**The Grace Way of Giving, No. 5 – BD35-01**

In the study of what the Word of God has to teach us concerning the Christian practice of giving, we have learned certain principles as we come now to this fifth segment. None of these principles that we have learned are designed to excuse any of us from the practice of giving. Sometimes board members get a little nervous when we lay in heaven on the grace system of giving because it seems that if people really realize how little they are under pressure and under demand and what a really relaxed thing the matter of your money and supporting God’s work is, that there will be a tendency on the part of Christians to drift off and not to rise to the opportunity, the challenge, the privilege, and the responsibility which is involved.

However, while that is a natural tendency within us, it is in reality not the way it works. When people learn what God’s principles are, when people what doctrine has to say and then are receptive to it, it causes them to function in the right way. There is nothing greater in the world than to come to know what God thinks. There is nothing more disastrous than to operate on some basis other than what God thinks. Once every member of this congregation has received these principles and is functioning on them, there will never again be a time when there will not be enough money to pay the bills because God always brings together enough people in a local congregation to do His job and His work and in His order. Therefore, if we want to get our bills paid, we have to learn these divine principles and then we’ll know how to function. There is no other way. To substitute something else is really self-defeating. So here are the principles we’ve learned thus far to which we should be oriented:

We have learned first of all that tithing has no part in grace giving (Romans 6:14b, 2 Corinthians 3:7-13). The Old Testament had a religious income tax called tithing which was levied upon all the Jews—believers and unbelievers alike. These tithes were paid. That’s why the expression “paying your tithe) is used. It really causes the hair to stand up on the back of my neck to stand up and praise the Lord for the blessings that he has received because he has paid his tithes. When you get hold of the feeling of grace and you get oriented to grace, you will certainly be revolted by a statement like that which is such an insult to our God. The Old Testament giving that was real offering was freewill giving. Tithing covers up using our own money as our income expands for ourselves rather than sharing equally on an expanding basis with the Lord’s work.

Secondly, an emotional love for money is the source for all kinds of sins (1 Timothy 6:10). If we have an emotional love for money, an emotional attachment to money, it reflects a lack of that facet of spiritual maturity in us that we have referred to as the mastery of the details of life. It leads to covetousness for things that are temporary, and this results in personal sorrows which pierce us because we have failed to have a control of the details of life, and money is one of them. An emotional attachment to money will often neutralize one’s active Christian service. People get so head up about money. People get so attached. People get so emotionally involved with pursuing it that they must look back upon their lives in time and say, “You know, I really didn’t do much in the way of Christian service. I just really wasn’t with it. I was with getting out to get the money, and maybe under the guise that I was going to help others do Christian service, but I myself failed in real Christian service.

The third principle we have learned: Grace giving stems from the mental attitude of grace orientation (2 Corinthians 8:2). Part of the spiritual maturity structure of the soul is built through Bible doctrine—grace orientation. The only way you will become oriented to God’s viewpoint on grace is through learning the principles of the Word. So grace giving through these chapters in 2 Corinthians does not stress the amount given, but the mental attitude. The poor Macedonians were able to give sacrificially and with great joy because they were oriented to the grace of God. Our giving is to commemorate this grace which God has showered upon us. That’s why you walk up to an offering box every time you do it. It’s not to pay God back for anything. It’s to commemorate the grace that He has given you. And there are few Christians, unfortunately, around us who understand what it is to be oriented to the grace of God. Christians are up to the ever-loving necks in legalism.

Fourth, grace giving must be voluntary (2 Corinthians 8:3). That means no human coercion, no appeals to your emotions, and no legalistic pressures or gimmicks imposed upon you. I cannot stress enough to you that so much of your spiritual well-being and of your eternal rewards are contingent upon your grace giving, and giving in a proper way in this age of the church. I cannot urge upon you strongly enough to be very careful about associating yourself with groups, churches, organizations, and religious bodies who violate this principle of voluntary grace giving. Anytime somebody stands up and gives you an emotional pitch to give to the Lord’s work, you slam your wallet shut. If you respond on that basis, what you give is no reward to you, and God does not honor it. Grace giving is a function of your Christian priesthood, so it has to be privately and without pressures upon you. Sacrificial giving cannot be sacrificial unless it’s an expression of freewill.

