



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Gift that Inspires All Gifts

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9; 9:15

DECEMBER 14, 2010

Tim Pauley / PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358 / 304.767.8430 / tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

Christmas is best known as a time of giving. Americans spend billions of dollars purchasing gifts for their families and loved ones. “Black Friday” has become a spectacle with folks lined up for hours in order to make sure they get a good deal on just the right gift. How did the giving of gifts become such a central part of the observance of Christmas? While Christmas has become much more commercialized and secularized over recent years, none can argue that at its heart it is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior. Perhaps the exchanging of presents may have come from other traditions, but in the truth of Christmas we find the greatest example of gift giving—that of God giving us His Son Jesus Christ. As we think about the gift God has offered to us, we should consider our response to this gift. We must be willing to receive this gift that God has extended to us. We should be overwhelmed with gratitude for what He has offered to us. And, as followers of Christ, we should follow His example of sacrificial giving.

Throughout the New Testament we see God’s sending of His Son and all that He provided us through Him described as a gift. John 3:16 reads, “**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**” In Romans 6:23 Paul writes, “**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” In James 1:17 we are encouraged by the words, “**Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...**” We describe all that God does for us as an expression of GRACE, which can be defined as God’s free gift to us which we in no way earn or deserve.

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian church we find two brief verses that vividly describe that gift God gave us in His Son, Jesus.

They are found in a passage on giving, so they are great for us to study at Christmas, the season of giving.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:15

BACKGROUND

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 the Apostle Paul is encouraging the church in Corinth to fulfill their commitment of a generous gift to help meet the needs of their Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem.¹ The believers there were in desperate need. The Jerusalem church was made up partially of pilgrims who had traveled there and heard the gospel through the ministry of Peter and the other apostles. After trusting Christ many chose to stay and become part of the church. They would have needed help and support. The believers in Jerusalem soon came to be persecuted which led to the loss of possessions and property. Palestine itself was a poor province of the Roman Empire. All this resulted in a group of believers who were in great need. The Corinthian believers had earlier made a promise of a generous gift to help, but evidently were failing to follow through. In these two chapters, Paul exhorts them to give generously, even sacrificially to help meet the needs. In doing so, he leaves for us the greatest teaching on sincere Christian giving found anywhere in Scripture.

Out of Paul’s practical exhortation to the Corinthian church on giving we find the two amazing verses listed above. We do not have time or space to consider this instruction other than to look at the real motivation for giving—the amazing, indescribable gift that Jesus gave to us.

BIBLE STUDIES

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14 * 8:00 A.M & 12:00 NOON * SENATE PRESIDENT’S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219) * BREAKFAST & LUNCH PROVIDED

The Gift that Inspires All Gifts

GOD'S GIFT TO US IS THE MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION FOR OUR GIVING TO OTHERS.

Paul lays out a number of reasons and motivations for giving in these two chapters. But the greatest of these reasons is this: “**..You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich**”. If Jesus sacrificed and gave so much for us, we should be willing to give to others.

Consider the extravagance of Christ's gift to us. “**He was rich..**” — This speaks of the eternal glory which He had with the Father before He came to earth. (John 17:5). “**He became poor..**”— This does not mainly refer to poverty Jesus experienced while on earth (laid in manger, nowhere to lay His head; a borrowed tomb). This is the God of heaven, the creator of the universe taking upon Himself a human body. This is Jesus who:

*Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross. **Philippians 2:6-8***

He did this out of “**grace**” and “**for our sake**”, that through His sacrifice we might “**become rich**”. Paul is not speaking of material riches and wealth. He is referring to the spiritual blessings of salvation provided through Christ's incarnation, sinless life, and His suffering and death on our behalf. This is His free gift offered to us. We do not give in order to earn God's favor, otherwise it would not be grace—it would no longer be a gift.

In closing his section on giving, Paul seems to be almost overwhelmed with the glorious truth of what God has given to us: “**Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**” Paul spends a great deal of time in his writings trying to describe what he says here is indescribable. God's glory and holiness are

indescribable. Our desperate need for a Savior because of our sin is indescribable. Not only the physical suffering upon the cross was amazing, but the punishment Christ took upon Himself in our place is indescribable. The love which drove Jesus to do this for those who were His enemies is indescribable. When we truly understand this, we are overwhelmed with thanksgiving for what He has done. We join Paul in doing our best to describe this indescribable gift.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

Our first response to this gift this Christmas season is to make sure we have received and accepted this gift. This is done simply through repenting and believing Christ. We turn from our sin and from trying to earn God's favor by what we do ourselves. We trust Jesus as our only way of salvation.

Secondly, as believers in Jesus, we should consider how we might give to meet the needs of others. There are many great principles of giving in these two chapters: give sacrificially, give proportionally, give willingly, have a plan. But most of all, Paul says we are to give out of love and thanksgiving for what God has done for us. We should note how Paul always links every area of Christian living to the truth of the Gospel.

- **HAVE YOU RECEIVED GOD'S INDESCRIBABLE GIFT OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN HIM?**
- **ARE YOU CONSIDERING HOW YOU MIGHT GIVE TO OTHERS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON?**

GOD GIVES US JESUS, GIVES US ETERNAL LIFE, GIVES US GRACE AND GLORY, GIVES US EVERYTHING IN FACT. THEN, MOVED BY LOVE TO HIM, WE GIVE OURSELVES BACK TO HIM AND TO HIS PEOPLE.

SPURGEON

¹ We read of this earlier commitment in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4