

Intro: Welcome to Thurs Night Alive. If you are a visitor here or just joining us from our Sunday Service for the first time, we welcome you and are excited you're here with us. TNA is TRC's midweek b-i-b-l-e study! This is our midweek service which we label a bible study because of it's ch by ch verse by verse approach to studying the bible. But the reason I bring this up is because of where we are at in tonight's study.

Because we are going Ch by Ch , verse by verse through the bible we are in a systematic type of a study. Meaning we are systematically going from the start of one book through to the end and where we left off of the week prior we start back up on the next. There is no skipping areas that are tough to teach on or uncomfortable for others to deal with; we tackle it all, in the timeline God has chosen in His sovereignty to bring us across.

I say that because last week we left off at the end of Ch 7 and so tonight we begin Ch 8. “Ok what’s the big deal Wens?” Well, in these next 2 Chapters Paul will be talking about giving. Ironically, this Sunday’s service, if you were there, started our new series on money “More Money More Problems”. Pastor teaches us on money every year about this time and it’s been such a blessing in many of our lives, to talk about money not just giving but how God feels about how we not only view money but handle that which He’s allowed us to steward.

Many people have a hard time with the topic of giving and the church. *“Here they go again, talking about money..... all the church wants is your money!” “In knew it was going to come sometime.”* Many of us have seen some supposedly strong Christian pillars take the topic of money and abuse it and the church by selfish greedy gain that doesn’t honor the Lord and I believe at some time will be judged. Know this.... We didn’t plan this bible study to be perfectly timed with Sunday’s message and so I think the Lord is really wanting us to learn something about giving and finances and the heart of

giving. Despite what you and I have seen by others the Lord want's to get through to us truth about this topic. If we are willing to receive.

One of these truths I believe God would want us to get ahold of is the fact that giving, at the heart of it, is an act of the grace of God in our lives. That's what Paul will be revealing in these next 2 Chapters. I've entitled these next two Chapters "**Grace In Giving**" and I'll be splitting it up into 3 parts.

***** **Pt 1 Ch 8:1-15 "Preparing The Hearts"**

Pt 2 Ch 8:16-9:5 "Proven, Prepared Vessels"

Pt 3 Ch 9:6-15 "Preparing The Gift"

- ***** Back to where we are in scripture tonight. To get an idea of where the city if Corinth was at I brought a map.
 - The cities of Athens and Corinth were in the lower regions of Greece. (Financial hub) They were heavily populated and were better off financially then those in Macedonia (Thessalonica ;Philippi).
 - Philippi Thessalonica struggling churches.
 - It's interesting that when Paul wrote the church in Philippi, from prison by the way, his main message to them was the Joy In Christ. Even though many of them were living in poverty. And that the joy of Christ is not related to how much money you have or things you own.
 - Though they were a struggling church living in an impoverished area where good jobs were hard to find they were a giving church. Matter fact when Paul wrote them in Philippians 4 15 (read passage)
 - Paul told them that the Lord shall supply all their need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Because of their hearts in giving. Even though they were poor
 - Like the woman who put in two mites. (This woman gave more because they all put in out of their abundance – her out of her poverty.

- As Paul was “encouraged by” the Philippians in their giving even though they were poor; “he now” has to encourage the “Corinthians” to be givers even though they are better off.
- Even worse off then the Macedonians were the saints in Jerusalem. They were experiencing tremendous persecution. By the Romans and the Jews. Many lost their jobs their dealings in the temple and market places, they were quickly becoming poor. Remember in Acts 4 they began to share in all things together, but those things began to deplete quickly and they began to be in great need.
- Paul decided to take up a collection from the Gentiles.
 - A perfect way to bridge the gap.
 - He looked at it as “You reaped the benefits of their God and faith—why not allow them to reap from your abundance financially”
 - So he’s going around the churches he already started and taking up a collection for the believers in Jerusalem.
- This is where we pick up in Ch 8-9 where Paul begins to talk to the Corinthians about this collection and giving in general. And to start things off in Ch 8 he uses the Macedonians as examples to stir the Corinthian hearts. (read 8:1-4)

1-9 I. GRACE BESTOWED ON MACEDONIANS

1-7 A. In The Example Of Giving

1-2 1. Notice how Paul, when he begins this section of the letter, starts things off here wanting to use those in Macedonia as examples to stir the hearts of the Corinthians, but he doesn’t just say “Oh look at those awesome givers in Philippi. Man their better than you, they are so spirit filled!”

 a. He’s quick to point out “this was an act of God’s grace” He says we want to “make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the Macedonians”

b. The focus isn't on the churches in Macedonia at all just like it wouldn't be on the Corinthians either.

i. The focus is on God's Grace.

c. When God begins to move on our hearts to give, that's an act of His grace. Not that we are so spiritual and better than others but that His grace has visited our hearts to give. **And we respond**

i. Maybe that's what was different in the Macedonians is that they responded.

