**PP Generous Hearts and Open Hands**

**Part 3-The *grace* of generosity 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 Pew Bible p. 967 2/27-28**

The clearest biblical teaching on Christian generosity can be found in **2 Corinthians 8-9**

Corinth sat on a 4 mile strip of land with the sea on either side, and ships would offload cargo on

one side, which would be transported across the isthmus to be loaded onto waiting ships,

saving captains from a long, dangerous voyage around the Peloponnese

This made Corinth a commercial success, and being the capital city of Achaia, the city

population grew to peak at over ¼ million people

The biennial Isthmus games took place in Corinth, second only to the Olympics

There was an 18,000 seat theater, a 3,000 seat concert hall, temples to Greek and Roman gods

Trade, tourism, pleasure, and every religion on the planet were woven together in Corinth

making it one of the most prosperous, diverse and divisive cities of the 1st century world

Into this city came the Apostle Paul with his mission team of Timothy and Silas, and together

 with husband and wife Aquila and Priscilla, they established a church

But this church rapidly assimilated its culture to itself become prosperous, diverse, and divisive

A few years later Paul paid a visit and soon after wrote the painful letter of **1 Corinthians**,

spurring most of the church back to Christ

In that letter, the church had begun to take up an offering for the poor saints in the mother church

at Jerusalem, but they had not completed this gift

A year later, Paul again wrote to them and we are about to study his urging to generously give

**PP** Read **2 Corinthians 8:1-7**

**PP 1-The motivation of the generous Christian**

**PP *“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the***

***churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and***

***their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”* 8:1-2**

The ***‘churches of Macedonia’*** were the churches at Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica

Macedonia was in northern Greece, at one time the kingdom of Alexander the Great until the

Romans conquered them, ravaging the people of the area

The Christians there were in financial hardship from intense was the persecution against them

These believers were in ***‘a severe test of affliction’***

**PP *‘affliction’*** is a word used for pressure that described the crushing of grapes

Their crushing affliction was a severe test on their faith for they were being choked by poverty

which Paul described as **PP *‘extreme’***, a compound Greek word meaning extremely

deep, or rock bottom, the greek work for a bathysphere, a deep diving ocean vehicle

They were as poor as they could get!

Yet, God had poured His grace into their hearts and while they had almost no possessions or

monies, they had ***‘abundance of joy’***

I saw in Haiti, Africa and Mexico, incredible joy among the poorest people I ever met

Some of the unhappiest people I have counseled are those with the greatest means in this life

You can have money and be happy, but if money has you, it will leave you joyless!

The means of their joy and motivation of their generosity was the ***‘grace of God’***

God’s grace in the believer’s life is the truth that we are not saved on our merit, not because we

earned it, but because God chose to set His love on you

That grace is made possible because Jesus died in our place, taking on Himself the judgment we

deserved, the penalty of death we should have had because our rebellions sins

Christian, when you believed in Jesus, God recreated you, giving you a new heart with new

desires, new motivations, new loves

He pulled your old, sinful and dead nature out of you and made you alive to Him

Some report seeing color for the first time, noticing life all around them when they got saved

You are made alive to God in Christ Jesus, He graciously blesses you with all you need

The grace of God persuades you that every dollar you have, every shirt in your closet, every raise

at work, are expressions of God’s favor to you, not because you earned or deserved it, but

because He loves to bless His children and through His children, bless others

When you truly understand that, and you come out of a job interview and you get the job, you

don’t think it’s because you nailed it and impressed the boss, but that God is giving you His faithful love and favor

You will find that it is not difficult anymore to give **PP *‘according to [your] means…and***

***beyond [your] means, of [your] own accord’* 8:3**

You will be utterly convinced that **PP** *“God's work done in God's way will never lack God's*

*supply.”*Hudson Taylor

You will believe with the Apostle Paul that **PP *‘God will supply every need of yours according***

***to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.’* Philippians 4:19**

And you will be able to open your hands on your money and possessions, and give generously

**PP 2-The devotion of the generous Christian**

**PP *“they gave themselves first to the Lord “* 8:5**

50% of the global extreme poor are children, 90% of them from sub-saharan Africa and South

Asia and these numbers have risen 16% in the past decade

America is not exempt from poverty as 37.9 million people in 2022 were impoverished

In the DRC, 30% of children die before 2 years old, 50% before 5 and if they survive into

adulthood, they usually make it to the 60s

The churches at Macedonia were poverty stricken, yet abundantly joyful and they begged Paul to

have the opportunity to give and help the poor saints in Jerusalem

I can imagine that he was telling them they didn’t need to give, yet they pleaded to give

They didn’t give from surplus nor was it a wrestling match to unclench their fingers and give

