



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 8:7-9

“Grace Giving, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

Returning this morning to 2 Corinthians, chapter 8 for the ministry of the word, and you’ll recognize, as soon as you begin reading chapter 8, that the apostle has made a significant change in the subject matter that he’s communicating to the Corinthians and now in chapters 8 and 9 will speak about the collection that is being made for the poor Christians in Jerusalem and made among those who were the churches of the Gentiles.

So the apostle has concluded the first major topic of 2 Corinthians, the ministry, which has taken him from chapter 2 in verse 14 through chapter 7 in verse 4, and then after a few words there at the end of chapter 7, he begins the discussion of the collection. So we’re going to read verse 1 through verse 7, and this is the first of a series of messages on chapters 8 and 9 under the general title of “Grace Giving.”

“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 entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, (the word is literally hoped,) but they first gave themselves to

the Lord (and incidentally that clause contains an emphasis upon the word “themselves.”) And themselves they gave to the Lord and to us by the will of God. Consequently, we urge Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, (evidently Titus had while he was in Corinth before he had met Paul in Macedonia, had reminded the Corinthians of the apostle’s desire that the churches of the Gentiles make a gift to the believers in Jerusalem in the area there and that work had begun under Titus’ sponsorship. Paul continues in verse 6,) so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. (So it’s evident that he was sending Titus back to Corinth to finish that work of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. And then in verse 7,) But just as you abound in everything, (incidentally you’ll remember in 1 Corinthians, Paul praised the Corinthian church for being behind no church in spiritual gifts, but even though they had all of the spiritual gifts that were set forth there, nevertheless, there were so many things that required apostolic counsel and many things definitely wrong that he had to write the lengthy first epistle to the Corinthians. So he’s alluding to that here when says,) but just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also, (that is, in the gifts for the saints in Jerusalem.)

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and we bow again in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours today of turning to the word of God and having the apostle again minister to us as he ministered to the Corinthians from Macedonia in the first century. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the preservation of the word God and recognize, Lord, that though the centuries have passed, the word is still active and powerful and pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and ministers to us today in 1987.

We sense, Lord, how much we need the exhortation, the comfort, the counsel of the apostles even though many, many centuries have passed. We thank Thee for this message that the apostle gave to the Corinthians, for we need it also. Enable us, Lord, by Thy grace to profit from the things that we read from the hand of our Lord’s chosen, apostle to the Gentiles, Paul of Tarsus.

And we thank Thee, Lord, for the blessings that are ours which have come with the gospel of Christ. We thank Thee for the forgiveness of our sins in the blood of Calvary’s cross. We thank Thee for justification for the gift of righteousness. We thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells us permanently. And we thank Thee also for his ministries of guidance and direction in so many ways in which we have needs.

We pray for all who may be here who have special needs, and, Lord, we commit them to Thee. We pray especially for some who are in the hospital. We ask Thy blessing upon them and upon their families. And, Lord, for others who have other needs, we ask that Thou wilt manifest Thy grace in their lives as well. And for those who have requested our prayers, we particularly remember them. Those names in listed in the calendar of concern and the problems and trials that are represented there. Bless those that minister to them and give them skill and the ability to be of help.

We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon every individual member of it who by faith have come to know Christ as their own savior. And for our country, we pray for President Reagan and others in our government. And, Lord, we ask also for our elders and our deacons here and for the members and the friends that visit us today. May we have the sense of Thy blessing upon us and give guidance and direction particularly to the elders and to the deacons as they have the oversight, as the Scriptures say, among the believing Christians. Bless the singing of the hymn that follows and the ministry of the word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Male voice] Shall we sing the hymn together? Hymn 197. Marvelous Grace of our Loving Lord.

[Message] As I mentioned in the Scripture reading, this is the first of a series of messages of the general subject of Grace Giving. We, of course, will be dealing simply with chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians, but that is our general topic. This past week, on Monday I believe it was, perhaps Tuesday, I received a telephone call from a lady in Jacksonville, Florida. She identified herself, and then she asked me if I would have a few moments to answer a few questions.

