

God, Grace, Money & Possessions
Money & Possessions: God Loves, God Gives, We Love, We Give
2 Corinthians 8-9

- I. The world in which we live...is really God's world
 - A. Three shifts in church funding culture
 - 1995: 600,000 NFP, 370,000 churches; 2005: >1.8 million NFP, 370,000 churches [*See shifts and resulting cycle below*]
 - B. The God/Grace reality
 - All God's: Owner, Controller, Provider (1 Chronicles 29:11-13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - All Grace: He Loves, He Gives (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9)
- [Read 2 Corinthians 8-9; p. 143 in back half of the Bible found on chair racks]
- II. Giving: Gracious Work (8:1-15)
 - All of grace (1) (cf 9:15)
 - Affliction/Poverty, yet joy (2a)
 - Overflowing liberality, beyond ability (2b-3a) [*Alistair Begg quotes*]
 - Own accord, enthusiastic response (3b-4a)
 - Building up the church (4b)
 - KEY=Gave themselves first to the Lord, then to us (5)
 - Gracious work (6)
 - Abounding in giving is part of abounding in everything (7)
 - Proving the sincerity of love (8)
 - Following the ultimate model of Jesus (9)
 - Desire through completion (10-11)
 - Acceptable gift characterized by eagerness to give what you have (12)
 - Biblical "What goes around comes around" process so that everyone is taken care of (13-15)
- III. Giving: Proper Administration (8:16-9:5)
 - By receiver/handler
 - Accountability
 - Good reputation
 - Eagerness/Readiness
 - Concern for what is right before God & men
 - For God's glory
 - Trustworthy
 - Confident in givers
 - Appropriate authority
 - By giver
 - Eager to participate
 - Ready with gifts (cf 1 Corinthians 16:1-4)
 - Resulting from generosity, not compulsion
- IV. Giving: Seed Sowing...the way the Bible *really* talks about it (9:6-15)
 - Proverbial statement: Sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow bountifully, reap bountifully (6)
 - Do what you've purposed in your heart (7a)
 - Not grudgingly or under compulsion, but cheerfully (7b) [*Discuss tithing*]
 - Grace abounds, abundance is for every good deed (8-9)
 - God supplies seed and harvest (10)
 - Increase from God is for liberality of the giver and thanksgiving to God (11-12) [*Randy Alcorn quote from The Treasure Principle*]
 - Giving shows obedience to confession of the gospel and highlights the surpassing grace of God in the giver (13-14)
 - All of grace (15) (cf 8:1)
- V. You, Me, & FBC
 - FBC status (Good administration, Debt Free, Adequate Cash, People-Focused, Mission-Intensive; Projected Deficit) [*Jeff Anderson/Krispy Kreme Donuts story*]
 - Giving to the local church is Biblical (1 Corinthians 9:9-14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Go Forward

Know - Simple question. Do you know what you're giving? Lots? Little? None? Take an accurate personal accounting of your giving life.

Grow - Compare the results from the **Know** exercise above with what you've learned from today's sermon. Identify the discrepancies and gaps. Pray about them, asking God to empower you and guide you to begin to eliminate the discrepancies and close the gaps.

Show - Do *something* about the results from the **Grow** exercise. Depending on your situation, this could mean anything from starting to give...to increasing your giving...to perhaps making even bigger life changes. This is all between you and God. And remember, giving is just a part of the overall life of a disciple but is also a key indicator of the sincerity of our love. (The NET Bible puts it this way: *But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in all eagerness and in the love from us that is in you – make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too. I am not saying this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love by comparison with the eagerness of others.* (2 Corinthians 8:7-8)).

Three shifts in church funding culture

1. Vision-casting replacing doctrinal teaching
2. Givers want to make a difference
3. Tithe message is fading

• Three shifts produce the following cycle

1. Vision-casting replaces teaching
2. Givers think like customers
3. Meanwhile, the tithe message becomes silent
4. As funding slows, more vision-casting is needed

• Solution

- A return to solid doctrinal teaching is needed.
- Get back to what the Bible really says about why we should give to God.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

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. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

"Their being willing to forego a legitimate want in order that they might be able to supply a legitimate need."

"They were prepared to squeeze themselves so that others might not feel the pinch."

Alistair Begg

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

"God prospers us not to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving."

Randy Alcorn, from The Treasure Principle

For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:9-14)

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. (Galatians 6:6)

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18)