

The Grace of Giving

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. 2Cor. 8:1-9
- B. God's grace in salvation is not the only form grace can take.

I. GRACE AT WORK

A. The grace of God

1. Eph. 2:4-9 - "For by grace you have been saved..."
 - a. Without the grace of God, there would be no salvation for humankind.
 - b. It is both that which initiated the plan of salvation and it is the catalyst that makes the blood of Christ and obedience of the believer work together producing salvation.
2. 2Cor. 9:8 - Grace sustains and supplies us with all that we need.
 - a. We pray for forgiveness for daily sins to remain saved.
 - b. We pray for strength to continue to persevere; for blessings to continue that we may be able to effectively serve - Acts 20:32
3. Matt. 16:24 - This grace is conditional, by our continued pursuit of the grace of God.
4. It is not irresistible grace - Gal. 2:21, 5:4
5. We know grace as unmerited favor in salvation; God giving us what we cannot earn and do not deserve.
 - a. Acts 11:18 - When Jewish Christians heard that Gentiles had been converted they said. "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."
 - b. Gentiles had done nothing to deserve it; God granted to them the opportunity to be saved.
6. This is not the only meaning of grace.
 - a. Grace can be certain favor or showing special favor by virtue of who one is - Heb. 6:13-14, 17-18; James 4:6

B. There is a grace of Christians - 2Cor. 8:7, 19

1. Freely offered favor or freewill offerings.
2. Spiritual exercises -- prayer, singing, communing, teaching -- all are commanded, but are open ended or without limits for the giver, who is at liberty to make the offering as large and as extended as he wishes.
 - a. Gal. 5:22-23 - "Against such there is no law (limit)."
3. What we offer beyond what is commanded, within the boundaries of scripture, is a free will offering; it is a Christian grace.

C. Let's not make a mistake at this point; this is not for God's benefit.

1. Acts 17:24-28
2. Rather it is for our benefit, a test of our faith, sincerity, and devotion, an opportunity to rise and grow.
3. Free moral agents freely choosing to do well in all areas of Christian endeavor. Thus giving of our means is our grace at work.

4. It is remarkable to think that from a perspective when we give of our time, money, and service to the kingdom we are in a sense granting a Biblical form of grace.

II. JOY AT WORK

- A. 2Cor. 8:2 - Affliction + joy + poverty = rich liberality.
 1. Madness or mistake? It is Bible math; it transcends this world.
 2. Just another Bible paradox, like the servant of all is greatest in the kingdom.
- B. 2Cor. 9:7 - Cheerful giver
 1. Some of them were slaves; some were financially broke because of abandoning former sinful lifestyles. Was God expecting them to sacrifice cheerfully?
 2. 1Chron. 29:1-9 - 190 tons of gold; 375 tons of silver; 675 tons of bronze; and 3750 tons of iron; or 13.6 billion in gold, 300 million in silver, 53 million in bronze, and 74 million in iron, equaling about 14 billion dollars, or \$2,800 which is the equivalent of seven years of wages from every man, woman, and child in Israel.
 3. Ex. 36:2-7 - Generous? But that is the point; it is joyfully, willingly done.
 - a. They were happy to be able to build God's house; they hadn't had one before. It was gratitude for something they had not had in the past.
 - b. The contrast between the zeal of new converts vs. those raised in the Church.
- C. Matt. 13:44-46

III. LIBERALITY AT WORK

- A. What is it?
 1. In this case, it is not the Herald of Truth, orphan homes, cooperative church efforts, or fellowship halls.
 2. 2Cor. 8:2, 9:13; Rom. 12:6-8; 2Cor. 8:8, 10-12
 3. It is not raising money; it is giving. Bake sales, benefit programs, games, or fairs.
- B. Liberality depends on the individual's will to give graciously, not on God's need for the offering; He needs nothing; for our benefit, not His.
 1. Psalm 50:10-15; 1Chron. 29:10-14
- C. He wants our heart first, not our offering; our offering is a manifestation of what is in our hearts.
 1. Mal. 1:10-13; James 4:8

IV. FELLOWSHIP AT WORK

- A. 2Cor. 8:4 - Did Paul want the Corinthians to participate for more money? No, but to be a part of a good work, to belong, to share, to be in fellowship.
 1. Many object: "The poor don't have to give."
 - a. Do they have to sing, eat the Lord's Supper, pray?

- b. 2Cor. 8:12 - "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have."
 - c. 2Cor. 9:7 - "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."
 - d. 1Cor. 16:1-2 - "...as he may prosper"
 - e. Acts 11:29 - "Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea."
- B. The offering is an expression of fellowship.
- 1. Fellowship with non-Christians?
 - a. 1Cor. 10:16 - Do we commune with sinners?
 - b. Our fellowship in the offering is not with sinners also.
 - c. Why are all NT examples of Church benevolence with Christians and not with sinners?

V. HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

- A. 2Cor. 8:5 - "They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God."
 - 1. This should answer the question.
 - 2. Matt. 19:27 - "See, we have left all and followed You."
- B. Haggai 1:2-5
 - 1. Haggai needed money to build the temple, but throwing money at it did not build the temple; work did.
 - 2. Giving, not only our money into the contribution, but of our service God.
 - 3. Do we believe we have done our part in spreading the Gospel if all we have done is give to support the preaching of the word? It is institutional thinking to believe that giving money is the same as personal, hands on involvement.
 - 4. That's how much we should give.
- C. "Should I give 10 percent?" No; in Christ, we are permitted to give more.
 - 1. The Jews' yearly tithes totaled 19.5 - 22%.
 - 2. 2Cor. 9:5-7, 8:12
 - 3. "Let the wealthy members give more!" Everyone thinks others are wealthier than they are.

VI. HOW CAN I GIVE SO MUCH?

- A. Mal. 3:8-10 - Just give and see what happens.
- B. 2Cor. 9:8-11; Luke 6:38

VII. WHAT IF I SAY NO?

- A. What do the scriptures say about a person who is miserly or covetous?
 - 1. 1Cor. 5:9-11 - Paul said to withdraw from them.
 - 2. 2Tim. 3:2-5 - The covetous will be lost.
- B. Giving is a grace, a privilege, a communion or fellowship. Sacrifice with a joyful, single heart.
- C. 2Cor. 8:9 - Be more like Christ.