

Grace-Based Giving

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] I think spring came early this year. Is that what happened? I mean, I'm not complaining. But, yeah. They have what they call an Indian summer in the fall. What do you call it when it comes early in the spring?

I don't know. Is there a name for that? Just spring. Isn't there like some little animal, fuzzy animal that sees a shadow? The groundhog.

Yeah. Did that happen already? I don't know. You know, having kind of dreary, wintry days is character building, isn't it?

You have to have a good attitude despite of the dreary weather. But I still appreciate it when the sun comes shining out bright. It's like the wind in your sails, you know.

It helps out quite a bit, doesn't it? A few additional announcements here. Just last week we were praying for Amelia. And she was in the hospital and had gotten out, I think, that same Sunday.

[1 : 06] We had talked about that in church last week. And she's back home. She's doing much better. She's smiling and cheerful. It's wonderful to see you guys here in church this morning.

So we love you, Amelia. Don't go back to the hospital. By the way, with the fair sign-up, we'd love to see more names on there. But I think we passed the demarcation line there.

So I think we're ready to go ahead and sign up for that thing. We've got enough names on there to where we can go ahead and get that booked. So we'll have to make sure that we send in our registration or whatever it's called to see if we can get a booth.

So I'm super excited about that. Again, we'll maybe have some, like, training sessions. We'll talk about kind of what we're going to do specifically and what it'll look like. And maybe give a few pointers on things to say or discussion starters or just little things like that.

We'll look for that in the future here. Also, on the John 3.16 signs, I was talking to Lynette. She said some people, I guess the stakes, they don't make them like they used to, right?

[2 : 13] So some of them, like, broke in the wind or got really bent out of shape. But people might still have the sign, but their stakes are broken or damaged. Well, she's got extra stakes.

So if you have a sign in your garage from last year, I think we already ordered the signs for this year. So if you haven't ordered any at this point, I think they're already ordered. So we can't sign up for more.

But if you have a sign from last year or just needed stakes, she's got some extra ones. So see her after the service. Oh, okay.

So they're ordered, but there's extras. So if you do want some, yeah, go ahead and sign up. Thank you, Lynette. Appreciate that. Also, and then finally, on family night, it's the third Tuesday of every month except this month.

So we've made a slight change just because of our schedule. And so it's going to be that Thursday. So I don't know if it's the third Thursday, but it's the Thursday after the third Tuesday.

[3 : 16] So that same week, it'll be just a couple of days later that Thursday night. So I think we made a change to the bulletin. So the bulletin should have the right date.

Let me check here real quick. Yes, the 23rd is a Thursday. It says Tuesday. But is that a – I think that's a Thursday, the 23rd. Somebody check that on me.

All right. Yeah. Anything else I'm forgetting? And sometimes people come and say, could you announce this or that?

And then sometimes I forget to write it down. Anything else? All right. Sounds good. All right. Well, let's jump back into the message. So we're just doing like a two-week series here on Christian giving.

And it's interesting because I was reminded over these last couple of weeks of how much the Bible says about giving. There aren't just like ten verses or a couple chapters.

[4 : 15] There's like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of verses about giving. And so you could easily, when it comes to this topic, talk on and on and on about it.

But really the goal of this series or these two messages was to just compare and contrast two types of giving. A giving that is under obligation or under the law.

And we talked last week about tithing and what that looked like. And then today we want to talk about what does grace-based giving look like?

What does it look like to give to the needs of others in this age of grace that we live in? You know, the Jews, as we read the Old Testament, the Jewish people lived under a system of law where they had obligations and requirements.

And the law said, if you do these things, then you will be blessed. And the day in which we live, on the other side of the cross, is we live in the age of grace, where we're under grace and not under the law.

[5 : 28] And it's a very different kind of life. So many people have not recognized the difference, that there is a difference. A lot of people try to just merge those two kind of ways of life together.

And it causes issues and it causes problems. One of the most important things that we can do as Christians is learn to live by grace. Well, what does that look like?

Well, that's going to be the topic of today. I'm going to start with a story. Anyway, back, oh wow, over 20 years ago now, I think I was probably 19 years old maybe, had really just gotten a passion for the Lord, which is really neat.

Had kind of what I would call a personal revival. We were talking about revival. You know, they've got this thing in Asbury going on. And then that movie came out about the Jesus Revolution and the kind of revival, some people might call it, back in the 70s out in California.

And that kind of spread really across the country. But back when I was about 19, I had my own personal revival, where just passion and excitement for the Lord and digging into the scriptures and trying to know more about the Lord and what he says in his word and how to live my life for him.

