income - to his church. This was in addition to donations that he had made to various other charities.

How and how much are we to give? Let's see what God has to say about it in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully read the following, noting any significant details or terms emphasized in the passage.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God granted to the churches of Macedonia:

2 During a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity.

3 I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability,

4 they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints,

5 and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God's will.

6 So we urged Titus that just as he had begun, so he should also complete this grace to you.

7 Now as you excel in everything—faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this grace.

8 I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich.

10 Now I am giving an opinion on this because it is profitable for you, who a year ago began not only to do something but also to desire it.

11 But now finish the task as well, that just as there was eagerness to desire it, so there may also be a completion from what you have.

12 For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

13 It is not that there may be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality —

14 at the present time your surplus is available for their need, so their abundance may also become available for our need, so there may be equality.

15 As it has been written: The person who gathered much did not have too much, and the person who gathered little did not have too little.

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

1. Please note that “grace” is the key ingredient in our passage today. We might define “grace” as an unconditional blessing bestowed upon us by God. How does Ephesians 2:8-9 describe grace?
 - a) Romans 6:14
 - b) Romans 12:6
 - c) 1 Corinthians 15:10
2. Clearly, the grace of God is the source of our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9, again). However, that's not all! Our entire lives, as believers, are dependent upon His grace. How, according to the following verses?

d) 2 Thessalonians 2:16

e) Titus 2:11-12

f) Hebrews 4:16

3. God's grace can be demonstrated in today's passage by comparing the poverty/riches in verse 9 with the poverty/riches in verses 1-2. What ***were the riches***, then, that were graciously and abundantly bestowed upon these Macedonian churches?
4. What is this grace called in verses 6-7?
5. Would you say that the grace referred to in verses 6-7 is operable, in us, today? How?
6. In light of Matthew 6:19-21 and 2 Corinthians 8:7-8, what would you say ***personal giving*** is a measure of?
7. Nowhere in the New Testament are amounts or percentages specified as to ***how much*** we should give. What ***is*** important, though, according to verses 10-12?
8. If grace in our personal salvation can be abused (Romans 6:1-2), would you say that the grace of giving can be abused? If so, how?

9. As Christians, we are ***dead*** to the (Old Testament) Law (Romans 7:4) and, so, we live by grace (John 1:16-17). We live and give by grace. How can we personally apply the grace of giving? How would you summarize it according to:

a) Verse 3:

b) Verse 7:

c) Verse 12:

d) Verses 13-15:

10. How would you connect giving, commitment, and the operation of the modern-day local church?

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

In one statement, write what God wants you to KNOW...

In one statement, write how God wants you to FEEL...

In one statement, write what God wants you to DO...

Sermon Notes

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I live life with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away God's Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away God's money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.