

Grace Principles in Ministry Giving

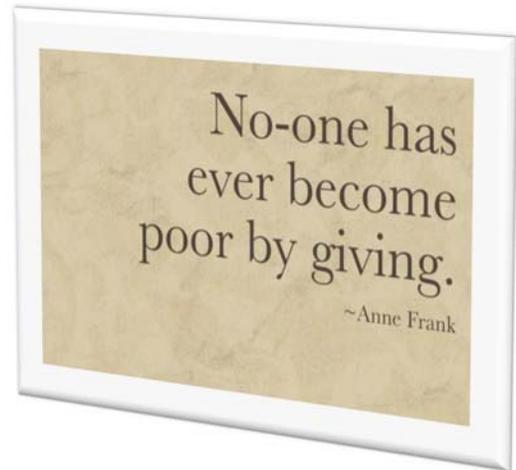
2 Corinthians 9:1-15¹⁰

Russ Kennedy

Giving is a touchy subject for people. They have come from churches where it was way too much of an emphasis. We have chosen to touch on it once or so a year. And, we will also preach on it whenever it comes up in texts. And so, here we are...

The well-known Dutch Jewish author of a dairy written while in hiding from the Germans in WWII, said, "No one has ever become poor by giving..."

Is Anne Frank right?



Four kinds of Christian givers...



Jesus' kind of giving – sacrificial...



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The church needed instruction on both corporate partnering in giving and on personal responsibility for giving. Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, wraps the two together. So we want to be careful here with two strands, interwoven into a single cord but having identifiable colors.

Once again the focus is on the grace that empowers and enables sacrificial giving...

The Prompting for Grace Giving

(9:1-5)

Though it is grace, there is still planning and preparation.

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints,² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.³ But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.⁴ Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

The Challenge to be Prepared

(v.1-3)

Moving on from chapter 8, Paul reminds them of their commitment. That commitment had been commended in Macedonia with the effect of stirring them up to great sacrifice. He is concerned. Evidently, Titus had informed Paul that he observed a waning impetus to carry through. Paul writes urging them to be prepared to give what was promised.

The Concern of being Embarrassed

(v.4)

Was his confidence in them and their giving misplaced? If the people he had bragged to about them come, will he be humiliated? Think about this. After all the stuff that the Corinthians had done, he was most concerned about the humiliation of their failure to carry through.

The Coming of the Team

(v.5)

He encouraged the team to arrive early to work through issues, to ensure that the offerings were taken so that it would flow from a heart willing to give, not grudgingly.

The Provision for Grace Giving

(v.6-11)

Giving is enabled and motivated by God's grace

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The Distribution of God's Provision

(v.6)

Biblical and practical motivation arises from a core principle in God's economy. But there is a terrible misuse of this text in Christian circles today. Let me simply point out that verse 6 is paired with verse 10 so that our expectations are Biblical. We sow in gracious giving and reap in growing righteousness.

The Directions because of God' Provision

(v.7)

⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Compare to the instructions previously given.

It is Commanded

Each one must give as intended and committed. This is not some kind of faith-promise as in many churches. The church has committed to the amount the people themselves decided on. Now, they were obligated before God to carry through. New Covenant giving is not framed by the Old Covenant – so we don't preach tithing here. But, giving is still a New Covenant responsibility. Each one must give...

Now for many of you grace and commands don't go together. This is a false either/or. Grace comes to us teaching us to turn away from sin and to turn to righteousness as people bought and owned by God. Grace teaches us to obey. But it does more and this is where it is different than Law. Grace gives the power to desire and to do what God requires. One Puritan wrote, "It is in *the very hearing* of the commandments from God's Word that grace is given to obey the commands heard." (Paraphrased from J. Owen).

It is to be Planned

You are to work out what you can give. Biblical giving is not primarily spontaneous and in the moment, though it can be that. Biblical giving thinks through a budget, makes plans and at least some commitment to the Lord to carry through with what was planned.

It is to have a Right Attitude

What should be our attitude in giving? Two words here that are important for us.

It must not be reluctantly. This word exposes so many heart issues. Think of all the heart attitudes that result in giving, but with a sense of hesitation or reluctance. Do these kinds of words run in your heart?

Think of all the things I could do with this...

Do I trust them? What are they going to do with this...

They don't need my money....

This is such a small amount maybe it doesn't really matter...

It must not be under compulsion. What does that mean? It means that we give without a sense of being forced to. We should give freely and out of a desire to do the giving itself. It should be voluntary. Now, this word is both to the ministry and to the giver. The ministry must not set up situations in which a person has to give in order to qualify for a role. Even if we ask for a commitment from people, it should not be treated as a promise but as an intention. But what is really being addressed here is an attitude that basically says, "Ok, I will give if I absolutely have to..." There is what that word represents. It will be poisoned words in our heart that will emerge in our giving as grudgingly and uncheerful.

It is from a Heart Responsive to God

What drives an eager and voluntary giving? What is our motivation? We know that God loves a cheerful giver. Why does God love a cheerful giver? Because God is a cheerful giver. Never ever think of God as giving His Son or His provisions reluctantly or grudgingly. He does all He does, not because He has to, even when He has promised to. Listen to me. God has made promises. His promises involve all kinds of giving to us. And He is happy, delighted, cheerful to give us what He has promised... and even more.