Next, number five, grace giving is a privilege to be eagerly sought (2 Corinthians 8:4). The Macedonians, because they understood grace giving, were enthusiastic to ask the apostle Paul to let them have a share in the Jerusalem relief fund.

Number six, grace giving requires soul giving first (2 Corinthians 8:5). How do you give your soul to the Lord? By having some little emotional ritual you go through? By making some public pronouncement? By walking an aisle and dedicating yourself, or rededicating which is even worse to the Lord? This is not how you can give your soul to the Lord. There is only one way you can give your soul to God, and that’s by getting the facets of your soul lined up with God in His thinking, in His will, and in His feelings. That’s how you give your soul. Now how are you going to line up your soul in that way with God? Only through Bible doctrine. When you’ve learned what doctrine has to say, and you respond to it, you’re in phase with God. Christian giving is an expression of the believers’ own character, as God’s giving has been an expression of His character.

Number seven, grace giving depends upon the believer functioning daily under the grace system of perception (2 Corinthians 8:7). The Corinthians super-abounded in spiritual things, we read at 2 Corinthians 8:7. This is in the indicative mood which is a declaration of reality and a fact. Then at the end of that verse we have the subjunctive mood which is potential—a doubtful mood, a mood of question. It was a question whether the Corinthians would super-abound in giving also, as they super-abounded in all the spiritual blessings that God had poured out upon them. The level of our giving reflects the degree of our functioning under the grace system of perception. And these people who show up at Berean Memorial Church once in a while, and occasionally drift in and drift out, and get a little spiritual food, you may be certain, without a shadow of a doubt almost, that they are very cheap givers. The people who drift in and out rarely give much at all. It is the people who are functioning on a regular basis under the grace system of perception of taking in doctrine. These are the people who can give. Until you do this, you cannot give.

Now in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul is describing the giving of the Macedonian Christians to these Corinthians Christians in order to give the Corinthians direction for their own giving. What we are learning in these two chapters are basic principles governing Christian giving. They relate to grace giving in very specific ways so that we learn from what Paul is saying here, the principles which govern the Christian’s giving. And you will discover that many other doctrines are related to grace giving. A Christian who knows how to give under grace is going to be straightened out on a lot of other relationships with the Lord. The Christian who is wrong on grace giving is going to be wrong in his relationships to God on many other doctrines that have nothing to do with giving.

Now Paul has sent Titus to Corinth to reactivate the collection for the Jerusalem relief fund which had been begun a year earlier, having commended to them in verse 7 that they should get with this offering again that they had begun. They were to get it completed as God has prospered them through the grace system of providing spiritual insights, they had developed spiritual maturity structures in their souls. The pentagon of defense and offense within their souls has developed and prospered and matured. Now God says God has given you knowledge, He has given you that “gnosis.” You have responded and it has become full knowledge, usable “epignosis” knowledge. Now as God has prospered you spiritually, why don’t you go on in the matter of grace giving and complete that offering.

**2 Corinthians 8:8-10**

But he wants to qualify something—something that they should understand about what he is saying. He qualifies this in verse 8 by saying, “I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the earnestness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.” “I speak not…” In the Greek this is the word “lego.” This simply means to communicate. He says, “I’m not communicating, I’m not telling you this, I haven’t been discussing this, I haven’t deliberately brought up this subject by way of a commandment.” He uses here a preposition “kata.” This means “according to a standard.” The standard here is what he calls an “epitage.” This is an order—a military command. Paul says, “I am not speaking to you according to the standard of a command. I am not issuing an order in what I said in verse 7 about your super-abounding in giving,” although he had apostolic authority and he could have commanded them to get with it. They were a wealthy church. There was plenty of money in Corinth. He could have told them to get with it, “and you people who are well off, underwrite this fund, and let’s get this money off to the Jerusalem saints, and let’s get relief onto them. They’re in desperate straights.” But he did not command them. He said, “I am not speaking as a command,” because grace giving can never stem from a dictatorial order.