Do you give generously **PP** ***‘beyond [your] means’* 8:3**

That is what sacrificial giving is, but for many of us, we give some of our excess and while it

may be a slight imposition, it does not infringe on our ability to maintain the lifestyle

we want

**PP Chart[[1]](#footnote-0)** We may believe that 10% is God’s and give it away obediently and live off 90%

But grace-motivated generosity knows 100% belongs to God, and He has complete authority to

do with it what He wants

**PP *“Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with***

***all that is in it.”* Deuteronomy 10:14**

**PP *“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it.”* Psalm 24:1 NLT2**

**PP *“For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.”* Psalm 50:10**

Years ago, a friend let me borrow their Harley Davidson motorcycle for a couple months

Imagine if he came to me to get it back, and I told him sorry, but I needed the money and sold it

He would be understandably upset because I had no right to do that, it belonged to him

If we applied this same truth to all of our possessions and monies-*that they all belong to God*-

how would that change the way we managed it?

Denise and I had some marriage advice to pick an amount that neither of us can spend beyond

until or unless we agreed together

We took that advice and chose the amount at $20, and 34 years later, we raised it to $25

Christian, what if you agreed to make no discretionary purchases without going to God in prayer

with this prayer: *God, this is your money and You’ve lent it to me for my family’s needs,*

*and for me to give generously to your Kingdom and the poor and needy. Are you okay if I*

*use some to go on this vacation, or buy what I am looking at?*

We accidentally left our garage door open, and someone went in and stole all my cordless tools

I bought some tools to replace them, but I didn’t want that to happen again so I began to look for

a metal locking cabinet, looking at FB marketplace and local stores

They are expensive, and though I could afford to buy one, I couldn’t find the peace to spend that

much money on one, so I kept asking God to provide one at a good price

At this time, we had a small house fire, and no fire extinguishers, so I went to Lowe’s to buy an

extinguisher, and saw that they had metal locking cabinets on clearance, but none left

I went to another Lowe’s to see if they had any, and they were out too, but when I asked the

lowe’s employee if they any in back, she looked and noticed one left on the top rack

I asked her how much it was and it was 75% off the original price

God cares how we spend His money, and when we seek agreement with Him for a purchase, He

will provide in His time and in His way!

Grace motivates our generosity, and no one will be more motivated to be generous than one who

surrenders all they have to God: **PP *‘they gave themselves first to the Lord’* 8:5a**

***‘First’*** comes from a Greek word for priority, not timing: *Keep first things first*

Most importantly they gave themselves to the Lord, the highest expression of worship possible

**PP** *We are yours Lord, and all we have is yours and You have the rights to us and our monies*

The only power that sets us free from a closed hand over our money is the gospel of grace

To see by faith the **PP *“grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your***

***sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich”* (8:9)** is to be set

free from an ownership mentality and cheerfully give

It is this worship that forms in us such a trusting devotion to God that we can willingly and

joyfully affirm His ownership of all we have and open our hands to His purposes

**PP 3-The dedication of the generous Chrsitian**

First, the poor Macedonian churches devoted themselves to Jesus, but then they dedicated what

they had to others

***‘they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”* 8:5b**

God had been so rich to them in giving them His grace, and He owned all they had, and they

trusted in Him to help them give despite their poverty

They dedicated themselves and their monies to Paul, Timothy and Titus for the poor in Jerusalem

Paul then turns to the Corinthian believers, **PP *“see that you excel in this act of grace also.”* 8:7**

Church, the timeless Word of God is now directed to us, giving us the same admonition

It begins with the mindset that we are all, verse 1, ***‘brethren’***...family, even around the world

That mindset proceeds to the truth that we are stewards of God’s resources

**PP** *‘When the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this*

*world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward.”* John Wesley

We become convinced that of all people, the Christian ought to be the most generous as we have

received the riches of God’s grace

His grace moves in our hearts to trust Him and open our hands and give generously as He directs

To come to Him and find agreement *before* we use His resources, realizing that He provides for

us and our families, and through us supplying what is needed for His kingdom and the

poor and needy of the world

Is this your attitude toward your money and possessions?

If not, I ask you to repent of your ownership, proprietor attitude and generously open your hands

to the kingdom of God and those in need

**PP** Research carefully and give generously:

Bright Hope Pregnancy Support Center

Restoring Hope Ministries

Tim Tebow Foundation

EFCA ReachGlobal

Compassion.com

Others like Bloom, our own Riverside and Children’s ministry, and many more

**PP** When you give generously, motivated by grace, devoted to God and committed to brothers

and sisters in Christ around the world, you will have an abundance of joy

1. Vision2 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)