So why are we grumpy, complaining, reluctant, self-deceiving, carping in our giving. Repent. Repent of your low view of God and high view of yourself. Repent of your stinginess, and selfishness. Explode with happy giving.

Notice the "and" - Cannot separate verses 7 and 8.

The Description of God's Provision

(v.8)

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Listen to that again. God is able for... all grace, abound, all things, all times, having all that is needed, abound, every.

So what is lacking?

The Design of God's Provision**(v.9)**

⁹ As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Here is the quote from Psalm 112:9. Look at the whole Psalm.

112 Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who greatly delights in his commandments!

² His offspring will be mighty in the
land; the generation of the upright will be
blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in his house, and
his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the up-
right; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with the man who deals gener-
ously and lends; who conducts his affairs
with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be
moved; he will be remembered forever.

⁷ He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is
firm, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,
until he looks in triumph on his adver-
saries.

⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to
the poor; his righteousness endures for-
ever; his horn is exalted in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked man sees it and is angry;
he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the
desire of the wicked will perish!

Do you see? Note how the Psalmist fears God, delights in Word, does not fear bad news, trusts in God and is thus able to give...

The Definiteness of God's Provision**(v.10-11)**

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

The whole sense here is an affirmation. God will supply ... will increase ... will enlarge ... will enrichen ...

But God's provision is towards a harvest of righteousness (v.10) and generosity (v.11a). The notion that if we give then God will enrichen us financially is not rooted in the New Testament. We sow obedience in giving. We reap a harvest of righteousness. In addition, there will be more seeds of grace for a deeper and richer ministry.

The opposite is true as well. When you withhold and are not generous, then you will harvest unrighteousness. You may well find a lack of grace in other areas of life and ministry because you are not enriched in other areas as well.

The Products of Grace Giving

(v.10-15)

This is how we know there has been Biblical giving. It really becomes a *reality test*.

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

Growing in Righteousness

(v.10)

Paul explains verse 6. Just as God provides for the farmer, He provides for the Christian. He gives the necessary seed and provides the expected harvest. we sow in obedience and reap in the harvest of righteousness.

Giving of Thanks

(v.11,12)

Grace **always** ends with gratitude in the one so graced.

Supplying of Needs

(v.12)

Grace giving sees itself as giving to God for one another in ministry.

Proving of Themselves

(v.13)

Grace giving is a proof of our obedience to Christ. So often, all the *confidentiality* of our giving makes this impossible.

Glorifying of God

(v.13)

True grace giving brings glory to God not honor to men. When our giving is man-centered instead of God-centered it is not grace, but works.

Sharing in Prayer

(v.14)

Grace giving motivates and informs Biblical praying.

The Surpassing Grace (v.14b) they had experienced for generous giving.

The Indescribable Gift (v.15) they had received in Christ Himself.

More than the need! Flowing from grace! Ending in gratitude. God's giving is grace based and so ours.

Reflect and Respond

Giving cannot be motivated by greed. Those who give in order to get more in return lose it all spiritually. Much of the Fund Raising done by TBN and other such “faith” ministries operating from a prosperity gospel perspective is unbiblical and ruinous to Christian people and ministry.

Giving is an expression of grace.

God has provided so that you can give. What did you do with it?

Giving is first of all, a matter of the heart.

Where you put your treasure, your heart runs after it. Part of the discipline of setting our minds on heavenly things is the laying up of treasure in heaven.

Giving reveals whether or not you understand:

- The gift of God

- The grace of God

- The generosity of God.

If you are not giving, you may be:

- Not supplying others needs in the church

- Not glorifying God

- Resisting the grace God has given to give

- Disobeying the command of God

- Disregarding the example of the church

- Misspending a portion of God’s provision

If you have already spent that portion you should be giving, you need to do what is Biblically necessary to do God’s will. This involves:

- Confession of sin

- Correcting the financial problem (may involve the selling of something which is keeping you from doing what God wants.)

- Doing what God has commanded.

All of the Scripture points toward giving that is proportional to God’s house. From Abraham who, before the law, gave to Melchizadek to all the giving in the New Testament, God’s people give through God’s house. Please be very careful in giving to para-church ministries. In view of the principles for partnership in 2 Corinthians 7, you should not be partnering or providing for outside ministries who are unbiblical in their theology and practice.

Are you expressing this grace of giving in your life?

A Heart that that is Graced for Giving

The following verses are the heart of grace giving.

8:1 ... we want you to know about *the grace that God has given* the Macedonian churches.

8:5 And they did not do as we expected, but *they gave themselves first to the Lord* and then to us in keeping with God's will.

8:7 But just as you excel in everything -- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us -- see that *you also excel in this grace of giving*.

8:9 For *you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

8:12 For if the willingness is there, *the gift is acceptable according to what one has*, not according to what he does not have.

9:6 **Remember this:** Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

9:8 And *God is able to make all grace abound to you*, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

9:11 You will be made rich in every way so that *you can be generous on every occasion*, and through us *your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God*.

9:14-15 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of *the surpassing grace God has given you*. 15 Thanks be to God for *his indescribable gift!*

Notes