

The Generosity of Grace – Part 4

Introduction and Review

- ❑ Giving generously is an “act of grace” (2Co. 8:19).
- ❑ God controls the heart of believers in giving and handling money in the kingdom of God (v. 16-18).
- ❑ God appoints people to ministry that are biblically qualified to handle money (v. 19-20).
- ❑ Believers should give generously and handle money honestly in a manner that brings honor to God (v. 21-23). *Dishonesty, fraud, stealing, embezzlement, excessively lavish lifestyles do not...*
- ❑ Believers should also give generously and handle money honestly in a manner that proves our love for people (v. 24).

I. Christian Zeal Acknowledged (v. 1-2)

A. Zeal inspires readiness (v. 1-2a)

Zeal (ζήλος) is a deep concern for or devotion to someone or something. Zeal for needy people initially inspires believers to give. Sometimes believers must be encouraged to do things they already know or have done in the past – superfluous (2Pe. 1:12).

B. Zeal stirs up other believers (v. 2b)

*One church giving generously provokes or stimulates other churches to do the same in order to help believers in need – “stirs up”. A deep concern for or devotion to believers in need is contagious. *We are motivated by example.**

II. Christian Zeal Proven (v. 3-5)

A. Zeal must be completed (v. 3-4)

*The initial zeal for benevolent giving can deteriorate over time. Believers need biblically qualified leaders to motivate & coordinate giving that has deteriorated (v. 3). *Giving needs to be coordinated so it is done orderly & consistently (1Co. 14:40; 16:1-2). Commitments made to provide the needs of other believers involve the reputation of individuals, the church & Christ (v. 4) – faithful, dependable, honest....**

B. Zeal must be completed willingly (v. 5)

Believers must fulfill their commitments to benevolent giving willingly in order to please God & experience His blessing.

*Believers are not to give simply to get something in return – exaction (Lk. 6:34; Pr. 19:17). *Giving is to reveal the love of God in order to bring glory to God – not pressure, schemes, etc. to raise money.**

ILL: There are many examples in life of initial zeal that deteriorates over time – dieting to lose weight, get regular exercise, saving money for a future project or goal, commitment to a regular meeting with someone, morning devotion, reading thru the bible, punctuality, change a bad habit around home, etc.

APPL: We must all beware of this tendency & temptation to let our initial commitments fizzle out; beware of allowing good & needful commitments to people fall apart & stop. We must all be willing to let the Holy Spirit search us now to see if God is reminding us of any unfinished commitments that we have made to people who are depending upon us; even commitments that we may have made to God & we have forgotten to complete the work. We are 2 years into our commitment to represent Christ thru TCC. What about your initial zeal? Are you still committed, faithful, resolved...? Did you count the cost & determine that this is worth the sacrifice (Lk. 14:28)?

CONCLUSION

So then my beloved brother or sister, are you willing to lay aside the defensive posture around your heart & make yourself vulnerable to the Lord? Are you willing to honestly face this issue just as Paul was asking the members of the Corinthian church? The grace of God that gave you the zeal to make good & right commitments initially is available right now to help you complete anything that God has called you to do. Regardless of the length of time since you made the commitment or the length of time since you stopped keeping your commitment, the Holy Spirit will enable you to finish now. So that you can say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight..." And I know you want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant..." In order for this to be true in the future, then you must be open & honest with the Lord today. Trust Him now...

And if you are not a Christian, you must consider your future too. Will the Lord have good things to say to you or will your judgment be severe with no hope or mercy? If want to experience & receive deliverance from judgment for your sins, then you must come to Jesus in faith first; you must believe in Jesus...

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