And then she began by saying that she had been a listener to the program from Believers Chapel in Jacksonville when we were on one of the stations there. She went on to say that she was extremely sorry that the Chapel’s ministry was no longer there because there were so many things that were, in her mind, at least questionable about the ministry to which they were exposed in the Jacksonville area. Then she brought up -- she said she had a few questions to ask me. And one of the questions was about Melchizadek, and so I passed that one up, but that was the second question actually that she had for me and we discussed Melchizadek. And I later called her back because I had suggested something that I wanted to be sure about. And I called her back just to tell that what I had told her was correct.

And her major topic, it turned out, was she wanted me to answer a few questions about tithing. And I thought, well, Lord, I guess you’re giving some personal interest illustration for the message this coming Sunday because the topic will be Christian giving. She then cited for me several comments that had been made by Christian ministers on the radio station, a Christian radio station that she had listened to for a good while. One of them was this: I have doubts that a person who does not tithe is a Christian. And then another one she cited was, one who does not tithe is under the condemnation of God.

Well, that started us off on a discussion of tithing, and I went on to try to point out to her so far as the New Testament was concerned, there’s no indication whatsoever that tithing is a New Testament practice.

Now, of course, I want to say now -- we’ll deal with this later on in some of the other messages, that it is possible for a Christian to tithe, but it is something that is not commanded according to the New Testament at all. It was an Old Testament income tax, and I will let it go at that and save it for dealing with later on.

But anyway we had a discussion about that and about the rather sad fact that over the Christian radio so many false ideas are propagated by well-known and, in many places, highly regarded ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And some of the men that she cited are men that I know personally, and I know are good men, but the doctrines that they occasionally propound are simply not Christian doctrine.

Money is a very important matter even in spiritual things. We think of money as having to do with economic issues, but it has very, very definite and close connection with all of the things we do as a Christian.

Now, the apostle has been talking about his ministry, and I think it’s significant that after discussing he moves into a discussion of things that touch on the Christian ministry of giving. As a matter of fact, he had already brought this up before the Corinthians because in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 in verse 1 through verse 4 he had alluded to this right at the end of that letter. The very fact, incidentally, that he brings it up right after the great doctrinal section on the resurrection of the body shows how important Paul regarded this. He said now concerning the collection for the saints as I directed the church of Galatia so do you also on the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save as he may prosper that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive whomsoever you may approve who I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. So the apostle had

already broached the subject of giving for the saints in Jerusalem. And now in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 he deals specifically with that topic.

So that indicates in itself how important the apostle regarded this. And the fact that he devoted two full chapters to it indicates that he regards this as being extremely important. In fact, he uses words that are very spiritual. He uses words like giving as a grace. You saw that as we read the very first verse. Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God. Now, he’s talking about the grace of God as manifested in the response that the Macedonians have given to the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem, not about the doctrine of saving grace but about grace as it is manifested there. In the fourth verse, he will use the word “fellowship,” in the New American Standard Bible translated “participation,” but giving is a means of fellowship that we have with others.

Now, I have often been in churches in which that term is very popular derived from the Bible. In fact, in earlier years, I can remember when I would go out and preach on the weekend in churches and the men would come to me afterwards and sometimes they would shake my hand and say thank you for the ministry of the word of God to me or to us. And as I would shake hands and take my hand back I would discover a ten-dollar bill. That was the way in which they gave. That’s a very exciting way to give particularly when you’re young and needy. And they would call that fellowship, and then at the end of weekend of meetings the elders would come to me and they frequently would give me a check, not very large in those days particularly, and they would say this is fellowship with you in the ministry of the word. They regarded themselves as participants in what I was doing, and that’s an idea they derived from the New Testament itself. The apostle uses it here in the fourth verse.

You’ll notice also that the apostle speaks of covetousness, which is idolatry. In other words, the individual who is covetous is a person who’s not simply greedy but actually he is an individual who is an idolater because in putting something like money

and material possessions before the Lord and having that become the object of his desire is to set something before the Lord God and to be guilty figuratively of idolatry.

