

GIVING
GIMMICK OR GRACE?

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First edition published 1972. Second edition published 1990.
Second impression 2011.

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 1-55764-008-4

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

GRACE IS THE KEY

GIVING IS AN EXPRESSION OF WORSHIP that commemorates God's grace.¹ Giving looks back to the greatest gift of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God freely provides the way of salvation for all humanity.

“For God so loved the world, that He *gave* His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, italics added)²

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Cor. 9:15)

God's gracious gift of salvation and the sustenance for our Christian life (Phil. 4:19) requires a response. Giving is one response by which we may express our grace orientation and gratitude for what God has done in our behalf.

Giving is much more than simply donating money. Giving is a function of worship by the believer. Worship depends on our use of the divine assets God has furnished for learning Bible doctrine, resulting in

1. See Appendix A.

2. All Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the NASB translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston).

spiritual growth.³ Giving involves the condition of the soul and mental attitude, as well as material possessions.

Misconceptions concerning giving constantly plague believers. Many people give because they think that God is a ‘genie.’ If they drop enough into the collection plate, God will bestow on them what they desire. Others may contribute to assuage a guilt complex for possessing wealth while so many live in poverty. Donating some portion of this money to ‘religion’ eases the conscience. There is a fine line between false motivation and grace-oriented giving. In order to fully conform to the pattern of grace-oriented giving, the believer must understand the uniqueness of the age in which he lives.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH AGE BELIEVER

The Church Age is the current dispensation which began when the disciples received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; cf. 2:1–4) and will culminate with the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:15–17).⁴ Never in any previous dispensation has God provided the assets that He gives to every Christian. These unique characteristics encompass both the means and the motivation for commemorating grace through giving.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit identifies us with Christ and places us in union with Him. Not to be confused with the ritual of water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at the moment we believe in Christ. “In Christ,” we share all that He is and has (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26–28; Eph. 1:3–6; 2:5–6; Col. 2:10–12).

3. The grace apparatus for perception is a nonmeritorious system of spiritual comprehension empowered by the filling of the Holy Spirit that endows every believer regardless of human IQ with the ability to understand, learn, and apply the entire realm of Bible doctrine. See R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 3; *Christian Integrity* (2002), 89–120; *Reversionism* (2000), 3–7. Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

4. Dispensations are the sequence of divine administrations that divide human history into consecutive eras and constitute the divine viewpoint and theological interpretation of history. The dispensations enable the believer to orient to the postsalvation spiritual life. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 16–21.

2. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells the body of every believer (Rom. 8:9) to create a temple for the indwelling of Jesus Christ as the Shekinah Glory (1 Cor. 6:19–20; 2 Cor. 6:16).⁵ Christ revealed Himself to Israel as the Glory who indwelt the Tabernacle and later the Temple (Ex. 33:9–10; Num. 16:42; cf. John 1:18). But now, because of “the renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5), Christ indwells the body of every believer (John 14:20; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). This is why the believer can reflect His glory (2 Cor. 3:18).
3. God reveals His instructions for the believer through the completed canon of Scripture, not through dreams, visions, angelic teaching, or direct revelation.⁶ The “mind of Christ” is in writing (1 Cor. 2:16).
4. Every believer is in full-time Christian service. Whatever our occupation or roles in life may be, we are all personal ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).
5. The Church Age believer lives under the Law of Christ as the precedent which abrogates and supersedes the Mosaic Law (Rom. 6:14; 8:2–4; 10:4). The Mosaic Law anticipated the coming of Christ by revealing the necessity for grace and the source of that grace, Jesus Christ Himself who perfectly fulfilled the Law (Matt. 5:17–18; Gal. 3:23–26; 5:3–5; cf. 18; Heb. 8:13; 10:9). Now, we have a clearly defined grace way of life that requires a supernatural means of execution—the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18)—and the maximum use of Bible doctrine resident in the soul (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
6. Every believer is a royal priest who represents himself before God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).⁷ Our priestly responsibility is to grow to spiritual maturity (Eph. 3:17–21; 4:11–16; 2 Pet. 3:18).

5. Only a few Old Testament believers received the endowment of the Holy Spirit on a temporary basis for the purpose of leadership, revelation, or some other outstanding service (Num. 11:16–17; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6; 1 Sam. 16:13; Zech. 7:12). This endowment of power could be lost (Judg. 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11) in contrast to the Spirit’s permanent indwelling of all Church Age believers.

6. Thieme, *Canonicity* (1973).

7. Israel was represented before God by a specialized priesthood from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 29:9; 40:15; Deut. 18:1–5; Joshua 18:7). See Thieme, *Levitical Offerings* (2004), 93–96.

Giving, as a function of the royal priesthood, is a privilege for believers. As a result of union with Christ, believers have received all the spiritual assets to worship God. True worship originates from the power (filling) of the Holy Spirit and consists primarily of learning, meditating upon, and applying Bible doctrine. Worship also includes expressing Bible doctrine in the soul through praying, singing, observing the Lord's Table, and *giving*.

GIVING IS NOT TITHING

Failure to distinguish between giving and tithing indicates a misunderstanding of the differences between the Church Age and the Age of Israel. Giving functions in every dispensation, but tithing was bona fide *only* in Old Testament Israel.

God *commanded* Israel to bring tithes (Lev. 27:30–34), a form of national taxation. The word “tithes” means “a tenth.” Old Testament tithes were levied upon Jewish believers and unbelievers alike. The amount was ten percent of what one owned or received for one's labors.

There were several tithes: a tax for the maintenance of the Levites (Num. 18:21, 24); a tax for the national feasts and sacrifices (Deut. 14:22–27); and a tax every third year used for the poor and destitute of the land (Deut. 14:28–29). Three taxes or three tithes!

Old Testament tithing was not synonymous with giving. Giving went beyond the requirement to pay taxes for the maintenance of client nation Israel.⁸ Only a free choice with a correct motive can bring about true giving. That motive, in any dispensation, centers on a willingness to honor what God has provided. The principle for giving in the Old Testament is found in Proverbs.

There is one who scatters [gives liberally], yet increases
all the more [materially],
And there is one who withholds [money] what is justly
due, but *it results* only in want [in poverty].

8. The client nation Israel was a national entity under the patronage of God, the result of the covenants which created a particular relationship of blessing between God and the nation (Ex. 19:5–6; Hosea 4:6). As a client nation to God, Israel was assigned the responsibility for the formation, preservation, communication, and fulfillment of the canon of Scripture. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 28–36.

The generous man will be prosperous,
 And he who waters will himself be watered.
 (Prov. 11:24–25)

Malachi also indicates that tithing is not related to giving.

“Will a man rob God? Yet you [Israel] are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ In tithes [obligatory] and offerings [a matter of choice]. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!* Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.” (Mal. 3:8–10)

Tithes brought “into the storehouse,” or treasury, of Israel were obligatory. Failure to pay was a violation of the Law. The Mosaic Law combined both spiritual and civil functions. As a theocracy, ruled by God personally, Israel was the unique union of true religion and state. Every citizen, believer and unbeliever, was responsible for supporting the nation through tithing. But only the believer could be properly motivated to freely give as a function of worship over and above tithing.

The principle of giving found in 2 Corinthians 9:7 explains that the believer gives “as he has purposed in his heart [not as a tithe]; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful [properly motivated] giver.” Mental attitude is the issue.⁹ The believer’s attitude in giving should reflect God’s graciousness toward him.

PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

Second Corinthians 8—9 is the most extensive section in Scripture on giving. Beginning with the last verse of chapter 7, Paul states he has “confidence” that the Corinthian believers would continue to respond to his teaching of doctrine. But the first word of the Greek text in chapter 8 indicates Paul did *not* have confidence in the Corinthians’ ability to give as unto the Lord. Therefore, he sets forth fifteen principles of

9. Thieme, *Mental Attitude Dynamics* (2000).

grace giving that apply not only to the Corinthians, but to all believers who give to a church or seminary, evangelist or missionary, a Christian service organization, charity, family member, friend, or as a function of the spiritual gift of giving (Rom. 12:8).¹⁰

1. Grace mental attitude
2. Freewill giving
3. Grace privilege
4. Soul activity
5. Extension of the grace apparatus for perception
6. Test of love
7. Grace orientation
8. Proper administration of money
9. The necessity for the filling of the Holy Spirit
10. Giving without pressure
11. Grace giving related to blessing
12. The motivation of doctrine
13. Grace provision for giving
14. The multiplication of grace giving
15. Recognition of grace authority

Grace Mental Attitude

Paul begins by establishing an example. The Corinthians had much to learn from the magnificent generosity of the impoverished and persecuted Macedonians.

Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (2 Cor. 8:1–2)

10. At the moment of salvation every believer receives at least one spiritual gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual gift is a distinctive ability which enables the believer to perform a particular service in the Body of Christ during his lifetime (1 Cor. 2:11). The spiritual gift of giving enables certain believers to contribute above and beyond the normal function of giving.

According to the historian Livy, the Romans at this time had devastated all Macedonia.¹¹ Yet despite poverty and great affliction at the hands of the Romans, the Macedonians gave generously to the needy Jewish believers in Jerusalem and set an example from which the Corinthians could profit. The impoverished Christians in Jerusalem needed assistance to survive, and this letter from Paul concerned a collection to provide relief for them.

Since there existed a traditional racial prejudice between the Jews and the Gentiles, Paul had to discourage any antagonism between Corinth and Jerusalem. He related to the Corinthians the example of Macedonia. Many Macedonians held no bias toward Jewish believers. These Macedonians were in fellowship with God and were exhibiting a spiritually mature viewpoint of “joy” amidst a “great ordeal of affliction.” They had the right perspective for giving. They gave from their love for the Lord so that the destitute Jews in Jerusalem might survive. Moreover, they gave generously to this collection when they themselves were in “deep poverty.”

The Macedonians gave with the confidence that the grace of God would provide for their future. The gift was not a bribe for the blessing of God, but emanated from a genuine desire to memorialize His grace and to help other believers in need. The Macedonians were grace oriented, a prerequisite for true giving. Only through grace orientation can any believer give as unto the Lord.

The collection from the Macedonians was so remarkable that Paul mentions it repeatedly (Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1–5; Gal. 2:10). Though poverty-stricken, the Macedonians gave liberally and with the proper mental attitude of grace, while the prosperous Corinthians balked. The Corinthians began to collect an offering but never finished (2 Cor. 8:6). Chapters 8–9 were designed to stimulate the Corinthians to resume the collection from an attitude of grace orientation and set a precedent for future generations of Christians. By his exhortation, Paul establishes a critical relationship between the grace of God and the believer’s mental attitude.

The mature believer with Bible doctrine resident in his soul has a sustained “joy” or happiness. Genuine happiness is built on truth (Jer. 15:16; John 13:17; 1 John 1:4). Truth from the Word of God produces

11. Livy, *Historiae Ab Urbe Condita* (History from the Founding of the City).

the capacity for happiness and gratitude, a motive for giving (John 17:13, 17). Unless understanding and applying the Word of God becomes the believer's first priority, happiness is momentary, the concept of grace eludes comprehension, and giving reflects vanity.

The Macedonians' happiness despite adversity was one blessing that arose from their understanding of God's grace. Their application of grace brought them to the aid of their needy brethren. The significance of giving resides in the giver's *mental attitude*, rather than in the actual gift. It is giving of yourself. When you give with a gracious mental attitude, you reflect the grace God gives to you.

Freewill Giving

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability *they gave* [willingly and voluntarily] of their own accord. (2 Cor. 8:3)

Grace giving is a function of the believer's free will and is never coerced or pressured. Neither is emotionalism a motive in grace giving. In other words, grace giving excludes gimmicks that incite a momentary passion, foster guilt, compete for human recognition, or presume to bribe God for divine blessing. One does not give to earn points with God or anyone else. The only proper motive for Christian giving comes from applying doctrine from one's own soul.

The royal priesthood of the individual believer must operate from volition and privacy. These are essential elements of freedom. Giving should be accomplished privately as unto the Lord and as a personal commemoration of God's grace.

In verse 3 Paul confirms that the Macedonians had the right motivation in giving. They were grace oriented. Their mental attitude was the basis for their sacrificial gift to the church in Jerusalem. This gift came from their God-given volition, in spite of deprivation and persecution. No pressure. No coercion. No desire for anything in return.

Grace Privilege

Begging us with much entreaty for the favor [privilege] of participation in the support [giving] of the saints. (2 Cor. 8:4)

Giving is a privilege. “Favor,” the key word in this third principle of giving, refers to a privilege extended to the believer by God’s grace. Christians have been granted the favor of reflecting God’s grace and, thereby, of glorifying Him.

The legalist cannot understand this principle. He tries to glorify God through his own righteous deeds, which I call human good.¹² His attitude reflects self-righteousness, not grace. Hence, the legalistic believer gives from an ulterior motive: to enhance personal prestige, to gain reward or advantage, to assuage guilt, or to alleviate peer pressure. The privilege of giving—a function of the royal priesthood—is derived from two Greek nouns in this passage: *χάρις* (*charis*), meaning “favor” or “grace,” and *διακονία* (*diakonia*), from which comes the word “deacon.” *Diakonia* usually refers to local church administration, but here it refers to general “support” by believers in Macedonia. This privilege belongs to believers only.

Soul Activity

And *this*, not as we had expected [anticipated], but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will [purpose, design] of God. (2 Cor. 8:5)

Although the Macedonians were destitute, their offering far exceeded Paul’s expectations. Why? Because “they *first* gave themselves to the Lord.” For the believer, giving oneself to the Lord means to grow spiritually. Growth results in a grace mental attitude. “First” emphasizes the primary importance of grace orientation, the soul activity of the Macedonians, rather than the gift. When a believer simply gives money,¹³ he is doing what any unbeliever can do. The deed has no spiritual value.

Giving must be accomplished as unto the Lord. Such giving acquires the status of divine good. Divine good, in contrast to human

12. Human good is the benevolent production or deeds of the believer who is in carnality, under the control of the sin nature (Isa. 64:6). The good deeds of the carnal Christian are indistinguishable from good deeds performed by the unbeliever. Human good produced by the believer has no spiritual value, is burned at the judgment or evaluation seat of Christ, and is not rewardable in heaven (1 Cor. 3:12–15). See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993), 8–9.

13. See Appendix B.

good, is the work of a Christian which has intrinsic and eternal value. Only divine good is acceptable to the perfect standards of God. God provides what is necessary to meet divine standards. His grace provisions are the filling of the Holy Spirit and the reality of Bible doctrine in one's soul which results in spiritual growth. By utilizing these provisions, the believer produces divine good when he gives. This is giving as unto the Lord.

Bible doctrine resident in the soul motivates all true giving. Doctrinally motivated giving is free from mental attitude sins, such as approbation lust, power lust, guilt, fear, or arrogance.

Giving as unto the Lord is not a one-shot, emotional dedication. Rather it requires a continual process, a way of life. This inner activity extends to the overt activity of giving. The actual gift is not most important; the condition of the soul counts most.

You are probably familiar with the emotional stories some evangelists tell about the dramatic conversion of a conspicuous sinner. While everyone is rejoicing and weeping, the offering plate is immediately passed. A pastor may even say to a guest speaker, "We need a big offering, brother, can you tell some inspiring stories?" This is coercion and manipulation. This is emotional giving. When believers give under this type of pressure, the motivation is false. Their giving cannot count for the Lord.

