

TO PROVE THE SINCERITY OF YOUR LOVE

2 CORINTHIANS 8:8 – 9:5



~ Our contemporary culture is surrounded by smothering consumerism in this modern age of technology and scientific advancements. Never before has there been such an onslaught of devices, gadgets, and other inventions on sale to “make life easier.” Constant advertising for said products and content permeates the magazines we read, the online web pages we visit, television programs we watch, the radio broadcasts we listen to, billboards, newspapers, mailings, and everything else we see as we move about and function in this world. The goal behind these advertisements is to convince you that your life is incomplete unless you purchase their particular product or service. Most people have an overweening desire to collect material goods; and the amount of “*stuff*” we have is the common barometer for how other people judge our “*success*,” and most people believe that having more and more money, gadgets, and “*toys*” will bring them happiness and contentment. There is a very popular secular song, and the lyrics go, “... *I can’t get no satisfaction!*” That song is sung by one of the richest men in the world. As a musician, I know songs are not written and sung that we don’t believe in our hearts. How tragic. Well, this leg of our Spiritual Safari is going to teach us – very definitely – that there is but *ONE* thing that can bring us happiness and satisfaction in our present physical world.

Our last report began the consideration of a section of Scripture regarding Christian giving; and Paul shocked all of us with what that really means. I’m sure most of your readers found that lesson totally foreign to your thinking. If you have not read that report, I suggest you go back and read it now; because it is a prelude to this report. The church in Corinth had faith and they were able to witness; they had understanding of spiritual things and knowledge of wisdom of the Word of God. They also had diligence and love for Paul and for the other apostles. They were told and we learned that giving is a grace — the grace of giving — and Paul told them to, “... *see that ye abound in this grace.*” ~

VIII

⁸ I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

~ Paul is telling us that appropriate Christian-based giving is not by law, and it is not by rote – meaning ritual. This is another indicator how we know the tithe is not a commandment for the Christian living under grace. I understand many fine preachers and outstanding Bible expositors preach and teach that tithing is something we should do; and it is a good principle – but it’s not a command. Obviously, tithing was a mandatory basic tenet for the children of Israel under the Mosaic System of Levitical Law in the Old Testament. However, if you examine the law carefully, you’ll discover the people gave *THREE* tithes; one of them being, essentially, for taxes in the government of the nation Israel. Paul says very clearly he is not telling people to give by commandment in verse eight.

The church in Macedonia set an example for giving that was exemplary; exemplary because they gave all they had, and they did so *OUT OF THEIR POVERTY* – not out of their riches. My friends, there is *NOTHING* you can do to prove your love for God - and there is *NOTHING* that will test your faith quite like giving when you don’t have anything to give. Most people say, “... well, I would help your ministry out of I were able to, Andrew.” But they never seem to get around to being able. Paul says we are *ALWAYS* able to give — and we are to give cheerfully.

Let me personal, again, for a moment; and I am usually not personal in these reports — but when the Bible becomes so extremely personal, well, so will I. I am a member of a wonderful church. The founders, the preacher and the congregation are a wonderful group of sincere, loving, dedicated and Christ-minded Christians, without doubt. The only reason you are reading these reports is because they generously provided certain essentials for this ministry for several years. Specifically, they provided a place to live and a means to write the Spiritual Safari. My personal monthly income was less than most average people made in a few days. There were *MANY* days and long nights where I literally had *NOTHING*. My most basic

of needs were *BARELY* met – but they were met. See, I know how Elijah felt living out of an empty flour barrel for so many years.

Well, God told me to sell all I have and give it to the poor so I can follow Him – and you can bet your life that is exactly what I did. In return, God provided in the sense that I am not living in a car scrounging through a garbage can for food – but I am not even *CLOSE* to these false teachers and preachers of Baalim who have become powerfully rich perverting the Word of God. See, if you give the Word of God out properly, correctly and completely; you're not going to become rich. As genuine and true preachers and teachers of the Word of God, we're not celebrities – we're servants. Well, my Christian friends, I suggest you put your money where your mouth is – and, like Paul, I suggest you do it right now.