Covetousness, which is idolatry. So one can see that the use of the money that God has given to us is very important in Paul’s eyes, and then when we think of the whole of the New Testament and remember that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of sharing as being a spiritual sacrifice, in the 16th verse of the 13th chapter of his epistle, we can see really how important it is that we handle a right the possessions that God has given to us.

Wesley, who had a very, very spiritual relationship to many of the things that have to do with our individual daily lives, more than once spoke about the temptations that money provided him. In fact, he said once, “When I have money I get rid of it as quickly as possible lest it should find a way into my heart.” Now, that’s good advice, really, for those who are tempted to let it find a way into their heart. And you may remember that Mr. Wesley had a practice in his Christian ministry in the early days of deciding how much money he could live upon and then everything above that he gave to the Lord. As the years went by, he said, as his income grew because of the wide range and outreach of his ministry, he lived by the same way in which he lived in the beginning and therefore as the years went by his giving continued to increase.

Now, someone else has said incidentally make all you can, but don’t can all you make. Perhaps some of you will understand that better than this other illustration by Mr. Wesley. But at any rate, Jesus said, If you lay your stress and trust upon money, it will fail you in the end, the mammon of unrighteousness. And so when Paul writes as he does about money, we’re not to think of this as the apostle abandoning his discussion of spiritual things. No, he’s talking about something that is very, very integral to a Christian experience and a Christian life that is fruitful.

Failure to follow the word of God here is, I think, one of the signs of the ways in which we have departed from the word of God. I frequently get, of course, appeals this

week. I got an appeal from one particular organization that told me, of course, they were in danger of having to disband, and then in the same mail I got a letter from a former student of mine who is in the country seeking to raise a number of thousands of dollars. It so happens, he said, that if he doesn’t raise these amounts of money he’ll not even be able to go home, and I know this man. I’ve been in his home. He’s a good man. He’s done good work. And the only thing that I would like to say about it is that I hate to see us departing from the principles of the word of God. And even in cases where men are good servants of the Lord but have been put in the position of being exposed to having to do this is to my mind one of the shames that pertains to the whole of us in the Christian church.

And ultimately, the propagation of the idea that we are only to give if we are solicited, we’re only to give if we are begged, and we’re only to give if we are begged by slickest of the public relations materials has eliminated from Christian experiences in many cases the privilege of giving voluntarily. And as it’s obvious from Paul’s words in these chapters to give of one’s own accord is a glorification of the grace of God, and we have lost that. And, unfortunately, because we have not studied the word of God, we have allowed those things to prosper and the church is weaker for it.

What disturbs me about it particularly -- I’m speaking only of myself, perhaps I haven’t given enough thought to this -- is that I feel I should give to some people such as this individual about whom I’m writing, but I hate to give and in one sense support a system of giving which is not found in the New Testament. So I guess in the future I should anticipate all of those things and I therefore be sure that they won’t have to write me a letter like that.

I received another letter this week from somebody in India who had heard of the ministry of Believers Chapel and of me I guess through the tape ministry and asked me to buy a home for a person in India that they felt rather sure that I out, of the generosity of my spirit, would be able to buy a home for this individual Christian who is without his

own home. So these are types of things. I’m sure you’re exposed to the same kind of thing.

We have failed here. I have numerous pamphlets in my possession because I for a long time I used to save these. One of them entitled “God’s Plan.” And when you look at it, it’s God’s plan for tithing and tithing is necessary for the progress of the church spiritually.. But when one reads the pamphlet, there is little or no reference to Scripture, and all of it is a reference to the Old Testament practice.

I have one, “Let’s Talk About Tithing,” which is not even supported by any Scripture of any significance, probably one or two verses within it as I remember looking at it. So we are, I think, exposed to something that is quite a bit different from the New Testament.

When we think of theological doctrine such as giving or justification or walking by the spirit or things like this, theologians refer to usually key passages that deal with major points in the particular doctrine, and they call those passages normative passages.