The Macedonian believers were truly magnificent. Their giving was divine good because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Bible doctrine resident in their souls motivated their offering. Only the impact of Bible doctrine on the soul provides the proper impetus for giving. The Corinthians, on the other hand, previously gave money without orientation to grace or doctrine. Their giving was human good, the "wood, hay, [and] straw" (1 Cor. 3:12) which has no spiritual value and will be consumed by fire at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13-15).

Let us summarize:

1. Giving is a commemoration of grace. God the Father gave His Son as the ultimate grace gift to all humanity. God's perfect character is the basis for this gift.¹⁴
2. In recognition of God's grace, the believer must give on the basis of his own mental attitude—from the Bible doctrine in his soul.

14. Thieme, *The Trinity* (2003); *The Integrity of God*, Appendix A.

3. There is a definite sequence in giving. First is soul activity, then the overt act of giving.
4. Giving is both an extension and manifestation of Bible doctrine resident in the soul.
5. Giving of self expresses capacity for love and happiness based on doctrine.
6. Giving in grace does not make an issue of the actual gift or the giver.
7. Giving from emotionalism is tantamount to manipulation by the giver and results in such self-centered thinking as, “After all I’ve done for you!” or “I’ve given enough money to have some say around here!” There is no place in the royal priesthood for giving with strings attached.

IMPERSONAL LOVE

The Macedonians were Gentiles, but “they were pleased to [give]” (Rom. 15:27a) to Jews who lived in a distant city, most of whom they would never meet. Why were these northern Greeks so generous to total strangers? Their generosity reflects *impersonal love*.¹⁵ By “impersonal” I mean a love that does not even require acquaintance with the object of love, much less intimacy or friendship. Impersonal love emphasizes the character of the giver, not that of the recipient, and demonstrates the giver’s integrity. The mandate to “love one another” (John 13:34–35; 1 John 4:11) refers to this category of love.

In contrast, personal love focuses on the attractiveness of the object of love. Personal love is reserved for a few special individuals—husband, wife, family, or friends. The ultimate expression of personal love is toward Jesus Christ.

Many Jewish believers in Jerusalem had fallen away from the truth and had become reversionistic (Acts 15:5; 21:18–26; Gal. 2:1–4).¹⁶ But the Macedonians fulfilled the command to love them with impersonal love. Their offering commemorated God’s impersonal love in sending His Son to die for undeserving humanity (John 3:16).

15. Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 31–33.

16. Reversionism is recession from any stage of spiritual growth through prolonged carnality and negative volition toward doctrine (Gal. 5:4). Reversionism does not imply the loss of salvation, for there is no sin the believer commits that cancels the salvation work of Christ on the cross. See Thieme, *Reversionism*.

Furthermore, despite the current reversionism and evil among some believers in Jerusalem, the Macedonians displayed gratitude for the past contributions of client nation Israel. The Jews were the original custodians of the Word of God. God had selected Jewish prophets to receive and write the Scriptures. The greatest communicators of doctrine were Jews. Christ Himself is a Jew. The Gentiles had benefitted from the Jews through doctrine, and now these doctrinally oriented Greeks wanted to express their appreciation by contributing their money to destitute Jewish believers (Rom. 15:26–27).

FROM EXAMPLE TO APPLICATION

We now leave the Macedonians and go to the Corinthians. The Corinthians were not paupers, but they had much to learn about giving.

Consequently we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. (2 Cor. 8:6)

The Corinthians needed the filling of the Spirit, doctrine in the soul, and impersonal love. The word *charis*, repeated from verse 4, indicates grace. Giving is a “gracious work” accomplished without strings or gimmicks. Paul knew the Corinthians needed to apply the Macedonian lesson.

Timothy was sent to Corinth to encourage grace orientation, but the Corinthians intimidated him. Timothy’s personality was too easygoing, and he failed. They drove him right out of town. So Paul sent his troubleshooter—Titus. Titus was direct and uncompromising, and the Corinthians responded favorably. They recovered from their arrogance and carnality described in the first epistle, and were advancing spiritually to the point that they wanted to express their grace orientation.

Under Titus, the Corinthians had begun an offering to support the believers in Jerusalem. When Titus departed, the Corinthians again fell into reversionism, and the offering was discontinued. With his return and the resumption of doctrinal inculcation and spiritual advance, the offering could be continued. But to make sure the Corinthians had no misconceptions or illusions and did not give under pressure, Paul purposely remained silent about the desperate situation of the Jerusalem believers. He simply related the illustration of the Macedonians.

Although in material poverty, the Macedonians possessed great spiritual riches. Their offering was divine good that glorified the Lord. Now the Corinthians had the same opportunity. At the beginning of verse 6, “consequently” is used to make the transition from Macedonian giving to Corinthian giving. Why is this word here? It indicates a challenge. The Corinthians can make a similar offering motivated by grace orientation. Furthermore, the challenge pertains to every believer of the Church Age. Give with the same motivation as the Macedonians!

You must disassociate money from the principle of giving. You give first of that which is invisible and immaterial—from Bible doctrine in your soul. Then, overt giving in its different forms may result. The act of giving becomes a reflection of the spiritual wealth of your soul. This was shown dramatically in the Macedonian example.

The Corinthian church had an abundance of wealth (2 Cor. 8:14). But Paul was not interested in tapping their financial resources. He was not going to cater to them because of their wealth. He was, however, concerned for their spiritual state. Therefore, Paul dealt with them firmly by sending Titus, the most hard-nosed man on his team. Paul desired to make clear the spiritual principles of giving already fulfilled by the Macedonians. The Corinthians must follow the same principles.

It is also apparent from the transitional word “consequently” that grace orientation is tested in giving. Giving presents an occasion to evaluate your personal grace orientation. Believers are tested every time there is an offering, even as there are grace tests at the communion table and when the Word of God is taught. A grace test means that God has provided everything and, therefore, your response depends upon non-meritorious positive volition to doctrine—not upon your human ability. The issue: Do you pass the test from the reality of doctrinal resources in your soul, or do you lose concentration and perspective?

Extension of the Grace Apparatus for Perception

But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work [of giving] also. (2 Cor. 8:7)

The fifth principle reveals giving to be an extension of the grace apparatus for perception (GAP). The Corinthians abounded in doctrine and

in money. God had materially prospered the Corinthians as He had prospered few of the early churches. They had both spiritual (1 Cor. 1:5) and material wealth—a great combination with the spiritual wealth being far more valuable. The three prepositional phrases of 2 Corinthians 8:7 emphasize the superior value of their spiritual blessings.

“In faith,” πίστις, *pistis* in the Greek, refers to the method of learning doctrine from the Word of God. Faith describes a nonmeritorious system of perception. The only requirement for the believer is positive volition to hear Bible doctrine taught by a pastor. The Holy Spirit actually teaches spiritual truths to the believer’s human spirit.

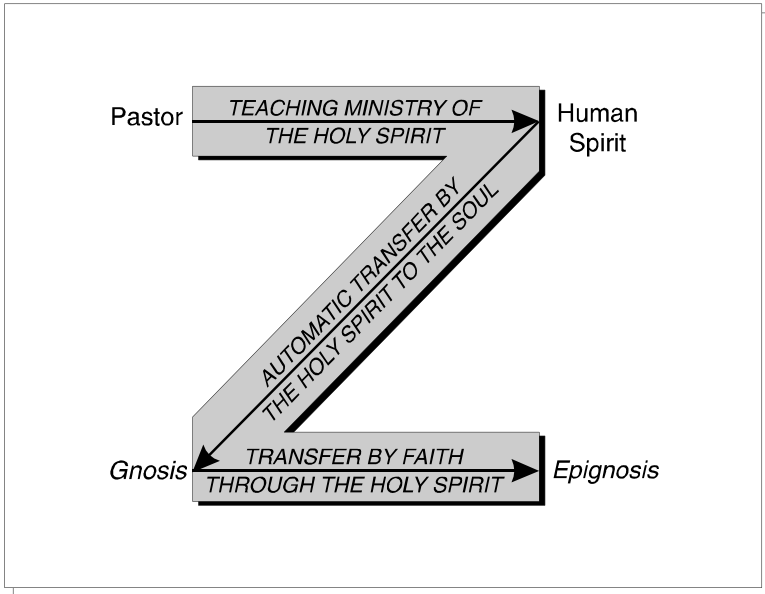
Now we have received, not the spirit [frame of reference] of the world, but the [human] Spirit [which is] who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by [from the source of] the [Holy] Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* [truths] with spiritual *words* [apparatus of the human spirit]. (1 Cor. 2:12–13)

God as the object of faith receives the merit. He provides every believer with a human spirit, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual truth which is Bible doctrine taught by a pastor. In combination with positive volition these resources are the means of spiritual growth.