[6 : 46] It was tremendous. And one of the things I love to do is find good Christian books to try to grow. And I had a job at a coffee shop. I was a barista.

Learned how to make coffee, cappuccinos and things. I never did like the taste of coffee, so I didn't drink it myself. But I liked the smell, so it was wonderful. But I learned how to make all the little coffee things.

But the owner of that coffee shop bought the little property next door, tore the wall down, and decided to put a little book shop right next door. It was just a tiny little thing, but he had all these used books in there.

And I was looking in there one day, and I found this book. It was called, Why Revival Tarrys? And that's kind of an old English word. Well, what does tarry mean? That's an old King James word that means just, why is revival on hold?

Why isn't it here yet? And I thought, well, that's a good question. You know, I kind of had this personal revival in my life. How come, you know, where's all the revival at in the world? So I grabbed the book, and I think I bought it, and I took it home and read through it.

[7 : 51] And the book, the message of the book was, you know, the reason there's not revival in our country is, and he listed all these things. You know, the preachers don't have unction in the pulpit, and they're not on fire for the Lord.

And Christians themselves, you know what? They don't pray enough. They should be praying more, and they should be studying the scriptures more. And he just listed all of these things.

And one of the things that he listed, and I remember this, I don't know why, but of all the things that he listed, one of the things he said was, you know that Christians, I don't think he said Christians, he said in America, Americans spend more money on dog food than they do on missions.

And I thought about that, and I thought, wow. You know, and he was saying, what kind of priorities are those, right? These Christians in this country are not prioritizing the right things.

So there was all kinds of things that he was talking about, things that Christians aren't doing that they really should. And if we did those things, then revival wouldn't tarry anymore.

[9 : 09] Revival would come. And so I thought, well, these are pretty good points. You know, I can look around and see lots of, you know, people not really living the Christian life the way that they

should, or at least the way that I thought they should, right?

And after reading that book, you know, I kind of turned out a little legalistic monster and kind of judging not only other people, but myself for, you know, not doing enough, right?

Not doing enough so that revival might come to our community or to the country. So I thought, well, maybe if I start doing these things, you know, giving more money to missions or praying more maybe or different types of things, then revival would come.

And then I also started doing that with my deadbeat Christian friends that weren't doing enough either. trying to get them to do more that revival might come.

You know what happened? After experiencing that personal revival in my life and having so much joy in the Lord and enjoying Him and the salvation that I had, that whole thing kind of ruined my Christian life.

[10:45] Just spoiled it. The joy started to fritter away. Specifically, in this topic of giving, my giving became more of a burden, right?

Because you got to do enough, right? You got to do enough in order to get that reward, whatever it might be, revival or something else.

And wouldn't you know it that despite my best intentions, I would fail at times to do enough. And you know what was even worse?

Is that there were times when I was really good at it. At doing enough. And I was successful for a while.

And what does that bring? Well, pride, right? I'm pretty good at this. And you know, regardless of whether I failed or was successful, but because of my focus on doing enough when it came to giving or any of these other things, whether I was successful and it led to pride or I failed and it led to guilt and condemnation and shame, both resulted in an outcome of feeling more separated, more distant from the Lord.

[12:19] And it really negatively impacted my Christian life in a significant way. And over time, a couple of years and really even longer than that, I had to learn something.

I had to learn how to live the Christian life the way that God meant for me to live it. To live the Christian life by grace. to learn to live by God's grace.

So last week, we talked about tithing. And tithing is a method of giving in which there is a requirement for exactly how much you should give, who you should give it to, what place you're supposed to give.

It's a legal requirement. And there are, it's not, there's very clear details to it. You don't get to just kind of pick and choose which parts you're going to do. It's an obligation.

It's required. It's a part of the law. And that's what Israel lived under with the tithe. And so many today in our Christian culture have kind of taken that idea of the tithe and decided, well, we'll put the same law on Christians.

[13:28] Because, well, you know, it's good to give, isn't it? Isn't it good to be generous? And so if we want people to be generous, one of the things we could do is we can create an obligation, a requirement.

And if we do that, more people will give. Right? Right? But that method of giving through obligation and requirement under the law given to Israel is different from what God wants to see giving from us today.

we're going to go to 2 Corinthians. And we're going to read out of there for a little bit. By the way, I expect to have some time for some questions or comments.

So as we're going through this and I'm talking through this subject, if anything comes to mind, we actually had a question last week that we'll get to.

But if anything comes to mind, write it down and maybe share it afterwards. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Really, if you want to do a study on giving, 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 are both great chapters to get into.

[14:47] A little bit of background. Paul was a missionary and he went around sharing the gospel of the grace of God really all over the Western world at the time.

