

## The Generosity of Grace – Part 1

### Introduction and Review

- We considered the parable of needy workers in a vineyard complaining because other needy workers were paid the same for working less time (Mt. 20:8-12).
- Their complaint was based on the wrong assumption that they deserve more than the originally agreed wages (v. 2, 10).
- The vineyard owner demonstrated there was no injustice, but some workers were simply envious of his lavish generosity to those who worked less time (v. 13-16) – GRACE!
- In the kingdom of God, rewards & blessings are based on grace & not merit (length of time or difficulty in ministry, social/ economic status, race, era of birth, etc.).

### I. Grace is Given (v. 1-4)

#### A. Severe test

*Paul uses the example of a church to motivate another: smaller to motivate larger; poorer/wealthier; suffering/ free of affliction. The Macedonian churches were located at Philippi, Thessalonica & Berea. They experienced severe opposition after being founded by Paul (Ac. 16:11-17:15). This persecution from Jews, public officials & citizens resulted in extreme poverty for these believers. This is the experience of many Christians around the world today!*

#### B. Wealth of generosity

*The grace of God supernaturally enables a believer to gracefully handle any difficult experience in life (v. 1; 12:9). Because of this grace, affliction results in abundance of joy; joy and poverty result in generosity (v. 2; Ac. 5:40-41). Their actions: they gave beyond their means (v. 3). Their attitude: privilege (χάρις), sharing (κοινωνία), ministry (διακονία), saints (ἅγιος) - (v. 4). The contrasts from the grace of God: affliction results in joy, poverty results in generosity, poor believers are begging to give, not Paul begging them to give!*

### II. Excelling in Grace (v. 5-7)

#### A. Gave themselves first (v. 5)

*Before this extraordinary act of self-denial & generosity, something extremely significant had occurred. Before they demonstrated this act of love for God's people, they first demonstrated their love for God (Mt. 22:37-38; 1Jn. 3:17; 4:20). They first surrendered themselves in obedience to **God** & then to **church authority** before they surrendered their **money** to the will of God.*

#### B. Excel in everything (v. 6-7)

*Using the Macedonian churches as an example, the Corinthian church is urged to continue giving financially by grace (v. 6; 1Co. 16:1-4). Grace enables believers to excel in everything, including giving generously (v. 7). **Excellence for Christ is the goal for the Christian: in faith (trusting Christ), speech (speaking for Christ), knowledge (knowledge of & with Christ), earnestness (eager & ready for Christ), love (love for Christ & his people) and giving (giving for Christ & to His people as an "act of grace").***

**ILL:** Athletes are often motivated by other athletes who succeed against incredible disadvantages & obstacles. Employees are motivated by other employees who are faithful in spite of extreme difficulties in personal lives. Husbands & wives are motivated by others who are faithful... Single people are motivated...

**APPL:** The same is true in the kingdom of God, we are motivated by other believers who are faithfully committed to obey the Lord regardless of circumstances in their personal lives.

## CONCLUSION

Therefore my brothers & sisters the question for you is this, “Is excellence for Christ your goal & objective?” Do you want to excel in everything for Jesus? Do you want to excel in your faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, love and giving financially? Do you want to be able to give according to & beyond your means when the Holy Spirit reveals a need to you? Do you want to respond willingly, spontaneously, genuinely and generously? Well then you too must first give yourself to Christ in submission to His will, His word, His Spirit, convictions, priorities, plans & purposes. Demonstrate your love for God by your deeds, not simply words. You might say but that so hard to become that generous when I have needs & have to plan for my own future. I say to you that it’s impossible for you to do it alone, but it quite possible with God...We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. By grace, you can become a generous giver!

And if you are not a Christian, I want you to consider the generosity of God to you. God so loved you that He sacrificed a perfect relationship & fellowship with Jesus to save you... (Jn. 3:16). But if want to experience & receive this generosity from God you must come to Jesus in faith first; you must believe in Jesus...

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