“Utterance and knowledge” in 2 Corinthians 8:7 are the Greek words λόγος (*logos*) and γνώσις (*gnosis*), respectively. These words focus on the function of GAP. *Logos* is Bible doctrine found in Scripture. Doctrine is initially understood academically through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and becomes *gnosis*, “knowledge.” By means of faith, *pistis* in the first phrase, *gnosis* converts to ἐπίγνωσις (*epignosis*), “true knowledge or understanding” (Eph. 3:19; cf. 2 Tim. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:3).¹⁷ In other words, *epignosis* doctrine is reality.

Epignosis equips the believer with a thorough, practical understanding of God’s truth. The Holy Spirit circulates this understanding into the conscience, vocabulary, norms and standards, and viewpoint of the soul. Application of doctrine to the circumstances of life comes only from *epignosis*.

17. Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 106–8; *Reversionism*, 3–7; *Mental Attitude Dynamics*, 1–2, 53–57.



FUNCTION OF GAP

Three of the technical words for the grace apparatus for perception are found in verse 7: *logos* (doctrine), *gnosis* (knowledge), and *pistis* (faith). “And in all earnestness” implies that *epignosis* doctrine motivated the Corinthian believers.

“In love” means virtue-love¹⁸ and reveals that the Corinthian believers are growing up. At this point they have sufficient maturity (personal love toward God) to obey the scriptural mandates to love all believers (impersonal love). Whether the Jerusalem believers deserve love is not an issue. With application of doctrine comes virtue-love, which motivates grace giving.

18. Virtue-love is a nonemotional motivation of the soul acquired through the filling of the Holy Spirit and maximum doctrine in the soul. Virtue-love is manifested in personal love for God and impersonal love for all mankind. It is a mental attitude that characterizes the spiritually mature believer who has integrity and capacity for life, happiness, and personal love relationships. See Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 144–50.

The Corinthians already abound in spiritual wealth. But the extension of their spiritual wealth to grace giving is only potential at this point. It depends on their decisions. With consistent positive volition and intake of doctrine comes stability in the Christian life. Spiritual stability requires steady advance. Forward momentum from consistently learning doctrine is the stabilizing factor. Being stabilized does not mean that you will always do the right thing, but it does mean that you press on regardless of your failures. That is Paul's message to the Corinthians, and they responded. Stability turns potential grace giving into real grace giving.

This relationship between giving and the consistent function of GAP can be summed up as follows:

1. Christian giving is an extension of stability in the spiritual life.
2. Stability is obtained from the daily function of GAP.
3. Therefore, giving is an extension of the consistency of GAP.

The Corinthians have been consistent to a point, but as yet they have not followed through with grace giving. They must give of their own free will, apart from human good, human ability, human viewpoint, human gimmicks, or coercion.

The believer has a clear-cut opportunity for consistency in this day of apostasy—consistency in taking in the Word of God. You give of yourselves because you have been *consistent* in learning Bible doctrine!

Test of Love

I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others [the Macedonians] the sincerity of your love also. (2 Cor. 8:8)

Paul is not laying down the law to the Corinthians nor demanding that they match the Macedonian gift. Rather, verse 8 reminds the Corinthians that Christian giving is *love* giving—not *law* giving. Law obligates, but love motivates. Therefore, the sixth principle reveals that giving is a test of the genuineness of a believer's love for the Lord.

Paul does not force giving on the Corinthians. "I am not speaking this as a command" means that they are not to give because of a mandate. Many activities *are* commanded in Scripture, such as the filling of the Holy Spirit, assembling together, learning and applying the

Word of God, praying for one another, growing in grace, and loving one another with impersonal love. But giving is *not* commanded.¹⁹ Giving is a result of divine viewpoint thinking, the product of the filling of the Spirit, spiritual motivation, and learning, accepting, and applying Bible doctrine. When this spiritual momentum exists, giving occurs as a virtue-love response. Human coercion, a guilt complex, or a desire for approbation leads to compulsive giving, not a response of love. Giving must always be an expression of the believer's love and response to the grace of God.

The key to the Macedonian giving was their virtue-love. That is why Paul says, "as proving through the earnestness of others," that is, through the diligent application of Bible doctrine on the part of the Macedonian believers. The Macedonians were an excellent example because they were poor, but they were motivated by an abundance of *epignosis* doctrine in their souls.

"Proving" or testing is an evaluation for the purpose of approval. Just as an assayer tests and approves the purity of precious metals in ores and alloys, giving is designed by God to test and approve the purity of your motivation. Giving evaluates the reality of your love for the Lord. How do you express that love? You express it through the application of Bible doctrine resident in your soul (Phil. 1:9; 3:7-8).

The only way to have doctrine resident in your soul is through the consistent function of GAP. You cannot love God unless you know God. The more you know about Him the more you are able to love Him. You can know invisible God only from His revelation in Bible doctrine. Your consistent perception of doctrine creates an increasing capacity to love Him. Through spiritual growth (2 Pet. 3:18), virtue-love becomes your motivation. True giving springs from this motivation.

In verse 8, Paul stresses the importance of giving from a motivation of virtue-love. In the past the Corinthian priorities were reversed; they placed the greater value on money. Prosperous people tend to emphasize

19. The mandate to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, and Luke 18:22 was not meant as a general principle of giving. Rather, the command was designed to show this Jewish nobleman that he had not kept the Mosaic Law: He did not love his neighbor as himself and he worshiped a false god (money). No one can keep the Law for salvation. The ruler's lack of response to the call to "give to the poor" simply points out that his wealth stood between him and a decision for Jesus Christ. Likewise, Luke 12:33-34 is not a principle of giving but serves to contrast the permanence of divine riches with the transience of human riches.

their wealth, but Paul emphasizes spiritual prosperity, the resource of *epignosis* doctrine in the soul. Therefore, the presence of virtue-love motivation in giving is a private indicator of personal momentum in the Christian life.

Grace Orientation

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)

Before you can fully understand the principle of giving, you must be oriented to the principle of grace. Giving is always a grace function. Grace giving is the antithesis of worldly giving. Under worldly systems, people give to gain something in return—to receive attention, to impress others, to compete with others, to assuage a guilt complex, to satisfy a lust pattern.

Verse 9 associates the doctrine of grace with the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. His work on the cross, the free gift of salvation, epitomizes grace. Faith in His person and work is the beginning of grace orientation.

The second phrase, “though He was rich,” indicates the status of Jesus Christ as eternal God. Christ was always wealthy! Yet because of you, believer, He came to the point of poverty. This does not refer primarily to the Incarnation, but to the cross, when Christ became truly poor under divine judgment. He gave His all; He gave Himself! And it was a voluntary act on His part, motivated by virtue-love.

When Christ gave Himself on the cross, who was the recipient of that great gift of love? You were! “That you through His poverty might become rich” connotes all that God’s grace provides, beginning at the moment of salvation and continuing through eternity.²⁰ The entire plan of God is grace oriented from start to finish. We are saved by His grace (Eph. 2:8–9); we live by His grace (Gal. 5:22–25); we serve by His grace (1 Cor. 15:10). Whatever we do in this life after salvation is a matter of grace, and that includes giving. You become grace oriented when you understand God’s *modus operandi* and apply it to your life. Grace-oriented giving, therefore, complies with the plan of God.