All over Asia. And he had had a meeting we call the Jerusalem Council with the Christians that were in Jerusalem. There was actually a dispute.

He had these Jewish Christians who were continuing to keep the law and then Paul had received revelation from the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentiles but it had nothing to do with the Jewish

system.

It was a separate thing. So these Gentiles were not required to keep the Jewish law at all. And so God was doing something different with them. And so they had this you know there was this dispute and they came to terms they had they ended it with the right hand of fellowship.

They shook hands on it if you will like maybe we would say today. But one of the things they said at the end of this whole meeting said Paul I want you to go back out to your Gentile churches let them know that we talked about this they don't have to keep the law of Moses.

[15 : 57] That was something for the Jews that was something for Israel. Your converts they don't need to do that. But we have a request. Would you remember the poor? Would you remember the poor especially here in Jerusalem?

There's a lot of need and there was a lot of poverty among the Christians in Jerusalem and why was that? Well in this early church you had the day of Pentecost and all these people coming to faith and you had Jesus' original disciples and they were trying to get the word out to let them know hey Jesus said the kingdom is coming soon and we need to let everybody know all the Jews know so they can get ready for this kingdom that is coming and we need to put everything on the line. So what did people start doing? They started selling their homes well we need more money so let's just sell my house my property all my stuff because Jesus is coming soon and we need to get the word out.

We need to be all in on this. Well as as we've taught in the past or Pastor Marv has anyway this this whole thing kind of got put on hold because the Jewish leaders and Jewish people as a whole really rejected their Messiah and God turned to the Gentiles instead for a season that season as far as we can tell has lasted 2,000 years.

There's a time the Bible says when the time of the Gentiles will be complete and God will pick up again on that timeline of working with the Jews but because of what happened and so many sold their homes and land and their belongings these people were in desperate straits they were really struggling if you didn't have land or property especially back then you were in trouble today you can get by you know you get a good job and you can rent whatever but back then especially you know in a more agrarian agricultural society if you didn't have land you didn't have a good way to provide for yourself so Paul here is writing to the Corinthians and he's talking about receiving a gift for these believers that are in Jerusalem so that's that's the setup that's the context here so we'll read well we'll just start reading and talking about it so again 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 verse 1 moreover brethren we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality he's telling the Corinthians about excuse me another church in Macedonia and so he's referencing them as an example moreover brethren we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia he's saying you know

[18 : 54] God poured out his grace on those people notice that word grace God's grace grace means in the most generic sense favor God poured out his favor on these people in Macedonia and he explains why verse 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality liberality these are kind of words we wouldn't necessarily use today but liberality he means generosity the Macedonians were generous in their giving to these people who were in need and that was a sign of what of God's grace being poured out in their lives God's grace led to them being generous and so he's using them as an example these folks these believers in Macedonia verse 3 for I bear witness that according to their ability yes and beyond their ability they were freely willing imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints so notice how he uses this word free they were freely willing there wasn't any kind of obligation or requirement they knew that there was a need and out of the abundance of their heart completely free choice there was no pressure it sounds like that was administered they were freely willing and even to the point of urgency urgency imploring us with much urgency that we should that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints these Macedonians were like Paul we want to give to these people there was an urgency about it we love the believers in Jerusalem and we want to help them out would you take our gift please don't say no here we've collected this as an offering for them and we want you to make sure that it gets to them verse 5 and not only as we had hoped but they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God when he says and not only as we had hoped what he means is it was beyond what we had hoped you know we've been asking other

we've been asking churches that we've gone to for gifts to help out the believers in Jerusalem but these guys in Macedonia

Macedonia they gave even beyond what what we could have hoped but they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God so notice how how it puts that you know in this in this series we've been doing in the Sunday school class about the poverty cure there was the video this morning was really good but it was talking about the importance of the gospel and in our giving and in transforming people's lives you can help people who are in need physically meeting their material needs but that only goes so far in fact that's such a minor small thing when it compares to their eternity or their eternal soul if we put it that way and so here he mentions that these Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord what does that mean they just they just gave their whole lives they committed themselves to the

Lord their love for him and their desire to serve him and to minister in a way that would please him and then and then he says and then to us by the will of God so they first gave themselves to the Lord you know when your eyes are on heaven when you're pursuing the Lord then that kind of overflow right just impacts other people the love that you have for the Lord overflows and leads to love for other people verse 6 so we urged Titus that as he had begun so he should also complete this grace in you as well evidently I think maybe Titus had been sent ahead to Corinth and say hey Paul's coming and he's going to collect the gift could you guys work it might take some weeks or months to get the word out and make the collection so he's saying so he would also complete this grace in you as well notice how he uses that same word grace