2. And how liberating that was for them.... look at verse 2 "**that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality**". That in their great trial of affliction....another translation says "though they were tested by many troubles", their joy even in their poverty led to their rich sense of freedom. Their liberality!

a. Paul's saying "Look at what the Grace of God did for those in Macedonia". Even though they were impoverished and visited with much testing through trial, they found themselves freer as they became givers. They weren't tied to their stuff.

b. Their joy from salvation led to their willingness to give and because this was happening even during affliction they found what Jesus said to be true. "It is much better to give than receive" They became free of covetousness. Greed.

i. **Hands that have been made smaller, carry the blessing of less to hold on to.**

c. Douay-Rheims "*their very deep poverty hath abounded unto the riches of their simplicity.*"

3. And when you've been made free of stuff you've been made free to give. Look at verse 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. This freedom caused them to be freely willing to give.

a. I heard that it's been studied that people who have the most give the least. And that people that have the least give the more. Now, that's not true of everyone of course. But it is of the majority.

b. I personally think it's because of the same reason we see the Macedonians such great givers and it's because they know what it's like to struggle themselves.

4. When they heard about those in Jerusalem and what they were going through their hearts were so filled with a sense to help that Look what Paul says in verse 4 they were "imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" Imploring us; with urgency!

a. Basically he's saying **They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for those in Jerusalem.**

b. This is what Paul is talking about later in Ch 9:7 **"Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"**

c. Paul says "They were begging us; let us be involved" Cheerfully giving!

5. Our giving says something about our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

a. **If we give grudgingly our attitude is "I have to"** Man I gave a pledge and the church is hitting me up, so I have to give.

Or I sit next to my wife and she'll give me the stink eye, but when she's not here I don't put nothing in.

- b. If we give dutifully then our attitude is "Well we need to"** It's what we do as Christians.....
- c. If we give thankfully our attitude is "I want to"** Those in Macedonia were recipients of God's grace in salvation and so they wanted to give. (same as us)
- d. If we give cheerfully our attitude is "I Get To!"** See again 9:7 ... "for God loves a cheerful giver"
 - i. I get to be a part. To give
 - ii. Cheerful means hilarious giver.

But the only way that we become givers like this is first giving ourselves over to the Lordship Jesus Christ.

5 **B. In Giving Themselves To The Lord First**

Those beautiful Christians in Macedonia gave the greatest gift first. And that was themselves. Afterwards it was an easy thing to give their money. Basically they were telling Paul "Paul we've already given ourselves over to the Lordship of Christ, His Spirit has enabled us to submit to not only His Lordship but your apostolic authority and so you tell us what to do" If there's a need we're all in. Don't dare try to count us out!

- 1. G. Campbell Morgan** wrote : "*Contributions to the work of the Lord are only valuable as they are the gifts of those who are themselves yielded to God*"

- a.** What does he mean by that? Well, there are some who give but haven't truly given themselves over to the Lord and so those contributions may not be gifts but payment. And their eyes are on it the whole time "*I've been giving my money to the*

church let me see what my money's getting me" (here take it back) There's not value to them or the church.

b. How many of us know someone who's a giver but not necessarily a Christian. I believe there is of little value to them aswell.

The laws of giving still come back to them for God causes the sun to shine on the just and unjust. And I believe He graciously visits them for salvation but in the end if they haven't truly given themselves to the Lord they won't be able to stand on their giving in the day of Judgment.

6-8

C. Corinthians Urged To Abound In Similar Grace

So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us — see that you abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

1. Paul said "we urged Titus that he would complete this grace in you as well". Titus was Paul's associate and was the one bringing the letter so he was supposed to encourage the Corinthian Christians to actually give him the collection, then he would give it to Paul. He was supposed to make certain that they actually followed through on what they had intended to do earlier.

a. Maybe one of Paul's concerns was that the Corinthians had planned in their hearts to give but after times got tough between Paul and them maybe they were lest inclined to give to this collection. So Paul sent Titus there with the letter but to also stir them up to **"complete this grace"**

b. Complete the purpose in your heart. It's not just good that you meant to but that you follow through. Oh how the devil seeks to disrupt our vows.

7

2. **"But as you abound in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us — see that you abound in this grace also."**

a. As you grow.... Grow here too.

8

3. ***I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.***

a. ***but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.*** Or in other words Paul's saying "I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches."

b. Some may think is that right for Paul to do that. To compare churches with each other. (some churches do that, have salvation races, posting their giving's to out do each other)

I don't believe Paul is doing that because look what he says in verse 13-14.

- i. I don't want you to put yourselves in burden
- ii. if others who have less are willing to give where's your heart at?

What Paul's really calling for here ultimately is to have the same heart Jesus had when leaving the glory and riches in heaven to come to the earth humbly and poor that we would become rich.

9

D. Jesus' Grace As Ultimate Example

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

1. Paul is saying "Look at the example of our Lord"
2. The word Grace is used in a variety of ways in the NT but here it's used to describe generosity. How generous was our Lord Jesus? He

was so generous that *He gave all he had* for our sakes so that through His giving of himself we would become rich.

a. **Phil 2:5-9** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. NASB

10-15

II. PRACTICAL WORDS OF ADVICE IN GIVING

10-12

A. Follow Through On Your Previous Willingness

1. **"And in this I give advice"**

2. **It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.**

12

3. **"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have."**
God's first looking for readiness and a willing mind. Again, God does not expect us to give what we do not have. True Christian giving cannot be measured by the amount. One person might give a million dollars and yet not give enough; another may give one dollar and that's a huge sacrifice and much generosity. True giving is measured by obedience, proportion, and need, **not by amount.**
