

## THEIR DEEP POVERTY ABOUNDED

### 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1 – 7



~ Our Spiritual Safari is going to examine grace excruciatingly carefully in this leg of our expedition. Most people define grace as “*unmerited favor*” – but there is a whole lot more to it than that. As most of you already know, this so-called safari considers the Word of God in a way that no other ministry really can. The primary reason a church today cannot present the Bible correctly is because, if they did, they wouldn’t have a congregation for very long. As a “*ministry*,” I realized long ago that I am not popular; and I knew before I started this endeavor that it would be completely misunderstood and unappreciated. I was correct in those estimates. See, friends, the Bible is not popular when taught properly, correctly and completely. Only when a ministry adds the leaven of the Pharisees does it start to taste good. If you add enough leaven, then people will actually give and support your ministry; however, when you start teaching this thing unleavened like I do – guess what? – Not only will people not support you – they’ll hate you and despise you.

Most so-called Christians do not realize that, while they say they love the Lord Jesus Christ, they really hate Him – because they have *NO IDEA* Who Christ is or what He is all about. Well, we’re going deep into the Biblical jungle in this report, and some of you won’t make it through; but this is just the prelude for our next report, which will be so utterly strong and dark that I *PROMISE* you most readers will simply wither and die spiritually. The statements I am going to make now will seem so revolutionary that most of you will think I am speaking Mandarin Chinese – or something. Honestly, I can only suggest you just scroll on down now and stop reading right here – and that means every single one of you. If you do decide to continue reading, I hope you will read this report carefully. Fasten your seatbelts – and don’t say I didn’t give fair warning.

~ *Heavenly Father, I pray that You will attend the teaching of Your Word, and may it speak to those sad hearts in poverty; I ask that You bless Your Word as it goes forth this day in Your Spiritual Safari; and that it go forth in*

*the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Holy High Priest, Your Son, our Intercessor and Propitiation – and the Blessed Hope of the world ~*

I trust you have your Bibles open and have read this entire passage before reading this report because, if you take the time to study the Bible the proper way, it will actually begin to mean something to you. Our first fourteen reports — covering seven chapters — in second Corinthians have been all about the comfort of God through the Holy Spirit. I trust those chapters and reports have been a blessing to your heart, and I trust they brought comfort, help and strength to your life. We have a Helper in the Christian life — the Comforter of the Holy Spirit — if we can learn to trust and obey Him. The reaction of a sincere Christian at this point would be to say, “... *Paul, tell us more!*” But the apostle abruptly changes the subject in this chapter. We’re now going to hear Paul expound on the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. We have been in the clouds of glory until now, but we’re coming back to earth with the thud of a jarring hard landing in this report.

You could label everything we have seen so far in second Corinthians as “*Christian Living*” — here we have “*Christian Giving*” — and Christian giving is an inseparable part of Christian living; if you aren’t giving — and that means giving to the right cause in the right amount in a regular manner — then you aren’t a Christian. Let me repeat that in case you didn’t catch it: if you aren’t giving to support a proper, correct and complete Bible teaching of sound doctrine to the entire world, then you aren’t a Christian — because that would be impossible. Go ahead and make your notes here.

Almost everyone asks me, “... *what do you do for a living?*” Well, I am just a poor Bible teacher. I don’t think anyone believes me for some strange reason; but, friends, I am so poor I make the orphanage in India, Africa and Pakistan look like oil tycoons — and that’s just not an exaggeration. I don’t spend time messaging everyone I know harassing, begging and passing the Spiritual Safari offering plate around — I certainly do not beg — but, I must say, it would be nice to see a few people who were actually interested in the Word of God. Unfortunately, that just doesn’t seem to be the case. I know the handful of safari friends that would support this Bible teaching do not have the ability to do so; and I can only assume that those who could

support this ministry don't even read these reports. I suppose that asking the so-called Christian to pray about supporting the place where they get their blessing from is just asking too much. Either way, I refuse to send out a mayday call as if the world is coming to an end like all the other beggars do.

Some of you may have noticed these reports becoming more and more sparse – and it very well could be that they just stop altogether when we finish second Corinthians; at which time I am going to close my page and quietly slip off to another endeavor. With my skills, experience and qualifications I certainly don't write these reports for my own benefit – but for yours. Someone will inevitably say in the most pious voice they can muster, "... the Lord will provide, Andrew" – and He has provided – and those same people will say that if the Lord wants this so-called safari thing to continue then He will make a way; again, I agree, but the lack of support for this teaching that takes the entire Word of God to the entire world is more of a commentary on *YOUR* hardened heart and *YOUR GREED* than it is on my ability to teach the Bible – you can just write that down, too, my beloved.

I happen to know that *MANY* people all over the world have come to Christ through reading these reports. This is an appeal for support because I have something to give those people who have nothing to give in return. I would hope that someone actually cares about the Word of God going to places that would never, otherwise, have the Word of God. That's the whole purpose and singular mission of the Spiritual Safari – and nothing else – to reach out and touch lives today that need the Word of God so desperately. If you believe in that, then I urge you to become involved before a marvelous and honorable opportunity to do so disappears right before your very eyes.

