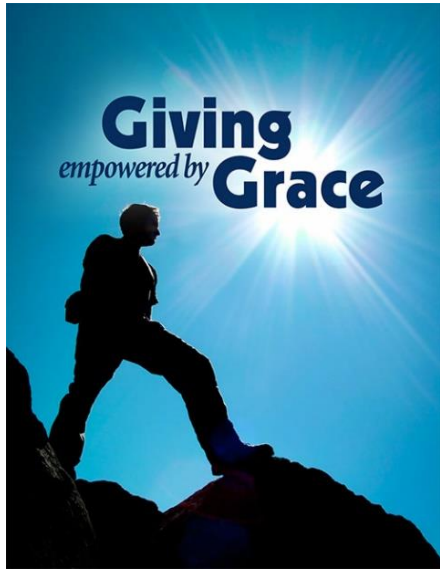


The Grace of Giving

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The Bible repeatedly teaches that “grace giving” is when we give out of a heart of gratitude which comes from God motivating our hearts. The grace that is linked to giving refers to both the *message* about grace (the sacrifice of Christ) and the *movement* of God upon our hearts (the stirring of God) which produces thankfulness and joy in our hearts for Christ’s sacrifice. This is the way New Testament saints are instructed to give to God’s work and ministry. The Dispensation of Grace (Eph. 3:2) highlights grace giving as the way Christians are to present their gifts to the Lord.

Grace giving means we should always give to God’s work while being influenced by the message of grace (Christ’s passionate death on our behalf) which stems from the work of God producing thankfulness in our hearts for His Son’s sacrifice (John 3:16). Grace giving originates from a spirit of thankfulness for the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross. It is the cross that motivates us to give sacrificially and faithfully to God’s work.

2 Corinthians 8:1 teaches:

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.”

This is not referring to being saved by grace but giving while being motivated by grace. The context of this chapter is dealing with the subject and practice of grace giving. Since these Macedonian Christians gave out of their deep poverty, Paul said that God’s grace was bestowed upon them in a special way. What Paul was referring to was how God’s grace was operating in their hearts and lives in connection with their ministry of giving. The message and truth about the grace of God and the movement of God upon their hearts was being

manifested among these believers in a special way. This was evidenced by how they gave out of poverty. In other words, the message and meaning of God's grace, regarding the sacrificial giving of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:9) had so touched and inspired their hearts, that they were willing to reflect this same attitude and expression in their giving.

These saints gave because they were motivated by the message and example of God's grace. Dear friend, we need to allow grace to stir our hearts again! We need a fresh stirring in our souls regarding God's amazing grace. When this happens, we will learn the secret of giving out of grace instead of law and we will find ourselves giving sacrificially and lovingly without the demands of the law hanging over our heads. Grace giving is God's way of giving for New Testament Christianity.

2 Corinthians 8:6-9

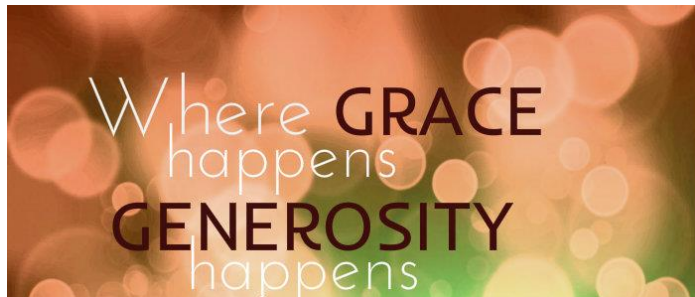
"Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also (*the manner of giving was by grace – out of a thankful spirit made possible by God's work in their hearts*). I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, (*the motivation behind their giving was grace – Christ's death on their behalf*) that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

The expressions "the same grace" (vs. 7) and "this grace" (vv. 7, 19) refers to the benevolence and kindness of the financial gifts of the Macedonian Christians which were collected for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26, 31). They were called grace gifts for they were motivated by the message of God's grace and the movement of God working in their hearts. The message of grace (God giving His Son and Christ dying on our behalf) and the motivation that this message brings was operating in their hearts. It was the principle of grace (not law) that compelled the saints to give.