20. See Appendix A, point 5.

If you encounter a group of believers who pressure you to give, who have some system of gimmicks, who dun you for money, who talk about tithing, their practices are inconsistent with grace. The Christian life is designed to be consistent—*grace all the way!* Giving must be unto the Lord, not unto men.

You must be alert to false ideas of grace giving. Someone may think, “Well, if I am going to give by grace, I should give everything I have.” That is wrong! How much you give is a decision between you and the Lord, a matter of personal judgment. Grace giving never suggests that you deprive yourself or your loved ones of necessities. Grace giving demands proper motivation, not deprivation.

The riches of verse 9 include the many grace blessings for time and eternity that the believer receives at salvation. Furthermore, special grace riches are available to every believer, but are only potential.²¹ These riches require capacity of soul developed through spiritual growth. The greater the capacity, the more special divine blessings the Lord bestows on the believer.

APPLICATION OF GRACE PRINCIPLES

And I give *my* opinion [based on doctrine] in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*. (2 Cor. 8:10)

Verse 10 begins a transition from the principle of doctrine studied in verse 9 to a recommended application for the Corinthians. Paul does not demand compliance. He gives advice based on doctrinal principle. To issue an order would superimpose Paul’s motivation on the Corinthian believers. The Corinthians’ motivation must come from their souls. They must make their own application of doctrine.

When a demand is made to give, giving no longer commemorates grace. But giving should always be a matter of free will. The Corinthians need only look back to verse 9 as a pattern: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Lord freely gave everything to the Corinthians. Grace exists only when freely given. The Corinthians must apply this principle.

21. For a further development of these special grace riches, see Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 61–63, 205–6; *Dying Grace* (2004), 32–41; *The Integrity of God*, 33–36.

Two infinitives in verse 10 express purpose: “to desire” and “to do.” Both are pertinent to giving. The desire to give must motivate the act itself. “Desire” indicates the presence of virtue-love. The believer who understands and applies Bible doctrine and develops capacity for love, desires to give. Whether he can actually give or not, the desire resides consistently in his soul.

But now finish doing it also; that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability. (2 Cor. 8:11)

Ultimately the proper motivation for giving culminates in a deliberate act at a point in time. The Corinthians began their offering “a year ago.” The desire to give is still present a year later. Now Paul encourages the Corinthians to finish the offering and give according to their “ability.” This anticipates verse 12. “Ability” to give does not depend on material wealth, but on spiritual motivation.

For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what *a man* has, not according to what he does not have. (2 Cor. 8:12)

What should be “present” at all times? You may not always have money, but you can always have the basis for giving—motivation based on doctrine in your soul. This “readiness” to give switches the emphasis from the gift to the spiritual condition of your soul. The conditional clause, “if the readiness is present,” *and it is*, indicates a remarkable change in the Corinthians. They are now giving of their own free will based on their grace orientation.

Now suppose an offering is collected when you are flat broke. Or you have just enough to pay a bill or barely enough to buy food for a few days. What should you do? Take care of the bill! Provide for yourself and your family’s needs!

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household [family], he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim. 5:8)

Do you see the point? When an offering is being taken and you are out of funds, in essence you are giving *if* you have developed virtue-love.

PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL SUPPORT

For *this* is not for the ease of others *and* for your affliction, but by way of equality—at this present time your abundance [of money] *being a supply* for their want, that their abundance [men with the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher] also may become *a supply* for your want, that there may be equality. (2 Cor. 8:13–14)

Divine assets of grace such as the indwelling Holy Spirit, the righteousness of God imputed at salvation (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21), and the sovereign distribution of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4–7), establish Christian equality before God. But Paul is not referring in verses 13–14 to this equality. He addresses the concept of equality among believers.

Paul was not promoting an early Christian socialism, a “take from the rich, give to the poor” pseudoequality. Equality does not mean that all have the same amount. Instead, Paul seeks mutual support among believers for the purpose of furthering spiritual advance in the Body of Christ.

Apparently the Corinthians assumed that they would have to carry the financial load, not only for the Jerusalem church but for all the churches, and would be overburdened. It is not uncommon in Christianity for some organizations to take advantage of wealthy and generous givers. So Paul explained why a generous offering was necessary at this time. The believers from Corinth and Jerusalem each had what the other needed. A teamwork of spiritual gifts would function to supply the needs of both churches.

The Corinthians lacked a permanent pastor to teach them doctrine. Jerusalem, in turn, had in training several young men who one day would meet the spiritual need of Corinth and other local churches. The Jerusalem church needed money to provide for these men during their training. Corinth had the money; Jerusalem had the men.

Therefore, the collection for Jerusalem was compatible with equal opportunity for every believer to exercise spiritual gifts such as giving, administration, and helps within the Body of Christ. In return, Corinth and other churches would receive access to consistent doctrinal teaching. The same principle exists today where seminaries prepare men to be pastors. Churches that support these men and institutions will in the future receive teaching and spiritual leadership.

As an illustration of equality, Paul cites from Exodus 16 the incident of the manna in the wilderness.

As it is written, “HE WHO *gathered* MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO *gathered* LITTLE HAD NO LACK.” (2 Cor. 8:15)

God gave manna to Israel because they complained about hunger (Ex. 16:2–3). They did not earn or deserve this sustenance. Manna was strictly a grace provision.

According to God’s command, Israelites gathered only enough manna to satisfy daily needs. Since individual appetites and the size of households varied, some gathered more and some less. But, “when they measured it with an omer [a measure of volume], he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack” (Ex. 16:18a). Each person had the amount that filled his capacity for one day. God provided continual sustenance in the wilderness to remind Israel repeatedly about grace. Paul now presents this picture of grace as a guarantee that all believers will receive access to Bible doctrine that fills their need.

The illustration was apropos since it dealt with daily sustenance, the very need of the Jerusalem Christians. Grace giving by the Corinthians filled that need. Now the Corinthians had to realize that grace also extends to them. Just as God supplied manna for Israel and relief for the destitute believers of Jerusalem by doctrinally motivating the Corinthians to give, He would also supply the spiritual need of Corinth and other locales through the reciprocation of Jerusalem. Even though believers are involved in this mutual support, it is the grace of God which is ultimately responsible.

But thanks be to God [for His grace], who puts the same earnestness [diligent application of doctrine] on your behalf in the heart of Titus. (2 Cor. 8:16)

Grace in this verse belongs only to God. You respond to God’s grace, but you do not originate it. In all of human history, no man has concocted grace. Grace expresses the character and policy of God toward mankind. God perpetually gives because grace characterizes Him. And since grace belongs to Him, giving belongs to Him. When you give graciously, therefore, you give in God’s way. You give on the basis of understanding His character in appreciation of the way He operates. Giving was never designed to get something from God. Giving was designed to express something you already have from God—grace.

Proper Administration of Money

The next principle of giving is found in verses 19–24. But in verses 16–18, Paul stops to mention the members of Titus’ team. Up to this point we know that Paul has sent Titus on the mission to the Corinthians. However, in verse 18 we find there is a second member of the team.

For he [Titus] not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord [volition]. And we have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things* [dissemination] of the gospel *has spread* through all the churches. (2 Cor. 8:17–18)

The text does not specifically name Titus’ companion except to say that he was well-known “through all the churches.” Furthermore, verse 22 intimates a third unnamed member, so Paul sent three in all. This third member was highly qualified. The passage states that he had been tested for approval upon numerous occasions, and Paul had great confidence in him.

And not only *this*, but he [Titus’ companion] has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work [the offering], which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness, taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration of this generous gift [the handling of large sums of money]; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (2 Cor. 8:19–21)

Now the eighth principle of giving: Money given to the Lord’s work must be properly administered. The mention of Titus’ companion focuses on this function. Not only was he approved for his ministry in disseminating the Gospel, but he had also been elected by the churches to travel with Paul and aid in the administration of the offering. He was not a member of Paul’s coterie, accountable only to Paul, as faultfinders could have charged (2 Cor. 8:23). He was a well-known believer with a good reputation whose very presence would bolster the confidence of the Corinthians in those carrying the offering to Jerusalem.

