

# The Christian Arsenal

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## SECOND CORINTHIANS 8:1-23

Today's and next week's lessons are on the subject of giving. There are only four passages in the New Testament that address the subject of giving and we will look one of those passages this week and the other one next week.

In today's lesson, Paul is going to contrast two different groups of believers.

One group of believers is eager to give.  
The other group of believers is hesitant to give.

One group asks to give.  
The other group has to be asked.

One group has very little to give.  
The other group has much to give.

And I'm sure if you've studied your lesson you know that the believers who are liberal and eager to give are the believers who are very poor; and the believers who are hesitant and have to be exhorted to give are the believer who have an abundance.

Now, we don't expect this, do we? I mean...we just don't **expect** folks who are in deep poverty to beg to be able to give to other people!! But that's exactly what the Macedonian believers were doing. They did this because of one thing...**God's grace!** You see, the Macedonian believers were "grace givers." We're going to see today what a grace giver is.

We know that grace is "unmerited favor." Grace is something God extends to us...**something we haven't earned, can't buy and don't deserve.** I like the pastor's definition of grace that he shared with us last Sunday morning. He said, "Grace is all that God is rolled up into a gift for you and me." So, let's see if we can find out what a "grace giver" is...

### 1) **We are grace givers when we give in spite of our circumstances.**

Verses 1-2...

You see, the believers in Jerusalem were in dire need of financial help. Many of them had lost their jobs because they had left Judaism and come to faith in the Lord Jesus. Many of them had been disowned by their families because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. So, many were without financial support...no way to make a living...no way to put food on the table.

We also need to be reminded that the church in Jerusalem was the "mother church" to the other churches that Paul and the other disciples were establishing. Think about it...if Kirby Woods sends out missionaries to other parts of this country or the world to establish a church, then Kirby Woods would more than likely contribute to their financial support, wouldn't we? But, here we have the opposite happening. The "mother church" was in need of help from the "mission churches."

I believe there was at least one other reason that Paul was seeking help for the church in Jerusalem...

Paul wanted this offering to strengthen the unity of the church as a whole...both the Jewish and the Gentile believers.

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Paul saw the Gentiles as being indebted to the Jews. Paul said this about the Jews in [Romans 15](#):

“...for if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”

Paul wanted the Gentile believers to express their love to the Jews in a financial way because the Jews needed it, but the Gentiles needed it, too! The Gentiles needed to feel they were helping the folks they were indebted to.

Last week we saw Paul key in on praising the Corinthians for their repentance and the comfort they had brought to both him and Titus...but Paul swiftly changed the subject here, didn't he? The Corinthians were probably saying,

“It was much more fun to be told how proud Paul was of us than to be told we need to dig deep into our pockets!”

We also need to understand that the Corinthians were wealthy. If anyone could afford to give, it was these folks. So, Paul held the poor churches in Macedonia up to them as an example...because the Macedonians gave out of their “deep poverty,” and this “deep poverty” meant “rock bottom destitution.” They weren't just poor, they were destitute. **Yet, they gave!!** In spite of their circumstances, they gave!!

## 2) We are grace givers when we give enthusiastically.

Verses 3-4...

These folks gave “according to their ability and beyond their ability...”

It's one thing to be a liberal giver when you can afford it, it's another to be a liberal giver when you're poor. Verse 3 tells us they gave eagerly. So, they were liberal and eager grace givers...

So, I believe the question comes to our mind – “ How and why were they able to do this? Well, that's our next point...”

## 3) We are grace givers when we give as Jesus gave.

Verses 5-9...

This is the answer...[v. 5](#)...

When we give ourselves to God, then we know that all we have is ours only because of His grace in our lives...

When we give ourselves to God, we know that all we have doesn't really belong to us... He's just allowed us to take care of it for awhile...

When we give ourselves to God, we care more about the needs of others than we do the needs of ourselves...

When we give ourselves to God, we don't have to be **convinced** or **manipulated** or **coerced**...or even **reminded** to give...

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When we give ourselves to God we give freely with **an open hand and an open heart...**

**And if these things aren't true in our lives, it's more than likely because we haven't truly given ourselves to God!!**

Then, Paul uses the **supreme example** of how we ought to give!  
Verse 9...

Paul is a master at contrasts...  
He has said, "though the Macedonians were poor, they gave like they were rich."

And he said,  
"though Jesus was rich, He lived like He was poor."

In **Philippians 2**, Paul tells us that the attitude Jesus had when He laid aside His royal trappings and came to this old world should be **our** attitude...

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in **Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.**"

I believe what Paul is saying is...

**"He did all this for your sake...now, I want you to follow His example and give of your wealth for His sake..."**

Well, not only are we "grace givers" when we give in spite of our circumstances, and when we give enthusiastically and when we give as Jesus gave, but...

## **4) We are grace givers when we give systematically.**

Verses 10-12...

**Here Paul reminds the Corinthians that they needed to do their part. Paul knew they had thought about giving...Paul knew they had intended to give...but good intentions don't pay the bills, do they?**

**Somehow between their decision to give a year before and the time Paul wrote this letter...the life of the Corinthian church had gotten out of balance.**

**You know, it's real easy for our lives to get out of balance, isn't it? Has your life ever been out of balance? Is it out of balance right now?**

**There are several ways to tell if your life is out of balance...**

**You can look at your prayer life and see if your life is out of balance...**

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You can look at your Bible study and see if your life is out of balance...

You can look at your concern for others and see if your life is out of balance...

You can look at your church attendance and see if your life is out of balance...

And, you can look at your checkbook and see if your life is out of balance...

