

The Grace of Giving

Feb 10, 2013

2012 Financial Summary

- Show Tithe-Offering-Expense-Giving Summary
- Not including pass through giving (example mission trips to Guatemala)
- Not including church remodel project (last year \$55K that came from New Beginnings)
- Thanks for your giving (Guatemala)

How People Give At ACC - long ago we decided to NOT take up offerings but to teach people about the grace of giving and about tithes and offerings

- Boxes at the back
- Show website and online giving option

The Grace of Giving

We want you to Know about this Grace of Giving (vs 1) describe the grace in their lives

2Co 8:1-12

We want you to Excel in this Grace of Giving (vs 7) - How does Paul urge us to excel

What is Grace?

Strong's G5485 Grace = The divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life;

EXAMPLE: I needed a car, someone sold me a car for \$300...I could not scrape the money together to pay him...was feeling guilty...At church I first heard about tithing - I had been a Christian 10 weeks. We lived paycheck to paycheck...(the Tithe is Holy to the LORD) I put my entire paycheck in the box. We came home from church that night, there was an envelope under our door - To Kirk and Ruth from Jesus - inside was \$300. This forever cemented in my heart something about giving, and something about The LORD seeing, and something about how we can never outgive Him...something about my ability to meet my need could never be a match for His plan to care for me.

We Want You To Know About the Grace at Macedonia

2Co 8:1 - And now, brothers and sisters, **we want you to know** about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

- There is something going on in the Macedonian churches that you need to hear
- What God does in others can inspire us

How was this grace expressed in their lives?

2Co 8:2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

Notice the Adjectives and Adverbs throughout to give a stronger emphasis to what is going on
FIRST: Because of God's Grace their VERY SEVERE TRIAL could not overpower their OVERFLOWING joy

2Co 8:2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy

1. It is hard to give when you are consumed by your own trials
2. SEVERE trial and OVERFLOWING joy don't seem to go together
3. OVERFLOWING JOY in the midst of VERY SEVERE TRIALS is the Grace of God

SECOND: RICH Generosity even in the midst of EXTREME Poverty

2Co 8:2 and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

1. We often don't think that people in poverty can give
2. EXTREME poverty and RICH generosity don't seem to go together
3. But Divine Influence causes those in EXTREME Poverty to have RICH Generosity

EXAMPLE: the Widows 2 mites

(Mark 12:41-44 NIV) Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. {42} But a **poor widow** came and put in **two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.** {43} Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put **more into the treasury than all the others.** {44} They all gave out of their wealth; but **she, [gave] out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."**

- She was **poor** - gift is insignificant (a fraction of a penny)
- Jesus NOTICED and COMMENTED ... she gave MORE than the others
- She GAVE out of her POVERTY -
- She gave ALL (she could have kept 1 of the 2 coins)
- Here giving is a mark of faith - that God would provide even after these coins were gone

EXAMPLE: I was a busboy for a while - living on tips - (I always paid tithe on every tip)

THIRD: They gave as much as they were able...then went BEYOND their ability

2Co 8:3 (a) For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

1. Many have difficulty giving as much as we are able - we give the minimum
2. But to go BEYOND THEIR ABILITY was the grace of God in their lives

EXAMPLE: early 80's a recession - 60% of the people in the church were out of work...there was a fear beginning to creep in that was almost tangible. We went into an elder's meeting...we had a bookkeeper who was very numbers conscious...(a good thing) but I felt the LORD told me to double our mission giving - we did and the fear began to lift from the church - the LORD sustained us all

FOURTH: Pleaded for the PRIVILEGE of sharing in giving

2Co 8:3(b)- 4 Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

1. They URGENTLY PLEADED for the opportunity to share
2. They considered it a PRIVILEGE to be able to give - this is Divine Influence

FIFTH: They GAVE THEMSELVES first to the LORD and then by the will of God to us

2Co 8:5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

1. If we don't give ourselves FIRST - we will never give as He calls us to Give
2. Giving is a matter of the heart - where your treasure is your heart will be
3. Repentance touches heart re: finances - John Baptist - (2 shirts or food give; tax collector - don't take more, soldier, be content with wages) Zacchaeus - 1/2 my goods

Now he is urging the Corinthians to EXCEL in the Grace of Giving

2Co 8:6-7 So we **urged** Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 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.**

He URGES them to EXCEL in giving and it looks like a SPIRITUAL exercise

1. We often think of excelling in faith, speech and knowledge...but seldom does that extend to the heart to EXCEL in the grace of GIVING - The Grace of Giving is a spiritual exercise.

