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SECOND CORINTHIANS 8:24-9:15

Last week, we saw Paul contrasting two different groups of believers. One group of believers was **eager to give and was even asking to give** and the other group of believers was having **to be prodded to give**. And, we saw that the eager givers really had very little to give and the hesitant givers had 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. And, they did this for one reason...**God's grace!** You see, the Macedonian believers were "grace givers." And, 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 the pastor's definition of grace that he shared with us a couple of weeks ago. 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.

Chapter 8:24-9:5...

Verse 1...What is this "ministry to the saints" that Paul is talking about? Why was it necessary?

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 is instrumental in establishing another church, Kirby Woods would more than likely contribute to its financial support, wouldn't we? But, here we have the opposite happening. The "mother church" was in need of help from the "mission churches."

We also need to understand that the Corinthians were wealthy people. If anyone could afford to give, it was the Corinthians, but they weren't giving. So, Paul held the poor churches in Macedonia up to them as an example...because the Macedonians gave out of (as we saw last week,) their "**deep poverty**," and one commentary I read last week said this meant "**rock bottom destitution**." The Macedonians 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 purposefully.

These folks had **promised** to give; they had **pledged** to give. We saw last week that they had begun their collection a year before, but they hadn't followed through.

But, Paul didn't mind reminding them about it, did he?

Some folks have a problem with a pledge...a promise to give... but, you know when we sign up for a telephone we promise to pay a certain amount each month. If it is acceptable to make financial commitments for things like telephones, cars, and credit card, certainly **it ought to be acceptable to make commitments for the work of the Lord**.

I believe what Paul is saying here is,
"Look, folks, I've been telling those Macedonians what

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kind of people you are, how generous and enthusiastic and willing to give you are. Can you imagine how I'm gonna feel if I have to look 'em in the eye and tell 'em you didn't finish taking the collection you promised you'd take?"

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?**

Let's just think of several ways your life can be out of balance...

You can look at the time you spend in **prayer** and see if your life is out of balance.

You can look at the time you spend in **the Word**, 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.

You can look at your **concern for others** 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 church attendance and even in your concern for others, but it doesn't line up in your checkbook, then **chances are you need to get your checkbook balanced!!**

I mean, if the margins of your Bible are crowded with spiritual notes, but your checkbook is **more** crowded with entries to Goldsmith's and Dillards and Visa and Master Card, chances are your life is out of balance.

Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a man who, after 20 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**...

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.

Beloved, our checkbook also tells the story of **our** life, **our** values and **our** lifestyle, and **our walk with God**...because our checkbook reveals what our priorities are!! And our checkbook tells us if we are giving purposefully!

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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."

Having good intentions are good...but good intentions alone don't pay the bills!!

Paul says down in verse 7 that we should ***do just as we have purposed in our heart!*** If the Corinthian church had done as they had purposed in their heart a year before, Paul would have been writing them a far different letter.

Verse 6...

3) We are grace givers when we give bountifully.

Does this mean we all give the same? No!

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?

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.

Now, is God going to ask us to do that? I don't know! He might and He might not!

Ron Dunn tells the story of his first meeting at a big church. He said the preacher at that church had already told him he could expect a good love offering...maybe as much as \$3,000. This was back in the seventies, and \$3,000 went a lot farther than it does today.

Ron Dunn tells how after the preacher told him that, he just couldn't get his mind off that love offering. He said he kept saying, "Three thousand dollars! Man, we surely could use that money. We could pay off a lot or all our bills!"

Well, he said that one afternoon he was on his knees praying in his motel room for the service he would preach that night and he was saying,

"Oh, Lord, come down, and bring us revival tonight!

Oh, Lord, we need to feel Your presence and we need real revival in our hearts...please do a work, Lord in our service tonight."

Ron Dunn said the Lord spoke to his spirit and said, "Do you **really** want Me to show up in the service tonight?" And, Bro. Ron said, "Of course, I do, Lord."

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Bro. Ron said that the Lord then spoke to his spirit and said, "Then, whatever the love offering is tonight, I want you to give it away."

See, Bro. Ron had been focusing more on that offering than he had on the souls of the people...and you know what? That night 28 people were saved!