Now, the normative passage about Christian giving begins in chapter 8 of 2 Corinthians and concludes at the end of chapter 9. No discussion of Christian giving can fail if it’s to be Christian and to be relatively full to deal with 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. And that’s what we’re going to deal with in the next few times that we discuss 2 Corinthians. So, we want to look now at 2 Corinthians 8 through 9.

And, first of all, at the source of the liberality of the Macedonians, which Paul praises so much. He writes in the very first verse, “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.” Paul considered, incidentally, this collection to be very important, and he doesn’t explain altogether why he regarded it as so important. But if one thinks about the fact that he was apostle to the Gentiles and that the Gentiles were ultimately indebted to those in Jerusalem who were the members of the original church who were scattered out over the world, including himself and therefore the recipients of the truth that had come to them

through Jewish believers, one can see that the apostle regarded this as very significant doctrinally.

Probably -- and I say probably because I don’t think this is specifically stated in any one text but probably because Paul, since he was the apostle of the Gentiles and spoke about the church being one, there might be a tendency on the part of people to think about the church in Jerusalem as being separate from the church or the churches among the Gentiles. And so the fact that the Gentiles together take a collection to Jerusalem and to the poor saints of the area of Jerusalem in Judea, that would be a very manifest token of the oneness of the whole body of Christ whether Jew or Gentile, the believing body.

So perhaps this is back of Paul’s great interest in the collection. But when he says in verse 1 that this is the grace of God given among the churches of Macedonia, he’s pointing to the way in which they have responded to the appeal for the individuals in Jerusalem, and he calls it the grace of God that’s their response because it was God he felt who had move in the hearts of the Macedonians to give as they have given. And that leads us to the first things that we want to be sure we understand, that all genuine beneficence comes ultimately from the Lord God. This grace is the grace of God, and it is given in the churches of the Macedonians. So what happened in Macedonia, this remarkable outpouring of liberality, is traceable to God’s manifest working in the hearts of those saints there.

Now, we turn to the manner of their giving in verses 2 through 5, and I just want to go down very easily through these verses and point out the things that I think are genuine principles drawn from these verses. He states in verse 2, that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

Now, the first thing I want you to note is a very simple thing. Their giving was amid affliction. Now, it’s a great thing to give, but it’s a better thing to give in the midst of

affliction. And these individuals had passed through the experiences that the apostle describes as affliction and as a result of it have nevertheless given for the poor in Jerusalem. So the first thing about their giving is that they gave amid affliction.

The second thing is also found in this verse. It was joyous giving. He speaks of their abundance of joy. Now, it’s fine to give. It’s better to give amid affliction, but it’s still better to give joyfully in the midst of your affliction. So their giving was joyous giving. It’s not grudging giving but joyous giving.

Third, also in this one -- second verse, he says that they have given amidst deep poverty. Now of course it’s fine to give. It’s better to give amid affliction. It’s still better to give joyfully, but it’s even better to give in all of these ways in the midst of deep poverty.

Now poverty, incidentally, we know from experience is often associated with liberality because the people who are in poverty have an appreciation for people’s needs that rich people often do not have. Rich people find it difficult to realize that there might be people who wonder where their next dollar is coming from.

Now I don’t claim to be an individual with a great deal of sympathy, but I do remember when I didn’t have anything. And I remember going through theological seminary when I didn’t even have a bank account. I kept my money in one of the books in my small library. And so if I wanted to find out how much money I had, it was very simple. I didn’t have to go downtown to the bank, the National Bank of Commerce, where later I did have an account at one time. I just walked over to my small library and opened up a certain book. I’ve forgotten which one it is now. I’m hoping one of these days I’ll run across it again and maybe an extra five or ten might be in it. [Laughter] But nevertheless that’s where my money was. And I can’t understand how people have needs that they do not know how they can face. But these Christians there gave amidst deep poverty. And it has been my experience that people who have been poor and are poor often have a bit more sympathy for those that are poor than some of us who are rich.

