

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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The Grace of Giving

Mark Robbins, CPA

There are many questions generated in the minds of believers when it comes to giving. How much should I give? Should I tithe or not? To whom should I give? Why should I give? How much is enough giving? What if I can't give? Giving is a matter between each believer and God. It is a very practical matter, but often times, provides a point of frustration for believers.

In the last issue of Money Sense we began to look at what Paul said about giving in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. The first point discussed was that the Apostle Paul taught that giving to the Lord's work was a Christian Grace. Let's call it The Grace of Giving.

Another point that Paul makes in this passage about The Grace of Giving is that giving is not a command or something to be coerced by him. He taught that giving was to be voluntary. The believers were to give willingly and freely as a response of love to Christ. How easy it would have been for the apostle to simply command that the Corinthians "give X amount." Let's be honest; to know that a certain amount of a gift would make God happy would make many of us feel good. It would be a way of salving our conscience, but it would also short circuit the blessing received from giving. Yet, what about those to whom it would be a burden to give that amount, or what about those who could easily give more? To give from a command is not the same as giving voluntarily from a heart of love.

Paul indicated that willing and voluntary giving is proof of the sincerity of our love for God and other believers (8:8). According to Paul, Jesus was the perfect example of the spirit about which he was speaking. He willingly and voluntarily gave his life out of love for the lost that they, being poor, might become rich in Christ. What an example! As believers, our giving should be from a willing spirit of love for what God has done on our behalf.

In verses 10 and 11 of chapter 8 Paul commends and encourages the Corinthians in their giving. Verse 10 indicates that they were not only the first to give, but also the first to have a desire to give. But in verse 11 Paul exhorts them to follow through on their desire. Paul

wanted their eagerness and willingness to be matched by following through and completing their desire by actually giving. It is also interesting to note that they were to give according to their means, or what they had, not what they did not have (8:11).

As believers, we are to determine what God wants us to give willingly, freely, and voluntarily from a heart of love; commit to that; follow through and give what God has laid on our hearts.

Verse 12 confirms that our giving should be done according to how God has prospered us. In the New Testament, God does not set a specific amount that each believer is to give. What he expects is that each believer will evaluate what he has and what he needs, as well as what others have and need in an open and honest manner. Then, before God and by the Spirit's leading, the believer is to decide what he can, and is willing to give, and do so. He is not to give what he is not able or willing to give. In summary let's look at what we have learned from 2 Corinthians 8:8-12. We have learned the following:

- The grace of giving is voluntary and a proof of our sincerity and love for God and those in need.
- The grace of giving is a personal commitment between the believer and his God to give.
- The grace of giving is giving as God has prospered us. We are to give according to what we have and are willing to give, not according to what we do not have or are unwilling to give.
- Remember that our willingness to give should mirror Christ's willingness to give. Christ poured out His life for others.

What is your spirit as you give to God and His work?
Does it fit with the Grace of Christian Giving?

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org