

The indescribable gift! – Part I

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"

II Corinthians 9: 15

Among many subjects involving Christian disciplines, certainly, given is the most difficult and sensitive topic among believers. It is difficult for those who give, and those who receive the gift due to a series of factors concerning the matter. We could think of problems such as immaturity, disappointments, greedy, skepticism, and fear or just ignorance.

Generally, you face two extremes in our days. There are some who turn every Bible verse in a way to get money from their listeners. It is the so-called "Prosperity Theologians" that teaches nothing else, but "sow your seed in y ministry and start building your garage for the brand new BMW you will harvest". In the other hand; there are others who say nothing about giving to avoid criticism or to show their listeners of how piety and honesty they are and how poor they are when compared with the many televangelist tycoons.

No matter how difficult to teach about the theme, the Scriptures consider the subject of extreme relevance in most of its books; therefore, we should study it with an open heart and mind, to avoid both extremes.

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul brought up a describing teaching about giving who would give us some light in regarding to the topic.

In chapters eight and nine, he will show that Giving is:

- a) A divine gift of grace (8:1; 8:7)
- b) An action of grace (8:6)
- c) An extraordinary blessing from God (9: 14)
- d) A gift beyond description (9: 15)
- e) A testing of someone's love (8: 8)

8: 1-4 "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency ^[a]that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

1. Through the poorest Christians from Macedonia (v. 1-4) he demonstrates that:

- a) Giving is a divine gift.
- b) It is an expression of love towards other believers.
- c) It was not a disadvantage, but a privilege.

8: 5 “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

- 2. The Macedonian believers gave something else in order to get freedom to be givers:

They had FIRST surrendered their own lives to Christ; otherwise, the mentioned gift would not be there. Jesus said that a true disciple was the person that had FIRST denied himself, and then picked up his cross and finally he was able to follow him, including of course, Christ’s actions. The reason why so many still stuck with greedy it is because, they are still supporting their ego, therefore unable to follow Jesus. We can sing the hymn “I surrender all”, but when the offering plate comes our hearts still egocentric, instead of Christocentric as it should be.

8: 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.”

- 3. The admonition to understand the value of giving.

It is important to remember, that Corinth was a church which apparently had received all spiritual gifts. For this reason, the Apostle spent three chapters in his first letter just to teach them how to use these gifts. He wrote this introduction:

“I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷Therefore you **do not lack any spiritual gift,**” *I Co. 1: 4-7*

These were a very charismatic group of Christians. They were prophetic in their meetings, bold to preach, ready to cast demons out, very faithful in spiritual prayers, however Paul are now challenging them to search and to understand the blessings to enjoy the “Charin”¹ of giving.

8: 8-9 “I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. ⁹ 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.”

4. Giving has to be expressed by completely liberty and would also reveal two things:

a) The heart of the giver – (v. 8 - I am testing the sincerity of your love):

Jesus asked Peter: “Do you love Me more than these?” Christ was not just comparing the love of Peter I relation to the other disciples’ love, but to his boat and the 153 big fishes they had caught. In a sense the Lord’s was testing Peter. Jesus was asking Peter: “Am I first in your life?” “Then, sacrifice your boat, your fishes, and your business and come to take care of my business.” – “I will make you a fisher of man,” Christ had told him years earlier.

God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, his most value treasure.

Elisha, after being anointed by Elijah, went back home, killed his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and invited the people for a free BBQ. Then, he set out to follow Elijah. He surrendered all!

The woman who anointed Jesus, did not count the cost when she bought an alabaster jar of a very expensive perfume to anoint her Master, while at the same time, Judas’s heart was revealed by the action of a grateful worshipper and of her gift.

Definitely, Judas did not love Jesus. The Lord did not even bother to ask him: “Judas, do you love me?” as he would ask Peter few days later. He already knew who Judas’s master was: Money!

b) To contrast their action: (v.8 - *by the diligence of others*)

Paul used the actions of others as a way to test the Corinthian's unfulfilling promises. He moved their attention in two directions:

- i. Macedonian's Christians grace – being poor they gave themselves to Christ and after enriching others with their gifts – v. 8b
- ii. Jesus's grace – Being rich he became poor by giving up his glory to enrich others through his ultimate gift: His own life – v.9

NAS: "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia," II Co. 8: 1

¹Grace: : Χάριν - charin

GRK: εὑρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ for you have found *favor* with God.