What I mean is this...if your life lines up okay in your prayer life and in your Bible study and in your concern for others and in your church attendance but it doesn't line up in your checkbook, chances are you need to get your checkbook balanced!

If the margin of your Bible are crowded with spiritual notes, but your checkbook is crowded with entries to Goldsmith's and Dillards and Visa and Master Card, chances are your life is out of balance!!

The story is told about a man who, after twenty years of marriage, decided to divorce his wife. In preparing for the financial settlement, he began to rummage through his old checks.

One canceled check after another stirred memories of a long-forgotten past: the check to the hotel where he and his wife had spent their honeymoon, the check for their first car, the check for the hospital bill for their daughter's birth, the check for the \$2,000 down payment on their first home.

Finally, he could stand it no longer. He pushed the checks aside, reached for the phone, and called his wife. Telling her they had invested too much in each other to throw it all away, he asked her to start over with him for a fresh beginning.

Our checkbook also tells the story of **our** life, our values and our lifestyle. And more than almost anything else, that checkbook reveals our true walk with God. Because our checkbook announces what our treasures are! And our checkbook tells us if we are giving systematically!

So, Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to get their priorities straight and get their lives back in balance...

"You've been sitting around for a year and your intentions may have been good, but the money hasn't been sent."

## 5) We are grace givers when we give by faith.

Verses 13-15...

Paul is saying that our giving should be equal...not equal **in terms of dollars**, but equal **in terms of sacrifice**.

Let's face it...what some can give easily without even missing, would be an impossibility for others...and God knows that!!

Remember back in Mark 12, when all the rich people were putting large sums of money into the treasury? Remember the poor widow who put in what would in today's economy be a penny?

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Remember what Jesus told His disciples?

“Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than **all** the contributors to the treasury.”

**Why? Why would Jesus say that about a penny?**

Because Jesus went on to say...

“for they all put in out of their surplus (abundance), but she, out of her poverty.”

**This poor widow put in all she owned and all she had to live on.**

Beloved, God doesn't need our money!!

God said, “Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”

God said, “All the earth is Mine.”

**The psalmist said, “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it...”**

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and He owns the hills as well!!

God has indeed created all men equal, hasn't He? We don't believe this because we look at other folks and we see what they have that we don't have and we don't see much equality!

**But, we all enter this world on an equal basis...and we all leave this world on an equal basis.**

If God chooses to bless some folks with wealth, that's His business...

The test will be how they handle that wealth. Are they going to acknowledge that all that they have is God's gift and is to be used for His glory... or are they going to squirrel it away and never share it with others, or invest it in God's work?

Jim Eliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

**Now, I know that there is more than money implied here...but the bottom line is this...WE CANNOT KEEP OUR WEALTH!!**

***If inflation doesn't get it, poor investments will...***

If a poor economy doesn't get it, Y2K will...

If we keep it until we die, our children will spend it when we're gone...

but we surely can't take it with us!!

We come into this world with empty hands...

We leave this world with empty pockets...

John F. Kennedy, Jr. didn't take any more with **him** than the poorest homeless man who dies down on skid row.

**The bottom line is that God has planned it so His people are to give of their resources to further His kingdom...and He has done this so that His people will be blessed! Let's face it...we'll never outgive God!!**

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Finally,

6) **We are grace givers when we give wisely.**

Verses 16-23...

Here, Paul commends Titus and two unnamed brothers. Look at how Paul describes these men – “earnest”, v. 16; “of his own accord”, (willing) v. 17; “appointed by the churches” (trusted), v. 19; “diligent”, v. 22; “partner and fellow workers”, v. 23; “a glory to Christ”, v. 23.

***I truly believe the Holy Spirit is teaching us that responsible***

men should handle the Lord’s money. I believe God expects His money to be used responsibly and given wisely.

**I know it must grieve the heart of God to see folks on TV appeal to folks by using fear and intimidation. I believe God will judge men who exploit ignorant Christians who are taken in by emotion and manipulation.**

**GRACE GIVING IS GIVING BY FAITH...**

**BUT GRACE GIVING IS NOT GIVING BY CHANCE!**

Know the ministries you support...

Know their stand on the essentials of the faith...

And if they don’t believe in

the infallibility of the Word of God,  
and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ  
and His virgin birth...

If they don’t believe in the historic creation of man by the triune God...

If they don’t believe salvation is **only** by grace through faith, and that it comes to us **only** by the blood of Jesus Christ...

**If they don’t believe and preach the bodily resurrection of Jesus**

**and His literal return to this earth...**

**and that all people will one day spend eternity in either  
heaven or hell, depending on their belief in the**

**Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning blood...**

**If they don’t believe and preach all these things...or if they add to all these things...if they are preaching a “health and wealth message”...then they are preaching what Paul called “another gospel” and you are not as a blood bought child of God to support them in any way!**

***Of course, this means that you must know what you believe!***

First, are you saved? Have you ever bowed your head and heart to the Lordship of Jesus in **your own life**? Secondly, have you taken the time to get to know what this Word teaches? **It’s really hard to know error if you don’t know truth!!**

Well, let me wrap this up by asking you a few questions...

Do you really believe God owns it all?

Are you giving to God according to how He has blessed you?

Are you giving willingly according to the grace of God?

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Would you be ashamed for Jesus to look at your checkbook?

Has God asked you to give something that you haven't given?

***I believe the "bottom, bottom" line is this...***

God wants His children to trust Him with all they have...  
to acknowledge it all belongs to Him anyway...  
and to give back to Him out of a willing heart, because of the grace He has  
extended to us...knowing we can never give as much as He has given to us.

May God make us grace givers! May we begin to give by grace through faith just the way  
we were saved!!