To Excel to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess, be superfluous; also (transitively) to cause to superabound or excel:(over and above).

How Does He Urge Them to Excel?

FIRST: He says their giving is a test of the SINCERITY OF THEIR LOVE

2Co 8:8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

SECOND: He puts forth Jesus Christ as an example - Nature of God is to GIVE

2Co 8:9 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.

THIRD: He moves them beyond good intentions to taking action - Just Do It

2Co 8:10 - 11(a) And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it,

FOURTH: He urges them to give based on their Means and Willingness

2Co 8:11 (b)-12 according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

1. This is not a loophole for not giving - he just expressed the Grace of God about giving out of poverty, giving beyond their ability - giving with joy - the LORD is trying to stretch us - we use this scripture to restrict us. "I don't really have it"
2. **IF THE WILLINGNESS is there** - children of Israel - tabernacle of Moses - those with a willing heart gave - they gave so much that they had to tell them to stop

Stepping Into the The Grace of Giving

Practical Considerations as I seek to Excel in the Grace of Giving 2 Co 9:6-15

FIRST: Remember THIS - We reap what we sow

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

SECOND: REMEMBER THIS God Loves a Cheerful Giver - giving a matter of the heart

2Co 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- If you are giving grudgingly
- If you are giving out of necessity
- They answer is not to stop - the answer is ask for a changed heart
- **GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER**

THIRD: Remember This: God is Able to bless you abundantly giving is a matter of faith

2Co 9:8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2Co 9:9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."

EXAMPLE The Tithe is holy to the LORD

Testimony - We did not have medical insurance - Ruth had to have an operation on her leg - we could not afford to pay for it (around \$10,000 bill)...we planned to pay a small amount each month. One day we received a letter from a Pastor friend of mine in NJ - somehow through a mutual friend he heard about our situation, and He took up an offering in his church. (They sent us a check for \$11,000 which paid the entire hospital bill)

FOURTH: Giving Begins and Ends with GOD - He gives so we can be generous so thanksgiving goes back to him.

2Co 9:10-14 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for His Unspeakable Gift.

How to know if I need this Grace of Giving in my life

1. I've lost my joy through the various trials I have encountered
2. I don't give because I am poor
3. I don't give because I have lost my job
4. I don't give because I have very little income
5. I don't give because I am cranky

6. I don't give because I am selfish
5. I don't give what I am able - or seek to go beyond that - I give as little as I can
 Pro 11:24-26 One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.
6. I consider giving an obligation, and have lost the perspective that it is a privilege to give - there is no joy in my giving - There is no joy in my heart as I even consider the thought of giving
7. Giving is an issue of the heart - If He does not have my heart - I will not be able to give in the manner of which I am speaking

How Does This Fit with Tithes and Offerings

The tithe is 10% of our income...everything comes from God and belongs to God - He asks for 10% back...Some would say that tithing was part of the Old Testament law and no longer in effect. Actually tithing has been practiced before, during and after the law.

1. BEFORE the Law (Gen 14:20 & Gen 28:22)
2. DURING the time of the Law (Lev 27:30-32)
3. Jesus affirmed that tithing was valid (Matt 23:23)
4. In the New Testament Church (AFTER the law) (1 Cor 9:7-14) Paul taught tithing (which was the means of supporting the priests in the OT) as a valid comparison of how to provide for those who are ministers in the NT church.

The tithe is a great starting point for giving, but by no means does it mean we should never give more than that. There were times that people gave more:

- a. 100% (Acts 4:32-35) - NT church
- b. 50% (Luke 19:8) - Zacchaeus
- c. 100% (Mark 12:42-44) - the widow
- d. Even in the midst of extreme poverty they gave generously (2 Cor 8:1-2)

When the Grace of Giving is in our life, we won't fear tithing as too much of an investment, instead we will seek for the privilege to give - even beyond our ability, even in our poverty.

For those who have never given a tithe, it is a great starting point to begin to exercise your faith. God Actually invites us to test Him in our giving of the tithe. (Mal 3:11 & Prov 3:9-10)

The tithe is holy to the LORD.