

## 2 CORINTHIANS 8-9: “THE GRACE OF GIVING”

### Introduction:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2-part series on Christian giving—b/c everybody from time-to-time gives to the people, organizations, & causes that we care about.
- Last week: Contrasted OC vs. NC giving & talked about WHY we give—For Christians, we concluded that we give b/c we’ve been changed: We have been given new hearts; a new mind; a new spirit; a new direction; a new set of values; a new life. And we respond to this, and prove the reality of our new heart & new life, among other things, by our giving.
- This week: Talk about HOW we give. 2 Cor 8-9=Paul’s most extensive and detailed discussion of *giving*. In fact, this psg. will give us an entire *theology of real Christian giving*.

### Historical Background:

- 1 Cor 16:1-4—Collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem.
- Begun the collection, but hadn’t followed through & finished it.
- Now: Paul is coming again, so “finish what you started.”

Proposition: Giving is a grace that glorifies God.

Org. Sentence: As we consider 2 Cor 8-9, we will see how giving is a grace that glorifies God as we look at 3 aspects of giving: (1) What real Christian giving is; (2) How real Christian giving should be *exercised*; (3) What the *results* of real Christian giving are.

### I. What is real Christian giving?

Not merely: “Giving glorifies God”—that misses the *essentially spiritual nature* of giving:

- Real Christian giving ≠ mere transfer of money. It is a *spiritual discipline*, like praying, fasting, going to church, or any other spiritual activity.
- Despite being Paul’s longest discussion of giving in the Bible, Paul never uses the word “money.”

#### A. Giving is essentially *spiritual*; it is a *Gift* of God’s *Grace*.

- *charis*—“grace” runs like a thread: Giving=“Grace” “gracious work”—**8:1, 6, 7, 9, 19; 9:8, 14 +8:4** (“favor”) **+8:16 & 9:15** (“thanks”).
- Essentially spiritual nature (**8:7**)—Paul equates faith & love with giving.
- *All have this grace of giving*: “Deep poverty” (Macedonia, **8:2**); “Abound in everything” (Corinth, **8:7**)
  - Giving = grace given *to* the whole church
  - To be exercised *by* the whole church.

#### B. Other terms show the essentially spiritual nature of giving.

- *koinonia*—“communion”—**8:4** (“participation”; “taking part”); **9:13** (“contribution”)
- **9:12: *leiturgia***—“liturgy”= (“service”)
- **9:1, 12-13: *diakonia*** = (“ministry”)

#### C. Giving reflects Christ’s own giving of himself. (**8:9**)

- *Giving is a grace that glorifies God.*

### II. How should real Christian giving be exercised?

A. Freely (**8:3b, 8a; 9:7**)—not manipulated, or strong-armed by the law of the tithe.

B. Systematically (**9:6-7a**)—Two aspects of this:

- **9:6** (“sowing”)=farmer =>*Regularly*
- **9:7a** (“purposed in his heart”)=*Planned/thought out*— “to reach a decision beforehand, choose”
- **9:5a** (“arrange beforehand”)

### C. Generously in proportion to one's resources:

- Proportionally (8:3a, 11b-12)—i.e., the more you have, the more you give—and not just raw dollar amount, but increased %. Remember: 10% should be the place where we BEGIN our giving. But most Americans easily could give 15%, 20%, 25%, or more.
- Generously (9:5b-6)—“bountiful”

We have seen that real Christian giving should be done freely; systematically; generously in proportion to one's resources. That is all on the side of the giver. Two other aspects of real Christian giving also implicate the recipient as well as the giver.