Now, those who are rich often have a genuine complaint against poor particularly if they haven’t given themselves to the acquiring of some kind of money by which they may live through hard work, but nevertheless their experiences sometimes that no hard work can correct, and these Macedonian had experiences like that. If you look at the history of the Roman Empire, this particular time, you will discover in studying the things that happened in the area of Macedonia that the Romans particularly depleted the resources of the believers in northern Greece, especially their minerals and their timber. And as a result of the Roman Empire’s taking of their properties in that way and the riches of the area, Macedonia was a very poverty-stricken land at this time. And so the Christians there were experiencing some of the things that were the result of the Romans who had impoverished the country.

So they gave amidst deep poverty but not only that, fourthly, we read in the third verse, For I testify, that according to their ability and beyond ability they gave of their own accord. In other words, it was sacrificial giving. They gave beyond their power. The amount was not to be decided by labors gift nor by surplus but it was a giving beyond their power. In fact, the danger that the Macedonians had was in giving too much, not too little because when you give beyond your own power, then you are in danger of overly impoverishing yourself.

I had a man come in my office just two weeks ago. We had a nice discussion. In the course of the discussion, he told me about a experience he had relatively recently in which he gave a large sum of money, many thousands of dollars, to a particular work or endeavor and then found out later on that there was something wrong with it and fortunately was able to get his money back but sometimes you’re not able to do that. This giving of theirs was sacrificial giving. And beyond their power they gave.

There’s an old story which I had collected many years ago from Roy Lauren, about Bible teacher who is now with the Lord. Mr. Lauren told a story of a businessman and a lawyer who are traveling in Korea. Both were Christians, and they were with a

missionary and he was showing them over the country of Korea. And one day, as they were driving down one of the roads, they saw in the field by the side of the road a young man pulling a plow with an old man holding the handles. So instead of an animal, it was the young man. And evidently, the father was giving direction to the plow, and it was a very rude kind of plow, too. And the lawyer was very amused by that and took a snapshot of it. He said that’s a curious picture. I suppose they’re very poor.

He turned to the missionary and said -- who was the interpreter and guide to the party. He said, yes, that’s the family of Chi Buoy [phonetic]. When the church was being built, they were eager to give something to it but they had no money. So they sold their only ox and gave the money to the church. And this spring they’re pulling the plow themselves. The lawyer and the businessman by his side were silent for a few moments, and then the businessman spoke up and he said that must have been a real sacrifice. And the missionary said, they didn’t call it that. They thought it was fortunate they had the ox to sell. Well, the lawyer, it is said, went back to the United States and the businessman too. When the lawyer reached home, he went to his minister, and he told him about it. And he said, I’d like to double my pledge to the church, and furthermore, he said, would you give me some plow work, please. I’ve never yet given anything to the church that was a sacrifice at all.

Well, I think we could understand how these Macedonians were giving. I remember reading a long time ago about an individual who said to another fellow as the collection was being taken up, how much are you going to give? He said, Well, I guess I can give ten dollars and not feel it. The other fellow says, Brother, give twenty and feel it. That’s when the blessing comes, when you feel it. [Laughter] That’s sacrificial giving. The Macedonians gave beyond their power.

And then fifthly, it was spontaneous. Notice, again, the third verse and the apostle says that they gave of their own accord. Let’s think about that for a moment. Why do you give? Do you give because you got a letter from such and such para -- some

parachurch activity, and they’ve written you in such a way that you feel guilty if you don’t write out a little check for them? Well, I confess that’s one of the problems I have. I read those letters. I’m amazed. I’m amazed at how they can tug at the heartstrings of a Christian and make them feel as if you don’t give, the work of the Lord is going to collapse. But then my belief in sovereign grace rescues me from the despair from that kind of viewpoint, and I realize that God is in control of things and he’s going to accomplish his work. And I tell you that’s a great support in just such little things as that.

