

Principles of Giving, part 2 (2 Corinthians 8–9)

Because the world will emphasize personal security and prosperity, it is important to be reminded of the biblical virtue of generous, grace-driven giving. Distinct characteristics mark the believer who gives by the grace of God and such giving produces results serving God's purposes.

I. Characteristics of the grace-driven giver.

1. *Grace-driven givers give generously* (8:2).

"Generosity" concerns not the absolute quantity given, but the quantity relative to one's possessions and the attitude in which it is given. The generosity of the Macedonian believers grew out of their characteristic, Spirit-given joy (cf. 1 Thess. 1:6) and out of their poverty. God can use poverty to lessen the temptation to trust in riches, to increase trust in Him (cf. Prov 30:7–9).

Because of God's provision and standard of generosity, your ability to be generous is not limited by a lack of wealth.

2. *Grace-driven givers give sacrificially* (8:3, 12–15).

"Normal" giving (not sacrificial) is according to one's ability, that is, what one possesses. God declares it to be fair sharing, when the one who has abundance shares with the one in need. Then when the once needy has abundance, that one can share.

Sacrificial giving is beyond one's ability. The Macedonians probably gave the little that they might have set aside for future needs to alleviate the immediate need of the Jerusalem brethren. This is true sacrificial giving, giving to the extent of personal hurt or disadvantage.

3. *Grace-driven givers give freely* (8:3, 5; 9:5, 7).

Paul had not encouraged the Macedonians to give in this fashion. It was beyond his expectations. It was God who worked in their hearts, so Paul could assure them that God would also meet their needs (cf. Philippians 4:19).

The New Testament does not demand the tithe of the Mosaic law. (The multiple tithings which were required actually made it more than 10%.) But if a believer is wanting earnestly to give regularly, the tithe (10%) is a good place to start. Beware, however, of limiting your giving to a percentage when God gives you abundance.

4. *Grace-driven givers give eagerly* (8:4; 9:7).

The Macedonian believers gave eagerly, pleading to be allowed to give. Paul instructed the Corinthians that they should not be reluctant to give, i.e., they should be eager.

When God by His grace works in your hearts, there will be an eagerness to give to true needs.

5. *Grace-driven givers give in devotion to God* (8:5).

The Macedonian believers had first given themselves to the Lord and to the apostolic team as messengers of the Lord (cf. 1 Thess 2:13; Phil 4:15). Such dedication reveals a changed perspective. They saw that all which they had belonged to the Lord, which freed them to give to the needs which the Lord revealed to them and which He moved them to help alleviate. Grace-driven giving happens with those whose hearts and lives are given to the Lord.

II. Results of grace-driven giving.

1. *The giver is enriched* (8:10; 9:11).

Give and God enables to give more and He blesses (cf. Acts 20:35). You receive in proportion to how you give (9:6). You get back what you invest in. If you "invest" by being selfish, your investment does not return spiritual riches (Galatians 6:7–8).

2. *The receiver is supplied* (8:24; 9:12–14).

The one receiving is blessed with material supply, but also spiritually. They are encouraged to see God's provision, to give Him thanks, and to intercede for those giving. (This is different than the nonbeliever, who when helped often sees only the human agent of God.)

3. *God is glorified.*

God is glorified by believers through the giving by revealing His grace. So believers should give thanks for that provision, for divine working in hearts, and for those willing to so follow Christ. Seeing that grace also reminds us of the greater work of grace in God giving His Son, an "inexpressible gift" (9:15; cf. Romans 8:32).

You are stewards of all which you have – possessions, abilities, family, opportunities, etc. Use them for God's glory and His purposes. Remember His great gift to you as a believer in Christ, so that you can give more generously, sacrificially, freely, eagerly, and devotedly.