I believe we should make a vow to the Lord regarding our support for an honest, educated, sincere, proper, correct, complete, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Bible teacher. I know most of you will balk at that and say you don't think we should sign a pledge for giving. Well, you sign a pledge to give for your house, car, appliances, gadgets, and just about everything else in your life; so, what's the problem signing a pledge for God? Do you see what utter hypocrites most so-called Christians really are? If you don't consider what Paul is saying to be true, then you don't hear the Spirit of God speaking to you right now – and He is speaking to you – but only His sheep hear His voice, friends – make a note of that....

⁹ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

~ Now, if you need a standard of giving – here it is in verse nine. That standard is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Christ was rich but became poor when He came to this earth and took a place of abject poverty. Imagine God leaving the riches and beauty of Heaven, coming to this filthy and hateful earth, being born with the animals in the barnyard, living a life of constant struggle and opposition, dying the most horrific death known to mankind on a Roman cross, and then being placed in the darkness of a tomb. God Himself became poor for you and me. The problem is: we don't

fully understand that truth. I recognize I am not conveying the reality of all of this to you effectively – and for that I feel I should apologize to you readers. I simply cannot do any better than this report....

¹⁰ And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

¹¹ Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

¹² For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

¹³ For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

¹⁴ But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

¹⁵ As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

~ Make sure you understand Paul is not collecting money for himself. As a Pharisee, Paul, or Saul at that time, had robbed churches for the religious rulers to become extremely rich. That's exactly what the false teachers do today, too, by the way. They rob sincere ministries like this destitute little so-called safari, and usurp God's glory in the process. You know the list of the children of Belial that I am talking about; the list is so long it would take all day to spell them out. Giving to those heretics is an absolute dereliction of your Christian responsibility. Paul never asked anything for himself because he was a true servant of Christ. Paul took up a collection for the needs of others – and that is precisely how this Spiritual Safari operates. Any offerings given here go for the poor saints around the world who need sound doctrine – that's all I have to give and, so, I give it all, my friends. I have promised to take us all the way through the Bible – we've come a long ways so far and, God providing, that's what I am going to do.

If you say you are a Christian, then you have already pledged to give to the Lord's work – because that's part and parcel of being a Christian – and if you aren't making good, then you aren't a Christian. No, friends — if you aren't giving to the proper cause in the correct amount and in on regular basis, then you're just a hypocrite – period. Paul says giving is not a commandment, but Paul also says to perform benevolence from that which you have been given. Further, we are to give with a willing mind. I think a tenth is about right for most people; but for some people, only giving a tenth is not nearly enough; and amounts to robbing God.

Frankly, most people don't give enough. Then, there are some people who have no money – but they can give in other ways – like volunteering, cooking, sewing or praying – and even teaching the Word of God to the entire world. I could look God in the eye right *NOW* if He called me home and declare “... *I gave it all!*” God knows my heart – and God knows yours – and, one way or another, we'll answer for our giving. That means we'll account for who, what, when, where and how we gave to the work of the Lord. Well, most people who are able to support this ministry have already stopped reading a *LONG* time ago, if they ever started, that's for sure.

Has God blessed you in this modern affluent world? Most people have good incomes, nice cars, lovely homes, new furniture, appliances – not to mention luxury gadgets and toys — and most have some sort of a savings account. Most people live quite well. God instructs us in His Word to give and share with those who are properly, correctly and completely executing His work, and who have a need. Again, I am sure most people who have the ability to give aren't interested in studying the Bible. Those people are generally willing to settle for the “*tithe*” type giving – but then they wonder why they are never satisfied; they never really seem to be able to afford their bills — and they always want more stuff.