The Christians are commanded to do certain things in Scripture. God does command us to be filled with the spirit. He does command you to come to church and listen to a pastor-teacher. I wonder how many people are very faithful in confessing to the Lord the sin of staying at home from church services on Sunday morning and Sunday evening. God commands us to pray. He commands us to study the Word. He commands us to have “agape” love and a relaxed mental attitude, a mind free of bitterness toward people. But He does not command us to give. He never commands us to give. So don’t let anybody slip you the notion that you have some kind of a commanding duty or responsibility, etc. by way of an order to give. There is a responsibility, but it’s not by way of an order. Grace giving results from these things that God commands us to do—to be filled with the spirit, to pray, to study the Word, to assemble with the saints for pastor-teacher instruction, etc. It’s very relaxing to realize that all that God asks of you and me in our giving is that we extend what we are spiritually to that offering box. That’s all He asks. He’s just saying, “What you are, my child, spiritually, what you have developed in your soul, I want you to walk by and extend and express that toward that offering box in what you give. Now that’s very relaxing. God is asking you to respond to something that you are, not something that you are not.

So he says, “I don’t speak to you by way of a commandment in telling you this and encouraging you to this offering, but by occasion of the earnestness of others.” Here it’s again a Greek preposition. When he says “by,” it’s the Greek expression “dia,” and that means “by the instrument” or “by the means of” by the instrumentality” of the earnestness of others.” This “earnestness” is “spoude.” This means “diligent application.” “So I ask you by the ‘spoude,’ the diligent application of others (that is, the Macedonian Christians), as to what they did, that this giving should affect your diligent application in the same way. Why were the Macedonians this diligent? Because they knew the Word. All the information and thinking that they had was able to guide them. The only guidance you can get is what guidance comes from your mind. If you don’t know the Word, you will have no guidance. This is why Christian giving is such a hard thing because the average Christian has been denied an understanding of the principles by which God wants him to give.

The level of doctrine in the directive side of your mind is going to determine your capacity to love God and therefore your capacity to give. If you don’t love God, you will not give. If you love God in a very small way, you will give in a very small way. There is no way for you to love God except as you take in His Word. As doctrine develops in the directive side of your mind as the result of what’s fed up from your human spirit that God has taught, you will develop a love for God. This is always true of love. This is part of our spiritual maturity—the capacity to love. Capacity to love comes from the Word. This is not only true toward God. This is true between the sexes. This is true between your friends. The level of love is determined by the level of intake of the Word.

The Macedonians are an example of love for God and it moved them to give. They’re a good example because of the fact that they were poor. You and I, if we were writing the Bible and we wanted to give an example of good Christian giving, we’d find ourselves a few wealthy people. We would say, “Now look at this wonderful person. He began many years ago in the business. He promised God that he would give him 10%. So his business started and he gave God 10%. His business prospered and then he gave 20%. The next year he was making $4 million and he gave God 30% and he lived off the rest of it. Then he went on until now he gives 90% of his $10 million a year, and he squeaks by on a million bucks a year.”

Now that’s how you and I would try to demonstrate how nice it would be for Berean Memorial Church to get $9 million a year from a $10 million earner. Already your hearts are saying, “Gee, that is a good illustration. I wonder if we could find anybody like that.” But God comes along and says, “I want to teach you something about giving. If I use somebody that has money, you’re going to have the wrong idea. The first thing you’re going to do is go way off to left field on the subject of giving.