And, incidentally, when I remember that the work in Korea, the very reason why Korea today has a thriving Christian testimony is because originally it began with people who believed in the sovereign grace of God, which our friendly foes within the church of Christ feel if you believe in sovereign grace you cannot evangelize. They must have on blinkers. They’ve not studied the Christian missionary movement at all, but the reason there are believers there is because there are individuals who believe that God accomplishes his will who went out there believing that if he accomplished his will, then there’s hope for evangelization and men to be saved in the country of Korea. We see the benefits of it even today, seventy-five years or so later.

So the pressure that the Macedonians felt was not from Paul. The pressure they felt was from the Lord. They gave of their own accord. And, in fact, the apostle will say in verse 8, I’m not speaking this as a command, very careful to point out that he’s not trying to command the Macedonians or the Corinthians to give, but they gave of their own free will. The pressure came from within, and the blessing too comes when the pressure comes from within.

Then sixthly and this is startling, verse 4 states, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints. Now, liberality we know is not common. Self-induced liberality is very rare, but for individuals who beg to give, that’s almost unheard of. So you can see these poor people coming to the apostle and the apostles saying, Wait, wait. Be careful. You need this. You’re giving beyond your own

power. I know that but they’re begging the apostle, let us have a part in this giving to the saints in Jerusalem. Begging us with much entreaty that they might be allowed to participate.

The whole system of Christian giving that has arisen within the past century is a system that precedes on the habitual reluctance of Christians to give for the support of the gospel. And so ministering to that, they have built up this entire system of solicitation, making us feel bad, working on our feeling and emotions when that is not the ideal. I feel so strongly about this. I feel that this is one of the reasons that we’re suffering today. And here again, you realize, there are individuals who do not knowing to my mind what the Scriptures teach about this have sought with some integrity to avoid the obvious possibilities of excess. But in the last few months, we’ve had the final evidence of that failure of that kind of thing.

And here in *Time* magazine this past week again plastered over the front of Time with millions looking at it, greed, money, scandal in the evangelical or gospel world. Again, pages devoted. I think about eight pages devoted again to the scandal and the whole citizenry of the United States of America has now been thoroughly apprised of the evils and the wickedness that have taken place in circles in which the gospel of Christ is named alongside of these ways by which the truth of God is discounted. So may the pressure for giving come from within and not from without.

So finally the apostle says it was from a dedicated life and this not as we had expected he says in the 5th verse, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. It’s good to give money. It’s better to give self and money to the Lord, but it’s best to give oneself to the Lord, and then to the Lord’s people. You see it’s easy to surrender a part of what we have if we’ve already given him the whole thing. It really comes down to that, doesn’t it? It’s easy to give a part if we’ve already given the whole.

We sing in our meetings, I am my Lord’s and he is mine, but not all of us who sing that and many of us who may at one time be able to sing it truthfully and at other

times are not, we’re not always right before him when we sing things like that. The apostle reminds of course that we are not on our own we’ve been bought with a price therefore we’re to glorify God and our bodies and that means in our pocketbooks as well. I think the experience of the widow, which our Lord marked and Luke recorded is so important for us to reflect upon. And he looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury and he saw certain poor widow -- I better repronounce that. We South Carolinians like to pronounce it wider (phonetic) but it’s widow -- He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. I still think the Authorized Version’s caught the sense of that with two mites. And he said, truly I say to you this poor widow put in more than all of them for they out of their surplus put into the offering but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on, all of her living.

Now, when she dropped in her last couple of coins, so far as our Lord’s story goes, and he was looking at it, she gave all of her living and in so doing she gave herself into the hands of the Lord in absolute dependence upon his care. That’s really a foolish thing, wasn’t it? To think that she has nothing, and all she’s got now is the Lord. Isn’t it silly even to say something like that? She’s given everything, and all she’s got now is the Lord. And I get so many letters from individuals who tell me this, this, this, and this, and this and now all we have is our trust in the Lord. But, look, if we have the Lord, why we have every need met. He stands behind those needs. He says that he will supply all of our needs. And so she gave her two mites. That’s true she had nothing left, but her living is the responsibility of the Lord, and two mites are insignificant. We need to remember things like that.

