



GREATER BETHEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

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Principles of Christian Financial Giving (I)

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

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Introduction

The Corinthians evidently made a **generous financial commitment to the Christians in Jerusalem**, but later retracted it. Paul writes to motivate them to fulfill their giving and to remind them of several key theological principles of Christian financial giving. Giving is a response to God's grace. Giving is an acknowledgment that we are God's stewards. Giving is an essential component of Christian spirituality. This area of our Christian life is **easy to try to wall off from God and say He has no business there**. But when we have been given everything through our salvation because of Christ's death, how can we tell God that our worldly resources are too sacred to part with?

How we handle our money is one of the truest indicators of how well we understand God's Word and how much we trust God's power and love.

Giving is a response to God's grace.

Read vs 1-4 - Paul obviously sees the Macedonians as an example for the Corinthians and us. What an example of voluntary, sacrificial generosity! **What motivated this giving?** Paul mentions the secret in v. 1a and spells it out in v. 9—the grace of God. *9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

All authentic Christian giving (financially and otherwise) is **a response to God's grace.**

"**Grace**" here does not refer to a prayer before Easter dinner or social charm. It is the most critical theological term in the New Testament. As Paul says in vs 9, grace is **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

Don't get the cart before the horse (moral change & good works before receiving Christ). Come to Christ, receive God's gift of forgiveness and eternal life and the Holy Spirit--and then you can give because you have been accepted.

UNDER GRACE: "My giving is a privilege that I enjoy."

UNDER GRACE: "I give as much as I can to express my gratitude for God's love." Grace promotes generous, voluntary giving, as the Macedonians did.

Paul is simply reminding us that *God wants us to choose to give with the right attitude*. We should reflect on God's grace and decide to give voluntarily and cheerfully on that basis.

Giving is an acknowledgment that we are God's stewards.

Read vs 5 - Here is another biblical principle that should inform our thinking about finances and giving. The key point here is that we give our money to advance the cause of Christ because we have first acknowledged God's rightful ownership of our whole lives. Giving should be an expression of our identity as ***God's stewards***.

Stewardship was one of Jesus' favorite characters in his parables. A steward was a manager — someone who oversaw the owner's farm or business. Good stewards faithfully used their master's resources to advance his interests and increase his wealth; bad stewards misused them for personal gain or squandered them out of laziness.

God is the Owner of all that we have (**Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 6:19,20**). We are his stewards, entrusted with the privilege and responsibility to manage his resources to advance his purposes. God gives us the freedom to use his resources as we choose, but **with this freedom comes real accountability**. One day, we will provide an account for him for how we did this (Matt. 25), not for salvation, but for reward.

Here, we collide directly with our own **culture's view**. Most Americans regard themselves as sovereign owners and their money as their personal property, to be used to advance their interests.

OWNERS ask, "How much of my money will I give to God?" **STEWARDS** ask, "How much of God's money will I keep for myself?"

It is appropriate for stewards to have enough to live on, to provide for their families, and to make realistic plans for recreation. But we should never live luxuriously while the owner's affairs are being neglected.

Yet statistics show that as most American Christians' income rises, their giving percentage declines! We should give generously and **consider the GRADUATED TITHE as our income increases and some of our costs decrease.**

OWNERS ask, "Do I want this?" and (sometimes) "Can I afford it?" **STEWARDS** ask, "How will this affect my ability to advance God's purposes?"

Just because I can afford something does not mean that I should buy it. This may be **responsible OWNERSHIP, but it is irresponsible STEWARDSHIP!** There are the needs of other Christians to consider, both locally and beyond the local context (8:13-15). And there are the needs of the lost who are dear to God's heart. **STEWARDS are caught up with God's passion to reach the lost and look for creative ways to subsidize this great purpose (LOCAL CHURCH GIVING; Christian MINISTRIES; MISSIONS WORK).**

OWNERS say, "My finances and giving are my private business." **This is an American attitude!** They tend to resent questions or challenges from others in this area as intrusive. But **STEWARDS** say, "I will seek wise counsel so I can be faithful with God's resources."

Giving is an essential component of Christian spirituality.

The Corinthian Christians had a lot going for them spiritually, but their deficiency in this area kept Paul from calling them models of Christian living. He calls on them to complete the profile of spiritual health/maturity by filling in this component (**read vs 7**) - *7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

HERBERT KANE: *"The last part of the person to convert is his wallet."* God says money is a symbol of our time and effort. How we spend it is a key indicator of our true priorities (Lk. 12:34).

This is why we unapologetically require a record of significant giving to serve as a deacon or elder in our church (**1 Tim. 3:3, 8**).³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.⁸ In the same way, deacons^[b] are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

We have biblical knowledge, ministry, character, fellowship, and other requirements.

We can give significantly whether we are financially rich or poor.

Read vs 12 - 12 *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.*

Refer to Mark 12:41-44

"This is . . . the new mathematics, the arithmetic of heaven. God estimates our gifts not so much by their financial value as by the sacrifice involved, the love that accompanies it, and the amount that is left. The supreme value of the widow's gift lay in the fact that she gave out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on, **while the others gave out of their surplus** (Mk. 12:44). Here is a searching test of our giving. Still, that incident should greatly encourage those who have only a little to give but give it gladly.