So what does He do? He gets a group of Macedonian Christians who were having their heads beaten out by the Roman army, who are under fantastic pressures, who have suffered economic disasters, and they’re poor as can be, squeaking by. And He says now these are the people I’m going to teach you how to give under grace with because how much they give could not have been the issue. It was the motivations, the qualities, and the attitudes with which they gave that constituted grace giving. Grace giving is an attitude of mind. If you don’t get that, you will never learn. Grace giving is an attitude of mind. It is not the amount that you donate. That is not the issue that is stressed in the Word. It centers on the factor of love for God as the result of our doctrinal intake. The Macedonians, in spite of their poverty, were outstanding grace givers because they knew how to love God. Some things in the Christian life are done in obedience to a command, but giving is an expression of love, not a command.

So the Corinthians, who were wealthy, were as good stewards as were the Macedonians. This was not because the Corinthians didn’t have money to be just as good, but because they were weak on doctrine, and consequently weak on love, and consequently weak on their giving.

So he says, “I don’t speak in the nature of a command, but by the instrumentality of the earnestness of others, the diligent application of the Macedonians, and to prove the sincerity of your love.” The word “prove” in Greek is “dokimazo.” This word tells us something significant. “Dokimazo” is a word which means “to test something for the purpose of approving it.” It means to test something to show that it’s good. The idea is to take it and to demonstrate by some kind of a test the good quality which is already there. That’s what Paul is doing. Paul is saying, “I know you Corinthians who have been very carnal have been getting on the ball with the Word. Things have improved considerably. I’ve had the direct report from Titus. That’s why he wrote 2 Corinthians, in response to the good news. He said, “Now I want to demonstrate what I know has happened to you spiritually. The one way to demonstrate it, the par excellence way of spiritual maturity and advancement and development is through grace giving because the person who has had something realistically done for him by the Lord Jesus Christ and has responded to the Word of God is going to be a grace giver. “Dokimazo” means to test, to show what is good.

There is another word for “testing” in the Greek. It’s called “peirazo.” This means “to test to see whether there is something good or bad—to discover what’s there,” and actually it connotes the idea of proving that a thing is bad. This is the word that the Bible uses about what Satan does to us. He tempts us. He “peirazos” us in order to prove that we are bad and to get us to do what is evil. God never “perizaos” us. God always “dokimazos” us in order to prove the good and the worth that He has put into us, but he never tempts us to do that which is evil.

So Paul is going to test the Corinthians to show the genuineness of their love through their giving. The Corinthians have probably been emphasizing the amount that they gave. Wealthy people tend to do this. So they’ve probably been smug in the fact that they gave a large amount, but a large amount short of the ability. Large churches with wealthy members can very easily gather together a certain sum of money for a cause that would take a considerable sacrifice for a smaller church with members that are not so wealthy to achieve. So just because this church at Corinth had come up with a sizeable sum of money apparently, compared to their ability it was nothing as to what the Macedonians had done out of their poverty.

The thing that was important was not the amount that was different. The thing that was important was what this reflected about the spiritual condition of each of them. Well things have changed in Corinth. Where they have been smug about what they have given in spite of what they could have given, things are changing. Paul says, “I know that these has now come into your life a spiritual…” The translation says “sincerity.” It’s the Greek word “gnesios.” This means “genuineness,” not “sincerity.” … The genuineness of your love.” This is the word which is used for “born in wedlock,” or “legitimate.” He is going to demonstrate the legitimacy and the genuineness now “of your love,” and this is the “agape” love, the mental attitude love. Paul’s encouragement is for the Corinthians to follow the grace giving example of the Macedonians and to thereby reveal their love as the Macedonians reveal their love for the Lord. Grace giving is the system that God has designed, in other words, to test the reality of our love for the Lord.