God's grace had been poured out on the Macedonians and what did it look like it looked like this generosity and giving and so we told Titus we want to see the same thing among these Corinthians we want to see God's grace poured out and see them show generosity and giving in the same way verse 7 but as you abound in everything in faith in speech in knowledge in all diligence and in your love for us see that you abound in this grace also so Paul's saying you know we want you to grow spiritually to grow in grace in all aspects and there are dozens and dozens and dozens of different ways that we can grow in grace he lists here in your faith trust in the Lord that's growing in grace in your speech the way that you talk how you talk to people how you talk to your kids how you talk to your wife how you talk to your boss at work we have opportunities to grow in that in our knowledge in our diligence he says in your love for us he said of all these things we wanted to make sure that we didn't miss your growing in the grace of generosity and then he says this in verse 8

I speak not by commandment but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others he says I'm not telling you what you have to do that's what the law did the law tells you what you have to do I'm just giving you an opportunity there's this need and I want to make sure that you are aware of the opportunity and he says I'm testing the sincerity of your love now that might come across as well haha I'm going to see if you guys really love the Lord but I don't think that's what he's doing here at all I think he's just wanting to show hey I want to prove that you guys are growing in the Lord that your love for the Lord will express itself in generosity I want to give you an opportunity to show that not just to us but to everyone who's watching and you know when you have love in your heart that tends to express itself in different ways and one of those ways is through generosity and so again he says

[26 : 15] I speak not by commandment but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others that's kind of a weird phrase what does that mean by the diligence of others all he's saying is by the example of others I just gave you the example of the Macedonians and I'm giving you that as a way of encouragement they've been diligent to abound in this grace and don't you know that virtue is it can be caught you know when you see somebody they have that what's that phrase you pass it forward or pay it forward right we've heard that and so somebody does a kind act for you and you just have this like you know I want to pay it forward I want to pass that on to someone else when you see a good example that has an impact on our life a lot of times even more so than just a simple instruction you read an instruction you ought to do this this and this and that can maybe have an impact on us right but when you watch somebody live out the kind of life that you want to live you see them sacrifice something for others that has a big so he's saying

I'm testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others by what you saw as an example in others and then in verse nine for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that you through his poverty might become rich so he gave as an example these Macedonians and then he's giving another know the grace the favor of our

Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich Jesus the king of heaven the creator of heaven and earth before he became a man this is he's talking about this incarnation the Lord coming down to become like us was God rich was he rich did he have any needs in in heaven before he came down very rich rich beyond what we can imagine but for your sakes he became poor and not just poor in comparison to where he was in heaven but even poor in comparison to where even many people were in the earth that you through his poverty might become rich so we have the example of the Macedonians the people around us who are generous in their giving but the ultimate example is the one who gave more than we can even imagine a gift that is beyond compare you know there's a phrase I think it's in Colossians that talks about our riches in Christ our riches in Christ God truly has like he says here made us rich through his poverty he has made us this whole concept of of God becoming poor so that we might become rich the Bible also talks about terms like Jesus died so that we could what live Jesus died so that we could live he was brought low he was humbled that we might be lifted up he was wounded so that we could be healed it says in

Isaiah and so Jesus became poor he gave us a gift that's beyond any gift we could ever give so that we might have riches and Ephesians in Ephesians it says that we are blessed as Christians who are in Christ who have received that gift of salvation we are blessed with a few spiritual blessings in heavenly places is that what it says we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places there aren't any riches that have been withheld so we're rich already as believers in Christ we're blessed already we might think well if I give to this need over here or over there maybe there will be a benefit for me

I could get a blessing from God be more pleasing to him in some way or maybe even get a financial blessing and you know the Bible does talk about you know in Proverbs and in other places that there is this law of sowing and reaping right in Proverbs somewhere it says that the generous man tends to have his needs met and that kind of a seems like it's odd the more you give away the more financially blessed you are so we have these kind of natural laws and that works whether you're a Christian or not if you're a generous person it tends to lead toward more prosperity for you so that is true but of all the most important blessings we could ever get we have them all we have them all so for us to try to give a gift to someone else that we might earn something of value it's not really there and so what does that do since there's nothing really for us to earn and we might think well at times [32 : 30] I don't know about any of you but there have been times when I felt like I could really use not some spiritual blessings but some cold hard cash you know right and but that's not what God promised us like I said there's some general blessings if you live a certain type of way then you'll tend towards not guaranteed we see over the history of the world people have been faithful to God and everything they had was taken away because of their faithfulness not in spite of it but of all the things that are important you know the spiritual blessings that God has blessed us with are the most important and I think that cash in the bank we'll understand why God focused so heavily on the spiritual and not on the physical but because we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places and there's not really anything for us to earn that frees us up doesn't it it frees us up to love people without that without that self interest in trying to get something through giving to love