Believers who administer funds must glorify the Lord—that is, they must be of a willing mind, well-motivated, and spiritually mature. Therefore, the administrators of church money must meet certain requirements:

Christian integrity, wisdom, a giver of sound advice, congregational appointment. Bible doctrine motivates the administrator. His ability to fulfill this function depends on his spiritual gift of administration (1 Cor. 12:28) and upon his capacity to orient to the grace of God and to love Christ.

Additionally, when funds are administered by more than one person, the possibility and even the appearance of dishonesty or misappropriation is greatly reduced. The procedures for handling money should be arranged ahead of time to ensure the security and the honest distribution of the offering.

And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent, because of *his* great confidence in you [Corinthians]. (2 Cor. 8:22)

At this point Paul has commended the three men on his team. They were all well-qualified to disburse large sums of money. In not naming the second and third members of the team, the emphasis is on the ministry of grace rather than upon personality. In the administration of the financial affairs of a local church, many unknown and unheralded heroes of governance accomplish the job in a manner pleasing to the Lord. God knows all who attend to such affairs.

As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. Therefore openly before the churches show them the proof of your [virtue] love and of our reason for boasting about you. (2 Cor. 8:23–24)

One way of demonstrating virtue-love is giving. These two verses recall the sixth principle, the test of love. You are tested every time you present an offering—not by the size of your contribution but by the attitude with which you give. God designed giving to test your capacity to love Him, as well as other believers. Whenever you give as unto the Lord, you express virtue-love. True giving cannot be separated from virtue-love.

The Necessity for the Filling of the Holy Spirit

For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints [in Jerusalem]; for I know your readiness, of

which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia [southern Greece] has been prepared [mentally] since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our boasting about you [Corinthians] may not be made empty in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared [in your soul]. (2 Cor. 9:1–3)

Carnality among the Corinthians had hindered them in the completion of the offering which had been started the previous year. Carnality means to be out of fellowship with God because of unconfessed sin. All believers periodically sin (1 John 1:8, 10). Since God can have no fellowship with a believer in a state of sin, He designed a method compatible with grace to reestablish that lost fellowship.

Before the Corinthians could take up this work again for the Lord, they had to rebound or privately name their known sins to God.²²

If we confess [name] our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown sins]. (1 John 1:9)

Confessing known sins results in forgiveness and cleansing “from all unrighteousness” and recovering the filling of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with God is the absolute state of spirituality which occurs only by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:1–3). Every time a believer sins he loses fellowship. Therefore, rebound must be used whenever the believer sins.

The filling of the Spirit empowers all momentum and spiritual growth (2 Pet. 1:3). By the time Paul wrote verses 1–3, the Corinthians had made rebound their paramount problem-solving device. They had learned to return quickly from carnality to spirituality whenever they sinned. Under the filling of the Spirit, they had recovered their spiritual momentum and were ready to continue the offering. In fact, the Corinthian “zeal [momentum]” was so exemplary that Paul had boasted about it to the Macedonians.

The ninth principle, then, is that all giving requires fellowship with God. If one gives without the filling of the Holy Spirit, proper motivation is impossible. This is a very simple principle: If the offering plate is passed and you are out of fellowship, either pass the plate

22. Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*, 19–21.

on or rebound before you give. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the only basis for grace giving.

Giving without Pressure

Lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift [a blessing], and not affected by covetousness [false motivation]. (2 Cor. 9:4–5)

Paul assumes that the offering would be completed because of a willing mental attitude which resulted from the last visit of Titus. At this point, the completion was potential. In Macedonia Paul had mentioned the Corinthians as an outstanding illustration of giving. But the illustration would fail unless they completed their gift as unto the Lord. If the Macedonians discovered that the offering had not been completed, Paul and the Corinthians would have been dishonored. They would have perpetrated a lie.

Paul wanted to make sure that the giving of money was not associated with dishonor or pressure. He was not using “shame” as a ploy to extract “a bountiful gift.” That gift had been “previously promised” as a result of virtue-love and not from “covetousness.”

Paul was politely reminding the Corinthians that they needed to follow through on their promise and complete the offering. This was in keeping with the divine mandate for glorifying the Lord and maintaining an honorable reputation among men (2 Cor. 8:21). He did not want any last-minute, grudgingly motivated giving. Therefore, Titus’ team would make arrangements “beforehand” in order to allow the Corinthians leeway to complete their offering without pressure. Believers should have the privacy and freedom to give as unto the Lord—not on the basis of coercion or harassment.

Grace Giving Related to Blessing

Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly [parsimoniously] shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully

[grace giving] shall also reap bountifully [blessing].
(2 Cor. 9:6)

Verse 6 states the eleventh principle: The believer who applies grace and doctrinal principles, which God has given, also receives the resources with which to give. This is no guarantee of fabulous material wealth, nor a promise of “give more, get more.” Rather, Paul is emphasizing the source of blessing and an attitude that appreciates the source, not the sum given. To convey this meaning, Paul uses the analogy of sowing and reaping. The Corinthians needed to be reminded that grace giving is like sowing, which will reap an abundant harvest of blessing (2 Cor. 9:8–9). God’s grace provides the seed to sow and the harvest is divine good.

Parsimonious giving conveys a grudging mental attitude. That the offering not be “affected by covetousness” is a warning to the Corinthians about this attitude. Whatever a man sows comes back to him (Gal. 6:7). When a man sows grudgingly he receives little in return. No blessings arise from stinginess that caters to personal wants and desires. You can harvest blessing from grace giving, but not from money-grubbing.

The one sowing “bountifully” through grace giving shall harvest blessings. In grace giving the believer gives of self, of his personal love for God, of his time in glorifying God, and of his money. His mental attitude retains no grudging motivation. The believer actually reaps what God sows in grace, which results in great blessing.

The gift is never the issue. Grace is the issue. God blesses only on the basis of His grace. To sow sparingly means to sprinkle a few dollars in God’s direction and expect a great bounty of harvest. You will never receive it! In effect, verse 6 says: *He who sows without grace shall reap little; he who sows in grace shall reap grace bountifully.*

What profit comes from parsimonious sowing—from stinginess based on a covetous attitude? None! What profit comes from grace sowing, from a mental attitude based on doctrine? A grace profit—bountiful!

The Motivation of Doctrine

Let each one *do* just as he has purposed [is motivated] in his heart [where doctrine is reality for the believer with

momentum]; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful [gracious] giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)

The twelfth principle describes a grace giver, properly motivated from *epignosis* doctrine in the soul. The believer determines the quality of his giving beforehand. One should not give at all if it is from pressure or distress of mind “grudgingly.” A person may decide to give for grace reasons, but he should not give because he feels trapped, forced, or “under compulsion.” Nor should he give under any form of emotional coercion.

Giving is worship, an expression of gratitude for God’s immeasurable grace toward you. Through doctrine you comprehend His graciousness. The result is grace orientation. Your appreciation for what God has provided stimulates a desire to imitate and commemorate His generosity. When this attitude accompanied by the filling of the Holy Spirit motivates giving, the act of giving becomes worship with intrinsic value, or divine good.

Worship is not something imposed upon you; it is a response of thankfulness for your relationship with God. Perception of doctrine defines that relationship. Application of that same doctrine produces appreciation and worship. God ordained every believer as a royal priest (1 Pet. 2:9), and as such you should enjoy worshipping God, the object of your love.

Therefore, you need never hang your head because you cannot drop something into the offering plate. God will supply the time, place, and resources for giving. It is doctrinal motivation that counts.