I want to express my love for God. How do I do it? It’s easy to say, “I love Him,” but that often means very little. The reality of this expression depends on the person who says it. Some people can come up to you and say, “I love you,” and you know that they don’t know a flip about love, and therefore the expression is meaningless. Because they have no capacity for love you distrust what they’re saying to you. Because you know their motivations are worthless you don’t accept the expression. When are moved to tell God that we love Him in a crisis, it doesn’t mean very much, or because we want to gain some benefit, it doesn’t mean very much. It’s like some little kid crawling up on his mother’s knee when he wants a present and he says, “I love you.” But how can we express our love for God?

**Worship**

Well, some people say, “I can express it through worship,” and that’s true. “I express my love for God through worship.” What is worship? Some people think it is ritual, going through motions, but that is a religious service. Anybody can do that. You don’t have to be a Christian to go through those motions. You can’t tell God you love Him that way. Worship has certain outward aspects to it. People gather together in a room. They sing. They pray. They listen to the explanation of the Word of God, but these are outward factors. There is an inner quality to worship through which we show God that we love Him. That inner quality is a capacity for worship. The Bible tells us we must worship in spirit (God the Holy Spirit) and in truth (doctrine in the soul). Anyone sing. Anyone can pray. Anyone can give. These are the outward aspects of worship, but it takes somebody with a human spirit filled with doctrine, the inner aspect of worship, for it to be genuine and real. Worship is impossible from this kind of a relationship to doctrine. Ultimately worship is a response of our love with an ability and a capacity. The ability is the outward expression. That’s the use of doctrine. But the capacity is the inner expression which is the storage of doctrine that we have built up.

In love for the opposite sex we have this same relationship. You cannot love in a genuine realistic deep way physically until there has been a soul attachment to that individual. Once there is a soul love, then the physical love follows and can be expressed. The inner quality has to be there first before the outer quality can come to the forefront. This is the same thing in giving. Until there is a love for the Lord on the basis of knowing His Word and responding to it within, you cannot give outwardly and thus express your love for Him.

So there are these two factors. Paul says, “I am not speaking as a command, but through the instrumentality of the diligent application of others, testing to reveal the genuineness of your love.” So here’s the principle which is taught in this verse: Grace giving is a test of the genuineness of one’s love for God. Grace giving will reveal your affection for God. Grace giving is love giving. It is not law giving or emotional giving.

**Grace**

Then there’s another principle in verse 9. He goes on: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: “For” introduces the reason for sacrificial giving. “Ye know:” This word again is a significant word in the Greek: “ginosko.” This means “to know” but it means “to know as the result of an experience.” There’s another word “oida” which means “to know as a result of information that you have received,” and thinking a thing through. “Ginosko” is what you get by experience, and the experience here is external through the hearing of doctrine concerning the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The experience here is also internal in that it has the reality of personal salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul says that you know something in two ways: by an external way, which is learning doctrine; and, secondly, by an internal way, which is your salvation reality in Jesus Christ. Continual understanding is actively secured as we learn the Word. That understanding is internal and it has external expression.

Now what has he learned? That you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That Greek word for “grace” is our old friend “charis.” This is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sinners as the supreme example of grace giving. It’s an expression of unmerited spontaneous love. Sacrificial giving is the very essence of divine grace. Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has made us rich. God in grace has made us rich. How has He done this?

Well, it is the grace of God that provided you and me with a priesthood under which we give. It is God who has provided us the money to give. It is God who has given us the means to learn doctrine to guide that giving. Grace functions on the basis of who and what God is, not on who and what we are or what we do. That’s the great thing about grace. What God has provided for us can never be spoiled because it depends only on Him. Grace makes a believer into the image of Jesus Christ. We call this positional sanctification. We are in Christ. We call this experiential sanctification. That’s our life now that’s building a spiritual maturity structure in the soul. We call this ultimate sanctification when we have our resurrection body and the old sin nature is removed. Grace does that for us. Grace brings maximum love of God to the believer—God’s maximum love through the cross.