### D. To meet real needs (8:4; 9:12a)

- Needs can be *physical* or *spiritual* (e.g., missions)
- 2% to Missions (Veith article)—Happy to say that our church has committed at least 10% to go to missions—not only overseas missions like the Dearths and my work with EPI, but also working with the Iglesia Evangelica Hispanoamerica & I know that it would like to do more. That is good. It shows that this church has its priorities right.
- Let me challenge us: Antioch Presbyterian Church, Conju, Korea: “Of every dollar APC takes in 70 cents goes to missions” (Veith)

### E. Subject to independent administration and accountability.

- Titus + 2 other brothers who were known ♂ of integrity (8:16-23)—i.e., finance committee.
- Hans Dieter Betz, Commentary on 2 Cor 8-9 points out: “Paul’s letters share the administrative practices and legal terminology of the day. . . . In fact, the integrity and credibility of the churches as administrative agencies depended to a great degree in these early years [and, I may say, still depend today] on the extent to which they were able to conform to current practices in the conduct of official business.” IOW, the church followed generally accepted accounting principles, kept accurate & open records regarding its finances, and had a finance committee to make sure that the money was going where it was supposed to go.
- B/c remember: IT’S NOT OUR MONEY—ULTIMATELY IT’S GOD’S MONEY THAT WE ARE USING AND GIVING. So, as givers, part of our responsibility should be to do some checking to see if the ministries we are giving to are properly handling our money. Again, this church keeps open records. Every week on the back of the bulletin there is a financial report. That is the way it should be.
- But what about other ministries we may give to? Do you know how much of your money is going to overhead as opposed to the work of the ministry itself?—[www.ministrywatch.com/](http://www.ministrywatch.com/)
- You may not think so, but Paul is saying that these administrative procedures and safeguards *are themselves spiritual*—8:19b-21.

## III. What are the results of real Christian giving?

### A. Thanksgiving, praise, & glory of God (9:12-13)

### B. Giving builds up Christ's body on earth.

- *Supports* the saints (9:12)—physically and spiritually
- *Enables* the saints to help each other (8:14)
- *Knits* the church together (9:14)
- *Inspires* the saints to help each other (9:2)—The zeal of Antioch Presbyterian Church for missions should inspire us.

### C. God blesses givers.

- 9:8-11—Certainly implies spiritual blessings (God will “make all grace abound to us”)
- Context suggests God will help us materially—But how does He do that? The answer is: God blesses givers primarily through the church.
  - The context of the passage indicates that the rewards primarily are given to the church, not individuals. In 9:6-7 when it says “he who sows” and “each one”—that is in the singular. However, in 9:8, 10, and 11 the “you” and “your” are all plural, not singular. The shift from the singular in 9:6-7 to the plural in 9:8, 10-11 suggests that, although each individual must decide how much to “sow,” the individual sower is doing so as a representative of the

local church. The Lord will then reward the church as a body when its members are generous givers.

- God cares about community. We tend to be so individualistic here in America that we undervalue the church. Yet the church is the only organization that Jesus founded. So important is the church that it is called “the body of Christ” here on earth. And, as I see it, the church is the primary means through which God will bless us materially as we give generously. What do I mean?
- Mark 10:29-30. What is he talking about? He’s talking about the church! That is our new, real, everlasting family. And one thing about families is: *families take care of each other.* Muslims know that (i.e., Muslims who convert to Christ in Muslim lands).
- It is the church where we should first go when we are in need. Just like most people go to their earthly families. *THAT’S WHAT WAS GOING ON IN 2 Cor 8-9!* The church was taking care of each other. Remember last week? It was the church’s generosity in taking care of each other—and even taking care of pagans—that caused everyone (including the Emperor) to see that “these people are different.” And people WANTED what those early Christians had—b/c everyone wants to be part of a loving family where they know they are loved, accepted, and cared for.
- Today we have largely abrogated those responsibilities to the government. To a large extent many Christians think and use their money just like nonbelievers. But it doesn’t have to be that way. We can get it back. Empty Tomb—The Potential

**Conclusion:** Giving is God’s gift of grace: given *to* us, and given *through* us.

- If our churches, and our people understand:
  - *giving is a grace that glorifies God*
  - and put our money where our mouth is
- We will:
  - Be giving glory to God;
  - The church will be built up and knit together;
  - Through the church God will bless us; and
  - Our giving will be not only a *help*—but an *inspiration*—to people whom we know, but also to people whom we might never see. But God sees. And when we stand before Him, I have a feeling that He will then show us all the ways in which our generous giving affected the lives and destinies of many, and thereby changed the course of history.