Now, God may not call you to give all you have away...literally...but he will call you to give **yourself** to Him. Paul said in our lesson that the Macedonians had first given **themselves** to Him. And, that's what He wants us to do...and when we do that...He might allow us to keep part of what He's blessed us with or He might require us to give it all away.

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 God lets us keep it 'til we die, our children will spend it when we're gone...

But we surely can't take it with us!

"Do your givin' while you're livin', then you're knowin' where it's goin'."

It may not seem like it, but we really are all created equal. We come into this world with **empty hands**...and we leave this world with **empty pockets**...

Think about it...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 bountifully 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!!**

Verses 7-9...

4) We are grace givers when we give cheerfully.

Motive makes all the difference in the world in the life of a Christian. For instance, a farmer can sow good seed and if he has good weather, he will reap a harvest whether his motive for planting was profit, pleasure or pride... but, that's not so with the Christian and his giving.

Our giving must come from the heart, and the motive of the heart must please God!

Remember Ananais and Sapphira? They gave, but they didn't give with pure motives or else they would not have lied about what they gave!!

**We mustn't be "sad givers" who give grudgingly.
We mustn't be "mad givers" who give of necessity.**

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We should be “glad givers” who cheerfully share what we have because we have experienced the grace of God...We should be grace givers!!

Let me just say this right here...God can indeed bless our **gift** if we don't give with the right motive...but He won't bless **US**...

By the way, this word for “cheer” means “hilarious.” God has called us to be hilarious givers!!

I truly believe that when we come to the end of life, the question will be, “How much have you given?” not “How much have you gotten?”

5) We are grace givers when we give thankfully.

Verses 10-11...

We ought to thank God that we're able to give!

Did you know that there was another reason Paul wanted the Corinthian and all other Gentile churches to give to the church in Jerusalem other than their sad financial condition?

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

See, 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 believer to express their love and gratefulness and thankfulness 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.

I promise on the authority of God's Word that when we give out of grace...not giving for the sole purpose of being blessed, but cheerfully giving to obey the Father...and edify the saints...

I PROMISE YOU THAT HE WILL BLESS YOU!

It's right here in **verse 10**...

Now, does this mean He's going to shower us with wealth?

No, but He will shower us with spiritual blessings of thanks-giving!

And your giving will not only produce thanksgiving on the part of those to whom we give, but those blessings of thanksgiving will be our blessings as well. It really **is** more blessed to give than to receive!! **Ex: Dead Sea...**

Well, not only do we know we're grace givers when we give in spite of our circumstances and when we give **purposefully** and **bountifully** and **cheerfully** and **thankfully**...but

6) We know we're grace givers when our giving glorifies God.

Verses 13-15...

Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father

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which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Paul said here that this ministry of giving would cause the Jewish believers to glorify God.

This is one of the beauties of church giving:
No individual gets the glory that belongs only to God!

If we give to be seen of men, Jesus said that we have all the reward we'll ever get...

Well, hang in there with me...we're almost through. Let me just insert a point that really comes out of the previous chapter.

7) We know we're grace givers when we give wisely.

In chapter 8, Paul commends Titus and two unnamed brothers. He calls them **earnest**, and **diligent** and his **partners** and **fellow workers**. He calls them **a glory to Christ**.

I truly believe that God holds each of us accountable for the ministries to which we give our money.

I believe God expects His money to be used responsibly and wisely.

I know it must grieve the heart of God to see folks on TV appeal to His children 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!!

Beloved, 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...

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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 brings up something else...this means that you must know what you believe!
Uh-oh...that means we're going to have to study!

Let me ask you...do you know you're 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 impossible to know error if you don't know truth!!**

Well, let's wrap this up...In light of these two lessons on giving...

Do you really believe God owns it all? That you have been entrusted with gifts in order for you to glorify Him?

Are you giving to God with purpose, according to how He has blessed you, no matter what the circumstances?

Are you giving **willingly, cheerfully, wisely, thankfully, according to the grace of God?**

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

My prayer is that God will make you and me grace givers...that we will give like the Macedonians...that our giving will not be a **chore** but a **challenge**...not a **burden**, but a **blessing**; and that giving will not be something to be **avoided**, but something to be **desired**.

May we give by grace through faith just the way we were saved!!

Next week we're going to see a real personal insight into the life of the Apostle Paul. Please study...we only have three more lessons in the book of Second Corinthians. Please study your lesson!!