Verse fifteen refers the Corinthians back to the time when the children of Israel gathered manna. One man might go out and gather fifteen-bushel baskets full and takes it home. Well, that man could only use what he could eat that day, because the next morning, the rest was spoiled. So, the only reasonable thing to do would be to share the surplus with the man who was not able to get out there and gather the manna for himself that day.

This is a practical and tremendous principle to live by; and outside of living this Biblical giving principle, you will *NEVER* be happy, you will *NEVER* be satisfied, and you will *NEVER* have enough. That's the immutable way God has ordained the affairs of this life. When we give correctly, we will enable the man who is qualified to give out the Word of God with the means to do so. That's the way God wants it. That's almost never the way it works out.

Further, God is going to deal with you the same way you have dealt with His children. God keeps an accounting ledger. I feel compelled to say again that this is not a law, because if it were a law, then we wouldn't be able to give as a grace. Giving according to a law can never produce a passion and a desire to give. You ought to be tickled to death to just tell other people, ".... *read that Spiritual Safari because that Hunt fellow is talking about the most wonderful thing in the world!*" I'm telling you how you can be happy by giving. Sound crazy? It does to me, too. Either way, that's what Paul is saying; and there comes a time when we are going to have to decide if we really believe the Bible is the Word of God – or not. This is one of those times....

¹⁶ But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

~ "Thanks" in verse sixteen is the same word for "grace" in the original Greek text. I'm not sure why the translators changed it to "thanks" – and I am not criticizing – and I wouldn't change it because it's a good word and a good translation that probably couldn't be improved on – but I still don't know why they changed it. They called it grace in every other place; well, either way – grace be to God. Titus had the same intentions in his heart as Paul had in his heart — to take up an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem; and they both wanted to take the collection to them for the glory of God.

See, Paul could say all of this – as can I – because he will be honest in the use of the offering and in the way he handles it. Unless you are *SURE* of where and what you are giving to, you ought not give; and anyone can look at my program and see the physical production of Bible teaching. These reports consume *MANY* hours of time to prepare; from Bible study to

prayer to writing – sometimes several days – just to prepare one single report. *NOBODY* can say it isn't obvious what support for this Spiritual Safari would be used for....

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

~ Paul and Titus trusted each other. They each made a report to the church in Corinth after they took an offering for them. God wants proof of our love; and there is *ONE* absolute way we can prove it – with our money! If we really mean business with God, show it in your giving. That's the way we express our love. Giving should be a grace in every genuine believers heart. Too many Christians love God like the teenager who told his girlfriend, "... /

would cross the widest ocean for you; and I would swim the widest and deepest river for you; I would climb the highest mountain for you; I would crawl across the burning sands of the desert for you.” Then, he concludes with a P.S., “... and if it isn’t raining Friday night I’ll take you to the movies.” There’s a whole lot of Christians just like that, my beloved....

IX

¹ For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

² For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

³ Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

⁴ Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

⁵ Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari concludes another rather long leg of our expedition to take the entire Word of God to the entire world by finishing the grace of giving; but we’re not altogether finished talking about giving yet. These people had made a pledge to give, but they hadn’t made good on that pledge; so, Paul now says, “... do it.” It’s simply pious nonsense to make any excuse for not giving to the Lord’s work. Well, let’s be sure that I understand your giving is between you and the Lord; but I know how you should be doing business with God; and so that’s what I am instructing you on. I can promise you that if you get into a shoveling match of giving with

God – you’ll find out that God has the bigger shovel. That’s the way God wants us to give.

Paul had already boasted of these Corinthians and their generosity. He would have been a little embarrassed if they hadn’t made good on their commitments. It’s a real test we have here; the test of a genuine Christian is their generosity towards those in the Lord’s work. If you want to see a spiritually dead Christian, then just look at one who refuses to give Biblically. That is an unquestionable barometer of spirituality. Giving is also called a “*bounty*” in verse five; and that means a generous gift. So, we’re going to finish talking about giving in our next report, and then we’ll just keep on moving along – and we’ll complete second Corinthians in the next few reports — by the grace of God ~

