

GRACE GIVING

A Devotional Prayer Guide on the Subject of Financial Stewardship

Thank you for taking the time to read through these devotional writings and seeking the Lord in prayer. My prayer is that these written pieces encourage and challenge us in the area of financial stewardship. Each week there will be two devotional writings for you to read and use to assist you in your individual prayer time. May the Lord be honored, and the church built up, and may you be blessed.

Prayer Time #1 The Privilege of Giving

Focal Passage: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Christians are most privileged people. To be saved from sin by the sacrifice of Christ and to enjoy fellowship with the Lord is the greatest privilege of all. The resulting privileges that accompany salvation are virtually impossible to count. The purpose of this devotional is to encourage prayer. Prayer is a tremendous privilege for the believer. Through the intercession of the Son and the help of the Holy Spirit, the child of God has direct access to their Father in Heaven. The Lord loves to commune intimately with His children, and prayer provides that privilege.

The Philippian Church was the apple of the Apostle Paul's eye. He dearly loved that church; it was the first church the Lord used him to plant in Europe. The Philippian saints were extremely generous and caring toward Paul's personal needs. He viewed them as his partners in the Gospel (Phil. 1:3). When writing the Corinthians to instruct and encourage them on the matter of giving of finances, Paul held the Philippian Church up as an example. The words in 2 Corinthians 8 show the Philippians had great joy in being able to give toward the Lord's work.

Paul's inspired words here reveal several wonderful realities which we will consider in this and other devotional writings. Today, please see the connection between the grace of God and the joy the Philippians had in their giving. Grace is unmerited favor. The Philippians realized they were beneficiaries of God's grace in Christ, and the result was their overflowing joy in giving toward the work of the Lord.

Note in the passage the words "great ordeal of affliction," and "deep poverty," but also words like "abundance of joy" and "overflowed in the wealth of their liberality." How could anyone have joy when they are stressed to the max regarding their daily needs? Those whom God graciously moves to be generous in their giving. The grace of God blesses Christians with the privilege of giving and great joy as they do so!

Christians have received God's grace and should likewise have joy in giving. Christians are privileged to be able to contribute toward the Lord's work. Local churches are privileged to do the work of the ministry. Financial contributions support that work. Ultimately, we give to the Lord first

and foremost, and that is truly a privilege. The Lord has provided this great salvation, and He provides all that is necessary to carry out His Great Commission. Our privilege is taking what He provides us, and joyfully contributing back to the Lord through His church.

As you pray today, be mindful of the privilege you've received to be able to contribute to the Lord's work through His church. The Philippians had joy in their daily lives, and it is clear from this passage that their joy was due in part to their recognition of the privilege of giving. May your season of prayer today be blessed.

Suggestions for your prayer time:

- Praise the Lord for His grace in saving you from your sin through Christ.
- Offer up praise to God for all the privileges you have to be able to give toward the work of the Lord.
- Ask the Lord to give you joy in your giving.
- Seek the Lord's grace to be able to give when you are financially stretched.
- If needed, ask the Lord to challenge you for your lack of joy in giving.
- Ask the Lord to give you a sacrificial heart.
- Meditate upon the focal passage and ask the Lord to reveal areas of stewardship you may need to grow in.