Grace Provision for Giving

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed [divine good]. (2 Cor. 9:8)

The emphasis in 2 Corinthians 8:1—9:7 has been on the importance of proper motivation in giving. Beginning in verse 8, the emphasis shifts to show what God is able to do. Periodically, believers become arrogant and forget or doubt God’s ability. If it were not for God’s ability and His grace, none of us would have the means to glorify Him.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you.” If you give legitimately, obviously you must have something to give. The God of all grace, who grants salvation by grace, who provides the filling of the Holy Spirit, who supplies Bible doctrine for spiritual growth, is also the One who furnishes the material resources for giving. Here is the thirteenth principle of giving: God who bestows spiritual resources also supplies material blessings; these are combined in giving.

The material blessings that God bestows are sufficient for “everything” and, therefore, more than enough of “an abundance for every good deed.” “Every good deed” includes all divine good but in this context refers especially to grace giving. The word “abundance” does not indicate great wealth. Paul has already concluded from the Macedonian example that proper motivation for giving is infinitely more important than a substantial bankroll. Remember, God “is able,” not obligated, to supply material abundance. Therefore, in verse 8, “an abundance” means enough material resources for believers to accomplish God’s purpose and further express His graciousness. This abundance resides with virtuous believers who reflect the graciousness of God, developed through spiritual growth.

People often make ungracious demands when they give something. “After all I’ve done for you!” “It’s the least you can do to show your gratitude.” Does this reflect God’s graciousness? No! This is legalism—expecting favors or preferential treatment in return for generosity. God cannot be bribed for His abounding grace.

Giving remains one of the greatest challenges to grace in the Christian life. The virtue in giving directly relates to what you are in your soul. Remember, the Macedonians had very little money; they gave first of themselves. That means they had doctrine in their souls. Consequently, God provided adequate resources and the opportunity for their use.

Giving brings both the spiritual and material into focus. The spiritual, which is unseen but real, meets the material, which is both seen and real. Giving requires the doctrinal motivation of grace, the unseen, followed by the sufficiency of grace, the seen. Every act of giving as worship is a twofold manifestation of God’s grace: God’s grace in the spiritual realm and God’s grace in the material realm. Therefore, Paul cites Psalm 112:9 as an illustration of the grace giving of the believer who manifests God’s virtue.

As it is written,

“HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR,

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS [VIRTUE] ABIDES FOREVER.”
(2 Cor. 9:9; cf. Ps. 112:9)

Scattering abroad recalls the imagery of sowing in verse 6. The one who understands God’s grace assets and becomes grace oriented can sow in grace. The “poor” are those recipients who benefit from this grace giving. Notice the final phrase of verse 9 does not tout a profit of material blessings for the giver, but something much more important: a righteous deed that God will not forget. The fact that “his [the giver’s] righteousness abides forever” indicates that he has produced divine good. Divine good only comes from a believer who understands and uses his spiritual resources.

All grace function comes under the category of divine good, and all divine good will be rewarded and will last forever. Remember, divine good meets God’s standards. When you give, you are performing an act of divine good, provided you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Multiplication of Grace Giving

Now He who supplies seed to the sower [the believer] and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
(2 Cor. 9:10)

“Seed” and “bread” illustrate God’s provision through His grace pipeline for the necessities of life and for “an abundance for every good deed.”²³ God blesses and multiplies the production of divine good. The believer in 2 Corinthians 9:6 who “sows bountifully,” gives money from grace orientation, also “reaps bountifully,” receives an increase in “the harvest of [his] righteousness,” which is divine good.

As grace orientation increases with spiritual growth, likewise your capacity to handle God’s monetary provision increases. God can “multiply your seed” for giving based on your capacity (Prov. 11:24–25). Thus, material resources supplied by God become the means to glorify

23. The “grace pipeline” is a term I have coined to describe the flow of blessings from the love and integrity of God to His imputed righteousness in believers. See Thieme, *Christian Integrity*, 57–59, and *The Integrity of God*, 103–5.

God. Capacity ensures that these resources do not become a distraction from the purpose of the Christian life. The result: greater service to God based on your increased capacity from spiritual growth.

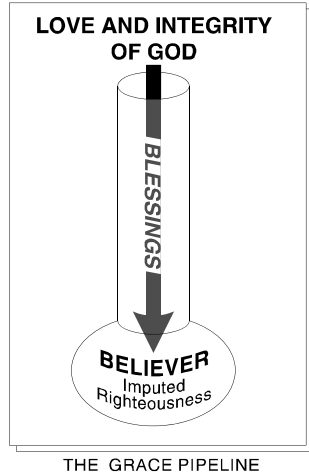
You will be enriched in everything for all liberality [generosity of soul], which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. (2 Cor. 9:11)

Enrichment, or multiplication of grace, applies to every realm of your life. Of lesser importance, you have the material things of life which may accumulate. Of utmost importance, you have the production of divine good, Christian virtue, and capacity for life. The more you learn and apply doctrine, the more time you spend in fellowship with God, the more you grow spiritually, the more you give from proper motivation, and the more your life is enriched.

Grace orientation generates a grateful response. This grateful attitude is described in verse 11 as “thanksgiving to God.” The Jerusalem Christians who will be the beneficiaries of the Corinthian offering through Paul and the members of his team are thankful to God. But another result is also noted: The Corinthians would be greatly enriched, a cause for their thanksgiving.

For the ministry of this service [giving] is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints [in Jerusalem], but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. (2 Cor. 9:12)

Although people may provide for the needs of others, the praise for “fully supplying the needs of the saints” still ultimately goes to God. We should express our gratitude to people for their generosity, but God owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). His resources are endless. His grace adds and multiplies the resources from which we give. This verse reminds us that praise must go to whom praise is due—to God alone.



Recognition of Grace Authority

Because of the proof given by this ministry [grace giving] they [Jewish believers] will glorify God for *your* [Corinthian] obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all. (2 Cor. 9:13)

What was the Corinthian “obedience to [their] confession of the gospel of Christ”? The “gospel of Christ” stands for salvation by grace. The Corinthians were saved by grace and, therefore, they must live by grace. Corinthian giving now expresses the principle of living by grace. Such giving recognizes God’s *modus operandi*, which is the authority of grace.

God’s grace is manifested at the cross with Christ’s substitutionary work and continues forever in the lives of believers. This is the message of the Gospel. Grace living and giving depends solely on what God does for believers. His work on our behalf makes possible our service for His glorification. That is the authority of grace.

Several fundamentals of giving arise from verse 13. The Bible emphasizes grace giving. The filling of the Spirit and Bible doctrine are the only basis for grace giving. Pressure leading to emotional giving is human good, human viewpoint, and contrary to grace principles. That which is contrary to grace principles is not part of the plan of God for the believer.

For example, you may hear a legitimate plea for money; and even though you are barely solvent, the emotion of the appeal convinces you to give your last dime, sell your wedding ring, second mortgage your house, or borrow the money. This is wrong! You can give only what you have, not what you do not have. Until God provides the seed to sow, do not deprive your family or neglect your obligations.

The same is true of your spiritual resources. You cannot glorify God unless you are filled with the Spirit and your giving reflects grace orientation, doctrine resident in your soul, and virtue-love. Giving without spiritual motivation has no spiritual value. Until you are properly motivated, your giving is human good.

While they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. (2 Cor. 9:14)

A gracious attitude produces all that is attractive and wonderful in the believer. Intercessory prayer, a manifestation of capacity for love, is one “surpassing grace” result. This “grace of God in you” comes from the daily function of GAP and maximum doctrine in the soul.

THE GREATEST GIFT

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Cor. 9:15)

The gift of Jesus Christ from God the Father set the precedent for grace giving. For the believer giving is an act of worship, a remembrance of His sacrificial gift on the cross. However, for the unbeliever no amount of giving can approximate what Christ did for you. You cannot buy the righteousness of God, eternal life, or entrance into heaven. God never asks anything of someone who does not belong to Him. You may give, but you receive no recognition for it from God. The unbeliever is said to be “dead in [his] trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), and a dead person cannot give anything to anyone. But, if you are still an unbeliever, God in His grace wants to give *you* the priceless gift of salvation. It cost Jesus Christ everything, but it is free to you simply by believing in the person and work of Christ.