Paul talks about “the exceeding grace of God in you” (2 Cor. 9:14) which was working in the hearts of God’s people. New Testament giving is to be done out of a sense of gratitude for God’s grace and with the motivation of God’s grace at work in the heart. There was no need to bring back the tithe or the law to raise money. There was no need for anyone to beg, bargain, or blow trumpets in order to get people to give. Grace motivates God’s saints to give, as God works in the hearts of His people, convincing and compelling them to sacrificially and lovingly give to His cause.

Philippians 2:13

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”



Grace is the movement of God upon heart which prepares our hearts to give sacrificially or generously and joyfully to the Lord’s work. When grace is at work, generous giving happens.

2 Corinthians 8:2 reveals the generosity of grace giving:

“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

Grace does not threaten us to give! It does not make us give! Grace stirs our soul and sends us to Church with a willing heart that is ready to give out of appreciation for what God has done for us and is presently doing in our lives.

Many years ago, after World War II was over, two families were waiting in line after a Sunday evening service to greet the pastor. The church was preparing to build, and the pastor had preached on the importance of giving that night. The first family said, “Pastor, as you know, our son was killed in the war. In honor of his sacrifice, we would like to give two hundred dollars as a memorial gift.” After they left, the second family said, “Pastor, we were going to give two hundred dollars, but after listening to that other family, we realize how

fortunate we are that our son came home. We've decided to give five hundred dollars."

It has often been said that *thoughtfulness* results in *thankfulness*. When we take time to think of all that God has been done for us by His grace and goodness, we will display a spirit of thankfulness, willingness, and generosity in all our giving. Grace giving is giving with an overflowing heart of gratitude for what God has done for us.

"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found -
Was blind, but now I see."

This should probably be played as a perpetual church offertory! We need to always be reminded about grace when we give to God's work.

The New Testament gives us a summary on how to give. We are to give:

- Systematically (1 Cor 16:2)
- Proportionately – not by strict percentage (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:11b-12)
- Willingly (2 Cor. 8:3, 11-12; 16:3; 1 Timothy 6:18)
- Honestly – (2 Cor. 8:2) – sincere and without hypocrisy
- Cheerfully – (2 Corinthians 8:2, 9:7)
- Lovingly (2 Corinthians 8:8)
- Sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:2-3)
- Graciously (2 Cor. 8:1, 6, 7, 9; 1 Cor. 16:3).



The last point means we should always give while being motivated by the message of grace as God moves upon our hearts – not by outward demand, law, threats, or compulsion. It means we are to give out of gratitude and thankfulness - not pressure and force. Grace giving

produces joyful giving which means to give in a happy and cheerful manner (“God loveth a cheerful giver” - 2 Cor. 9:7). Literally, this means to give hilariously! In other words, when we place money in the offering plate or box, we possess an overflowing spirit of cheerfulness and joy, as we give to God’s work and ministry out of deep appreciation for His grace.

2 Corinthians 9:15 concludes:

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

This verse has puzzled many people. How does it fit into a section talking about Christian giving? It’s really not difficult to see. As Paul reaches the end of his section on Christian giving, he reflects on the greatest Giver of all - God Himself. He also thinks of the greatest gift of all – salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23). This was God’s unspeakable or indescribable gift. A saved person cannot put into words what God’s grace means to them. God through His Son Jesus Christ has saved us from everlasting hell and damnation. He has rescued us from a judgment that we deserved.

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” You see, God’s free gift of salvation, which stems from His grace, is the motivation for all of our New Testament giving – no matter what amount or percentage you give. Grace can take us higher than 10 percent. It can move in our hearts in such a way that we give lavishly and sacrificially.

In summary, grace giving is giving out of a spirit of thankfulness and gratitude for the sacrifice of God’s Son, giving which is motivated by God at work in our hearts. Grace at work in our hearts is what makes New Testament giving unique. As the offering is passed, we look back to Christ’s death on our behalf with tremendous gratitude and thankfulness. Our hearts are so stirred that we give sacrificially (generously) with an overflowing heart of cheerfulness. This is the grace of giving!

“How can I say thanks
For the things You have done for me?
Things so undeserved,
Yet you give to prove Your love for me.

The voices of a million angels,
Could not express my gratitude.
All that I am and ever hope to be
I owe it all to thee.”

This is the spirit of grace giving! “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”