The Christian faces the hazards of being disoriented to grace and of reverting to legalism in his giving. That’s why we have to understand that God functions under grace, and what grace is. God waits to pour out his grace blessing on the Christian who is oriented to doctrine. A lot of blessing that could be ours is missed because we just aren’t oriented through the Word to His thinking. Grace carries the believer through suffering and through the pressures of life. Those problems you meet: God has a provision for them. Grace is God’s perfect plan. He has provided this for you and me as our way of life. Grace orientation is the source of all of our genuine bonafide giving. Pride is the source of human giving.

So it says, “Ye know the grace…” and all that his connotes of God’s plan and provision, “… of our Lord Jesus Christ…,” His full name, the full title of the God man, “… that though He was rich…” How was He rich? It literally says, “He being rich,” indicating His absolute status. We have a Greek work here, the verb “eimi,” and this is a word of absolute status. “Eimi” tells you something that is absolutely true—the status about Jesus Christ in eternity past. We’re told as in John 17:5 that He shared with the Father the glory of God. There was never a time when Jesus Christ as God was not rich. This word “rich” is the Greek word “plousios” from which we get our word “plutocrat.” “Plousios” means “wealthy” or “rich.” Jesus Christ was very rich. He was the second person of the Trinity, and all that that connoted. He is the first begotten before every creature. He was the Creator of all that is visible and invisible. He is the sustainer of the universe, both by position and by what He did. He is very very rich.

Now this phrase clearly indicates that Jesus Christ existed before He came in His human body. Out there in eternity past, the Son of God was very rich. This person who was so very rich yet “for your sakes,” which means “on account of you all” (this connotes substitution), He took on himself a poverty in the form of the cross. This word is placed first in this particular clause, for emphasis. “For your sakes,” with you personally in mind, he took upon Himself a poverty in spite of His spiritual wealth. He became poor. The Greek word for “poor” is “ptocheuo.” This word means not only to be poor. It means to be downright destitute. It’s an abject poverty. Jesus Christ in eternity past, when He left heaven’s glory, came in human form in the incarnation, and reduced Himself to poverty by setting aside His glory and coming as a man. The ultimate point of poverty was that three hours that He hung on the cross when the sins of the world were poured out upon Him, and He died spiritually. This impoverishment is what Philippians 2:6-8 is describing, when Paul says, “Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

This describes the poverty, the downright abject poverty, to which Jesus Christ came. This is in the active voice which means that He did it voluntarily. He took this upon Himself. The impeccable person gave Himself on the cross for the sins of the world. Now this is an illustration of grace giving. That’s what He’s doing here. He’s saying that Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of grace giving. The reality of this one who, with all of His divine attributes, took the position where He was despised, persecuted, and crucified as a man.

So Paul says, “Now you know, from the experience of study, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that because of you all He became poor, being wealthy.” Now what was the point of this? “That ye through His poverty…” That you all (the Corinthians), through His poverty (and again it uses a noun from this same Greek verb)—by means of His poverty (and the word “His” is emphasized—that One’s poverty—that particular person of whom you’ve been speaking, contrasting with us), that we might be rich (“plouteo”). “Plouteo” connotes all the spiritual wealth that was Christ’s and now it’s ours (John 17:22). The whole plan of God is the riches of His grace to us in salvation and the Christian life. Since grace is God’s riches to us through Christ, His plan is to deal with us in grace, and our giving must be in grace. We must be motivated by the things that motivate God. His love expresses itself in sacrificial giving. That’s why Christ is the example in giving. There are no pressures in giving. It’s a free expression of love.

Now that makes sense. Obviously you can’t command somebody’s love. You can’t put pressures in love. If you and I are going to walk up to these offering boxes and say, “Now I’m going up here to express my love,” we can’t walk up to that offering box and see somebody put up a sign that says, “Every Berean a tither.” Immediately somebody has put pressure and demand upon us and has frustrated our being able to love. This is like some woman going to her husband or her boyfriend and saying, “Now I want you to understand that I want you really to love me today—really deep affection,” as if she could command that kind of a response. There is no pressure in giving if it is to be a free expression of love.