Quite frankly, I resent just about all so-called preaching and teaching in the world today; and I hereby denounce *ALL* of it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Name of God the Father. Maybe you want to write that down, too – you know, so you can have something against me, Andrew, when that time comes. The shameful attempt to promote everything under the sun – from little starving children to "*personal ministry*" needs - while

neglecting sound doctrine — and, friends, I speak for God Himself right now — it makes Him want to destroy this earth with you in it. How do I know? Just trust me: I know more than you might like to think I do. There are so very few people who are genuine Christians in the sea of mankind who profess to be Christian that I honestly don't see why God wastes His time with us any longer; *AND IT ALL COMES DOWN TO OUR PHYSICAL GIVING!* I feel this is extremely important, and I am going to bear down on it now so hard the spiritual pencil just might break.

Second Corinthians chapters eight and nine contain the most extensive sections of Scripture on the subject of Christian giving. In fact, everything we need to know about giving is found right here. I am not going to try to form any rules; but there are certain principles that are so clear cut that if you cannot see them, then you are simply spiritually blinded by Satan. If you cannot recognize these great truths — *AND ACT UPON THEM* — then, my friend, you are not a child of God; because it means you cannot — *CANNOT* — hear His voice. His sheep hear His voice — I suggest that you try to listen super duper carefully now.

Some people think we are to give in the form of a tithe; but that is not Biblical. Tithing may be a good principle for you — but it's not a rule for the genuine Christian. The operative word here, if you have read chapter eight and nine, is "grace." The word "grace" occurs *TEN* times in these two chapters. It is always connected to the "grace" of *GIVING*, too....

***<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;***

***<sup>2</sup> How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.***

***<sup>3</sup> For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;***

***<sup>4</sup> Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.***

~ The grace of *GIVING* is called the grace of God in verse one. In verse four, the “*gift*” means the “*grace*” that Paul would receive from these people. The theological meaning of “*grace*” is unmerited favor; but if that’s all it is to you, then you destroy the rich flavor it holds. In classical Greek, the word means an *outward grace*; such as goodness, beauty, charm, goodwill, gratitude, delight, pleasure and loveliness. Well, there are three graces: good, fine and noble. The Greeks were missionary-minded, and they desired to impart this understanding to others. So, the Holy Spirit reached out and chose this particular word; giving it a new luster and a new glory. Then, the Christian writers adopted it, and Paul uses it more times than we can count.

The purest use of the word “*grace*” refers to the passion of God to share all of His goodness with others. Grace means God wants to bestow good things and goodness upon you. God wants to make you fine and noble by bringing you into the likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why we are saved by grace through faith; but faith is not even of ourselves – faith itself is a gift from God. You could never obtain grace or faith by works or we would have something to boast about – which we don’t. Friends, we were lost sinners who were completely dead in our sins when God found us, and we have *NOTHING* to offer Him for His grace or for His faith. See, it’s all His! Only by God’s passionate desire to save mankind did grace and faith come about. God doesn’t arbitrarily save anyone. That’s where the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ comes in. God so loved the world — that He saved us? – No, He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. See, God is in the business of giving – not receiving – never has been in the business of receiving — and He never will be.

Some people seem to think God is poor and needs our “*tithe*” or gift or talent – or something. Friends, God needs nothing from you, and He doesn’t accept anything from you, either. God said the cattle on a thousand hills are His, and if He were hungry, then *YOU* would never even be told. Well, God doesn’t get hungry, and your silver and gold are already His. Now, some of His works have a very real need – like this so-called Spiritual Safari, for example. Certain things just happen to need support. Even so, any support for any ministry must be done as a grace of God — and

because you believe in that cause. Further, and simultaneously, it must be something that furthers the Gospel teaching and something that has helped you; and it must be something that you understand very clearly concerning how that gift will be utilized and spent. If any of that is not in place, then your giving is sin – period.

The early church gave *EVERYTHING*, and they did so out of an overwhelming desire to share the things of the Lord Jesus Christ with the lost world. The Jerusalem church had been the first to give out the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection. Jesus said they would be witnesses unto Him beginning in Jerusalem. The apostles loved Jerusalem, and they locked arms around their beloved city. However, persecution ultimately drove them out, scattered them abroad, and sent them down the road into Judaea and Samaria – and on to the uttermost parts of the world.

That left the church in Jerusalem weakened because of fierce and intense persecution. This actually led to a famine in the church, and it became utterly poverty stricken. On his third missionary journey, Paul began to take up an offering for those poor saints. That means we have the missionary sending the offering to the mother church where he had begun. If you don't find that completely foreign to our understanding of missionary work, then you don't comprehend what you are reading here. Today, this has become totally backwards. Don't like that? Don't believe that? Then you don't believe the Word of God, friends. That's all.

This is when Paul sent instructions to the church in Corinth about how to give; because Paul didn't want any promotional activity going on when he arrived there. Today, we tell the missionary to come to our church and give a stand-up routine about what they want the congregation to think they're doing in the field, and they take up a "*love offering*" for them while they're there. Paul wasn't about to waste his time talking about money, because his mission was to get the Word of God taught properly, correctly and completely; and that takes a whole lot of time and effort, by the way.