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.” (Acts 16:31a)

Appendix A

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

- I. Definition
 - A. Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
 - B. Grace depends on the essence or character of God.
 - C. Grace is what God can do for man and still be consistent with His own character. This is illustrated by the doctrine of propitiation. Propitiation means “to satisfy” and is God’s view of the cross. God the Father is satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross on behalf of sinful man. Thus, God blesses the believer with salvation, spiritual assets for the Christian life, and eternity in heaven based on Christ’s perfect work, not our work.
- II. The divine policy of grace is the precedent for the Christian way of living and giving. God supplies the apparatus for assimilating doctrine as the basis upon which believers live. God also provides the material resources from which believers give. The result is living and giving that reflects His plan. Grace orientation is the bona fide motivation and attitude for giving (2 Cor. 8:9).
- III. Grace is the antithesis of legalism. Legalism is man’s attempt to observe a strict standard of behavior and thereby gain the approbation of God. Even if the standards are true, man’s work cannot bring him to God. Legalism is the enemy of grace.

- IV. God has provided everything for salvation. Man responds in a totally nonmeritorious manner: by faith (Rom. 3:22–24; 5:19–21; Eph. 2:8–9).
- V. Under the concept of grace, the greatest thing that God can do for the saved person is to make him exactly like His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). This is sanctification, which is accomplished in three stages.
 - A. Positional sanctification: Every believer at the point of salvation is entered into union with Christ through the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). In His resurrected humanity Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20). As one with Christ every believer shares His exalted position (Eph. 2:6).
 - B. Experiential sanctification: This is the Christian way of life, the spiritual growth of believers through the consistent intake of Bible doctrine. The result: continual progress in the process of maturing spiritually (Eph. 4:11–16).
 - C. Ultimate sanctification: The final stage of sanctification promotes all Church Age believers to a state of perfection and glorification in eternity. All receive resurrection bodies like that of Christ (Phil. 3:21–22; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 John 3:2).²⁴
- VI. Every believer has “tasted the kindness [grace] of the Lord” at least once (1 Pet. 2:3). This verse refers to the point of salvation, when the believer receives at least forty grace gifts from God, which are unearned and undeserved.²⁵
- VII. Disorientation to grace is the believer’s greatest occupational hazard (Gal. 5:4). Falling from grace is not loss of salvation, but rejecting grace and accepting legalism or some other human system of pseudosanctification.
- VIII. God is constantly waiting to pour out His grace on every believer (Isa. 30:18–19).

24. The sin nature is the center of man’s rebellion toward God. The sin nature is transferred genetically as a direct result of Adam’s first sin, and thereafter resides in the cell structure of the human body of every human being except Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:6; 7:5, 18). See Thieme, *Old Sin Nature vs. Holy Spirit* (2000).

25. The Church Age believer receives at least forty things from God at the instant of salvation. See Thieme, *The Plan of God* (2003), Appendix.

- IX. The Christian way of life expresses grace in many ways, for example: prayer (Heb. 4:16); suffering (2 Cor. 12:9–10); growth (2 Pet. 3:18); stability (1 Pet. 5:12); the *modus vivendi* of the Christian life (2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 12:28); and the production of divine good (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1).
- X. Grace is sufficient for enduring all suffering. Through grace God is able to bless the believer in the midst of pressure, hardship, and adversity (2 Cor. 12:7–10).
- XI. The axioms of grace
 - A. God is perfect; His plan is perfect.
 - B. A perfect plan can originate only from a perfect God.
 - C. If imperfect man can do anything meritorious, then God's plan is no longer perfect. Grace, which excludes human merit, protects the perfection of God's plan.
 - D. A plan is like a chain, which is no stronger than its weakest link. Grace excludes human merit, human ability, human good, and, therefore, the plan of God has no weak links.
 - E. Human works cannot accomplish the plan of God. Human virtue always falls short of God's absolute standards.
 - F. Human good, when assumed to be man's approach to God, expresses arrogance.
- XII. Arrogance rejects grace
 - A. The arrogance of the believer who rejects the doctrine of eternal security: He assumes his sins are greater than the plan of God.
 - B. The arrogance of the believer who succumbs to pressure and adversity: He assumes his sufferings are greater than grace provision.
 - C. The arrogance of the pseudospiritual believer: He assumes his human system is greater than the power of the Holy Spirit and the Christian way of life.
 - D. The arrogance of the believer whose emotions dominate his thinking: He assumes his feelings and experiences are more valid than Bible doctrine.

Appendix B

THE DOCTRINE OF MONEY

- I. Money was designed as a medium of exchange. Coined money was unknown until seventh century B.C. Before coins, valuable metal was measured in terms of ingots or rings. Croesus, king of Lydia, was the first to preserve his money in the form of coins. When Cyrus the Great conquered Lydia, he adopted the concept of coinage. Cyrus spread the concept throughout the Persian Empire and beyond.
- II. Monetary transactions are a legitimate function of life (Gen. 23:9; Jer. 32:44).
- III. The giving of money is an expression of the believer's priesthood (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8—9; Heb. 13:15–16).
- IV. Materialism lust makes money a god and enslaves a person to the details of life (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:9, 11, 13). Money is a useful and helpful servant, but a harsh and cruel master.
- V. The dangers of money to the unbeliever
 - A. Salvation cannot be purchased with money (Mark 8:36–37). Salvation has been paid in full by the blood (spiritual death) of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18–19).
 - B. Money can cause the rich man to put his trust in the wrong things (Mark 10:23–25).
 - C. Money can hinder the unbeliever from seeking salvation (Luke 16:19–31).
 - D. Money has no credit with God (Prov. 11:4, 28; 13:7, 11).

- VI. The danger of money to the believer
 - A. Money can become a part of slavery to the details of life (Eccl. 5:10—6:2).
 - B. Love of money becomes the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:6–12, 17–19).
 - C. Money can destroy grace orientation and contribute to reversionism (Acts 5:1–10; James 4:14—5:6).
- VII. Money can be a source of deceit (Jude 11; cf. Num. 22—24).
- VIII. Illusions about money:
 - A. Money is a means of happiness. For the believer there is no happiness from the details of life, including money. The believer's happiness is built on the intake of doctrine, spiritual growth, and spiritual maturity.
 - B. Money is a means of security. Grace provides a security for which there is no substitute (Matt. 6:24–33).
 - C. Money can buy anything. There are many things which money cannot buy: salvation, love, happiness, stability, or tranquility.

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF GIVING

- I. Giving is an act of worship, a remembrance of the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ.
- II. Giving is a mental attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than an amount donated.
- III. Giving must originate from free will apart from coercion, emotional manipulation, or legalistic pressure. Giving is an expression of the royal priesthood of the believer in privacy and freedom.
- IV. Giving is a privilege associated with grace.
- V. Giving is a soul activity. Since giving commemorates God's grace, the believer must give on the basis of virtue and integrity.
- VI. Giving is an extension of the daily function of GAP.
- VII. Bible doctrine and virtue-love motivate giving.
- VIII. Giving depends on grace orientation. Grace orientation depends on understanding the divine way of operating and relating that operation to the Christian life.
- IX. Money given in the Lord's work must be properly administered.
- X. Rebound and the resultant filling of the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite for giving with proper motivation.
- XI. Grace giving is divine good motivated by doctrine, not human good motivated by approbation lust, coercion, emotion, guilt, peer pressure, or desire for prestige.

- XII. God provides everything for giving—both the mental attitude and the means. To actually give, the believer must be the recipient of both spiritual and material blessings from God.
- XIII. God never promises great material blessings to the believer. He supplies enough for you to fulfill His plan for your life and to express your grace orientation through giving.

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