So doctrine in our minds is going to enable us to love God and to respond with grace giving. Grace giving is giving freely, but this does not mean that because Christ gave and made Himself poor so that we could become rich spiritually, that we should make ourselves poor materially. That isn’t what He is saying. You don’t have to give away all of your money and then wait upon the Lord to take care of you. What He is asking you is to recognize that everything you have belongs to the Lord, and you’re using it accordingly. In other words, you’re operating on God’s credit card.

When somebody takes you out to the restaurant to eat and they hand you the menu, the normal reaction of most people is, “I’m a guest here. Somebody else is paying for this, and even if they say, ‘anything you want,’” you don’t order the lobster. You kind of stay over toward the hamburger side. Now if they want to grab the menu and say, “You must have lobster,” that’s something else. That’s acting in freewill and love. It’s the same thing with God. You’re operating on His credit card.

Once in a while I see somebody go up to someone and say, “Now I want you to do this, and here’s my credit card. Just charge it.” I never had anybody do that to me, but I have seen other people have this experience, and I’ve always envied them. But if you had somebody’s credit card, you could have a blast. Oh you might exercise certain restraints and say, “Well, wait a minute. He’s going to have to pay for this so I will act accordingly.” That’s what God expects of us. We’re operating on His credit card. It’s His money. He doesn’t expect you to give it all away. He doesn’t expect you to do without the necessities of life, or the reasonable comforts.

Don’t come up after the service and say, “Well what if I have this bill to pay, and after I pay it I don’t have any offering to give?” Well, pay your bill. Now you might want to ask yourself, “Should I have incurred that much expense that I can’t give?” But once you’ve incurred, the answer is that you pay your bill. Don’t sit around saying, “Well, I’m going to give it to the Lord and let other people wait.” Grace giving doesn’t mean you give it all away. It doesn’t mean you deprive yourself of the things that are right and necessary. It just means you remember whose money you’re dealing with.

So if grace giving is love giving, it has to be done the way love sometimes has to be done—in private. There are private aspects of love, and our giving, if it’s to be a love gift has to have that privacy aspect. This word “plouteo” here is in the aorist tense—all the grace provision of God to us. He has made us rich from salvation to eternity. The believer is active voice. He’s the recipient of these grace riches at the point of his deciding to believe in Jesus Christ. However, it is in what is called the subjunctive mood means “potential.” It may be or it may not be. Now it’s up to you as to whether you are going to be made rich. Jesus Christ has made the provision. He has handed you the credit card. All of the riches and spiritual blessings of heaven have been laid at your disposal. It’s yours. You’ve got it, but the question is whether you will receive it. It’s like the Jews who were given the land. Because they were doctrinally disoriented in their souls, because they had no spiritual maturity structures, they weren’t able to rise up and take the land, so it was lost to them. The point is: are you able to enter into what God has provided? The thing that determines that is how much you know about Him—how much doctrine there is in the directive side of your mind so that you may be led into responding to what He has provided.

Do you see why it is important to read the Bible, to study the Word, to be here where somebody can explain a few things to you? We learn so little. We really ought to be doing this every night of the week, not just on weekends. You ought to be doing it some way, with tapes or some other way every day because as you progress in this Word, and I don’t care how long you’ve been a Christian, you haven’t gone far enough. Every step you take will lead you more deeply into the riches that Jesus Christ came to give you.

Paul says, “Now you know from the experience of study, the grace system of perception, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being wealthy in his pre-incarnate state, because of you all became poor, at the incarnation and the cross, that you all, by means of His poverty, might become rich in His grace provisions.

So here’s the principle which is taught in verse 9: Grace giving is supremely illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9). His giving was sacrificial to enrich others. His giving was motivated by love. His giving was in grace with no strings attached. His giving was voluntary, and His giving has a personal intimate private aspect that is just between you and the Lord.

We’ve seen two principles here. Grace giving is a test of the genuineness of your love for God. Grace giving is supremely illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. May we follow His example.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971