Well, finally, in the last two verses, verse 6 and verse 7, the apostle really exhorts Titus. Well, says he has exhorted Titus. He says consequently we urge Titus that as he had previously made a beginning so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. Just as you abound in everything in faith and utterance and knowledge and all

earnestness and in the love we inspired in you see that you abound in this gracious work also.

The Corinthians had a lot of strong points. [They had] been given unusual spiritual gifts, so Paul said in his first letter to them, there was no church that could compare with the Corinthians in spiritual gifts. But now he says, add to that the liberality of concern for those in Jerusalem and give for their health, but don’t do it compulsorily, as he said in the 8th verse, voluntary.

So one of the first lessons then we learn about giving from these chapters is that giving is to be voluntary. It’s to be sacrificial. And it’s to flow out of a life, first of all, dedicated to the Lord God. My son, give me thine heart so the writer of the Proverb says, and that’s the beginning of Christian giving. The motive is not the sermon. The motive is not the approval of men. The motive is not a special occasion. The motive is not the letters that we get, the appeals that we get, the constant appeals and my they are really clever. They call over the telephone long distance, and they write every kind of piece of literature that they can. They call on the telephone here locally and every other way. They are really remarkable in the varieties of ways in which they have discovered that we can be approached for money, solicited. But the motive is to be the mercies of God and the abundance of joy that comes from having a part in the work of God when the pressure is created from the appreciation of the love of God and Jesus Christ.

I’m going to tell a story that really was a story that was often told by Pastor Theodore Maneau (phonetic), and I’ve told it to many of you in the Chapel, and you’ve heard it before. And if you remember it, please accept my apologies. I’ve said I’m going to leave the Chapel when I give the same illustration in the same message twice, not when I give the same illustration twice. [Laughter]

Pastor Theodore Maneau was a very fine evangelical preacher. He used to illustrate what it really means to give oneself to the Lord in this way. He said, “Let us suppose that as we leave this meeting and we rise and we make our way toward the

exits, that as we go out you walking along see, and he used the expression of five-pound note, you see a five-pound note fall on the floor and you go over and pick it up. Now, let’s suppose that in your mind you say” -- well, he didn’t say this, but I would say, finders keepers, losers weepers, you know [laughter]. But nevertheless he said, “Let’s say that you say, well, I’ll keep four pounds for myself and give him one pound. And then your conscience begins to work, and you say, no, that’s not right. I’ll give him four pounds, and I’ll keep one. And again your conscience rises up and says, no, that’s wrong,” and so then Pastor Maneau said, “you say within yourself I’ll do the grand thing of giving him the whole five pounds. He says, Look, that’s not a grand thing. That’s not a grand and glorious thing. That’s the only honest thing to do. That’s the only honest thing to do.”

Now, I ask you, Christians, you believers, you belong to the Lord? You been bought with a price? You think he has right, total right? It’s not a grand glorious thing to give sacrificially. It’s not a great grand glorious thing to do anything that requires a little bit of sacrifice on our part for the glory of God. It’s the only honest thing to do. May God help us to really understand and appreciate that. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed thankful that we are able to read of the experience of the self-sacrificial loving cheerful giving of those poor poverty-stricken believers in Macedonia who impressed from within by the grace of God shown to them gave themselves first to Thee and then to their fellow believers.

Lord, we thank Thee. We pray by Thy grace that thou wilt through the Holy Spirit touch our hard hearts and enable us to have something of the same joy and trust in the giving of our ourselves and of our possessions to the directions of our Triune God in heaven. We thank Thee for the gospel of Jesus Christ that he died for sinners, and we know we’ve been bought with a price. Many in this audience who do not know that, Lord, O move their hearts to turn to Thee to receive in faith not works the free gift of

eternal life. For those of us who are believers, O God, through the Holy Spirit and the word of God, touch us too that we may give ourselves to Thee.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.