An offering or collection needs to be done *BEFOREHAND*. If the church today actually acted in accord with Biblical truth, then the offering would be taken long before the missionary arrived; and they would only take an

offering for that missionary who was actually doing something to take the entire Word of God to the entire world in sound doctrine. Putting an emphasis on the mechanics of how it all happened – or on music – or on a so-called missionary who really isn't doing anything to contribute to the church – is so shameful that....well, I better just move on before I say some things that will pierce like an arrow shot from a compound bow from five yards away. I hope you get the picture. We have certainly come to that bad place; and a church will *NEVER* grow under those circumstances.

Certain principles must be understood in order for the proper and complete revelation of truth to be derived from the background of this local situation regarding Paul and the church in Corinth. Even though Paul's physical missionary journey has long since dissipated, these fundamental principles *MUST* abide if the local modern church desires to grow and be successful in reaching people for the cause of Christ. The generalities are as sharp and fresh in a thriving church as they were when this epistle was penned.

First, Paul cites the Macedonians — the church in Philippi — as the prime example of Christian giving. The seven verses we just read gave all the motives and methods that need be employed. Giving was a grace bestowed on the churches in Macedonia! Verse two is one extremely tremendous statement. *THEY GAVE OUT OF POVERTY, MY FRIENDS!* Read it again – they didn't give out of their riches. I hate to tell you this, but we just don't know *ANYTHING* about that today. The top priority was a commitment of themselves to God – that's verse three. God had given them the grace to give and what they gave was grace – and that is genuine fellowship – verse four. This means they shared the things of Christ. You and I may attend a great Bible-believing church that helps each other, but we simply cannot understand the love this early church had one for another.

We speak of social action in our churches today, but even the most fundamental church has lost sight of that. I think it's wonderful to give to missions, but there may be some people in the congregation who are in *DEEP* and *DESPERATE* need, too. Most of them do not want their need to be made known because they fear they might become the subject of gossip. So, they might accept help, but they would *NEVER* ask for it; because of a feeling, more or less, like that would be a disgrace. Friends, if

anyone is still reading: I'm speaking from personal experience – I'm not guessing. I'm not making this up as I go. I can *PROMISE* you I will starve like a stray cat before I ask for support – and I will simply never beg. We have all but lost the marvelous and wonderful grace of giving....

***<sup>5</sup> And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.***

***<sup>6</sup> Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.***

***<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.***

~ We're looking at a people who gave themselves to a local work of the Lord Jesus Christ, friends. They were sold on the idea, and they were sold out for God. At the end of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul began to speak about Heaven; and, then, they were about to ask Paul to tell them more about Heaven – but Paul shook their tree straight down to the root in chapter sixteen, verse one, saying, “.... now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.” They wanted to hear about Heaven, but Paul brought them something practical. They were told to give from the “*abundance of their joy and FROM THEIR DEEP POVERTY!*” God loves the cheerful giver. This is how it works in shoe leather on the streets; and most preachers and teachers have this absolutely backwards today. As a result, modern preaching and teaching is simply not effective. This grace of giving out of poverty was a fellowship that they all shared in. These churches in Corinth and in Macedonia owed the church in Jerusalem *EVERYTHING* they had that was spiritual! Paul tells them it's time to give material things.

**Galatians 6:** *<sup>6</sup> Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things ~*

That means, “*pay your preacher!*” That's what it means. Flip on over and read verse seven from Galatians chapter six, and see how that floats your



boat. I just happen to know that these reports have brought *MANY* — *MANY* — innumerable people to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. It has also brought back others who were far from the Lord. He has drawn many closer to Him in His Word. Well, this report has now told you straight from the Holy Spirit the way in which you are to give. In a great trial of affliction, there was the abundance of joy for these people at the time in which we are studying. Out of deep poverty came the riches of their liberality. Remember the account of Jesus watching the people give, and the widow who gave it all. I don't think I need to expound on that again. Jesus is standing right next to you and watching your giving — you may be absolutely sure. When it comes to this matter of giving, some people stop at nothing; and I mean that literally. Some very rich people throw in two little pennies and think they have given the widows mite — what fools — what hypocrites.

Alright, this leg of our expedition has been a little longer than other reports from second Corinthians, and I'm just going to leave it at this: if you aren't giving *EVERYTHING* — and I mean physically — then you aren't giving *ANYTHING*! And, even so, it must be done joyfully. *THEN* — and *ONLY* then — will giving bring you greater joy. It just doesn't work any other way. The blessing *ONLY* comes when giving *HURTS*! Don't believe it? Then you don't believe the Word of God — it simply cannot and will not ever be otherwise. It is more blessed to give than to receive; and most people have made complete hypocrites of themselves by ever saying that. Giving is grace; see that ye abound in this grace, also. The real test of your commitment to God is determined by what you give. As we move along in our safari in our next report, as I have already told you, it's going to be traumatic — and that's an understatement. Maybe you will want to skip that report, too — but I really hope you will read it ~