God through our giving to just invest in eternity just to be a blessing to others so why would someone why would anyone be generous if you don't have to if you're not going to get anything out of it why would anybody do that it's because we love people because we love them right the Bible talks about Jesus talked about you know what kind of a father would give like a rock as a gift to his son right or what did you say like a lizard or something or a snake why would you give that to your son you know if you love your son you're going to give them something you're going to be generous right and so the motivation for our giving is what matters more than the gift what is our motivation for giving to others and what

God wants from us is that our motivation every time would not be obligation would not be fear would not be guilt but would be love because we love them and we love people because why because he first loved us he loved us so much he gave us this amazing gift of eternal life through his blood he gave us everything and so our giving changes and this is grace based giving as compared to law based giving it's not just an obligation it's not just checking a box I did my Christian duty checking a box I gave to the poor box or whatever I'm not doing it to impress other people how good of a person I am we give because it's a way to love others just as

God loved us so let's just talk about a few different ways that we as Christians can be generous can give you know we have lots of opportunities is there any end of opportunities any end of need around us there's not we have we can give to church we can give to missions we can give to ministries evangelistic ministries crisis pregnancy center we have neighbors that sometimes fall into desperate straits and have needs and so how do we choose what we give to one over the other how do we prioritize does the church come first and then missions and then the crisis pregnancy center and then our neighbor if we have anything left is that how we do it no we give as using the wisdom that

God has given us and the love that's in our heart and so there are times where you might give more to one area of need because you see the greatness of the need and others where other times where you give a little less here and a little more over here you know when it comes to a subject matter like tithing you know you have a specifically what are churches looking for cash right and you know we don't just take cash here at this church I mean we'll take fur coats and television sets and no I'm just teasing giving is not just money right and I know there have been seasons in my life where money was very very tight

[38 : 14] I needed to make sure I took care of my obligations paid the bills so that the light stayed on but does that mean that you can't give anything you can't give in your life because you're strapped for cash absolutely not you can love people by through the time that you spend with them helping someone out using the skills you have the labor the time that you might have available and there are times in my life as a young Christian especially when you're young and poor that you know I didn't have much to give financially but I loved the church I loved serving the Lord and found opportunities to spend a weekend doing some kind of ministry service helping others and that's a great way to give hospitality is another way opening up your home in fact

Paul talks about different as you read through Paul's epistles he'll mention different people who's helped him along the way and some people it was monetarily other people you know they supported him with housing giving him a place to stay other kinds of ways making meals right is a way to help people sometimes people they don't necessarily need money but they're going through such a hard time just spending the time making a meal is a real burden right now and so you know giving them a pre-cooked meal so that they don't have to worry about that is such a tremendous blessing you know there are seasons of life that impact how we give there are times especially when you're younger and you're just starting your family and you need to really invest in your family and you don't have as much to give and I've seen some people fail at that where you know from the outside looking in and you know we don't always know exactly what's going on but at times it seemed to me you know what this person instead of giving so much over here to external ministries or whatever they probably should have invested more in their family because really that is our first priority isn't it to take care of our family and so there are families that you know have young kids kids and really want to keep mom home because they want mom to be able to raise the kids and so that means dad's got to work extra and there's there's less you know instead of two incomes you have one income and that's harder especially in this culture and so there's a season of life where maybe you know what we're not going to give like we used to maybe maybe before you're before you're married or when you're married and you don't have any kids yet you know you're being really generous to church or other ministries or different things and then all of a sudden you go from two incomes to one we've got to make tough decisions and you want to invest in your family and what a tremendous thing to invest in something that is of such importance there are times maybe towards the later years of your life where maybe you have more money now but you have parents who are aging and they have physical needs or financial needs sometimes and so your resources need to go there because that is the priority and you know what that's good and it's wonderful you know there are people out there that feel guilty because they had to cut back on their church spending or their church giving or giving to other ministries because of these needs it's just incredible to me and then there are churches out there that would make them feel guilty about that what a horrific thing somebody's investing in their family whether it's their children or their parents and they're being made to feel guilty about that you might have a neighbor and their car breaks down and they just they're too strapped for cash they don't have enough money to fix that vehicle and so you might decide you know what

I don't have a lot of money saved up I can't really just you know just write a check but maybe what I'll do is I'll just hold off on giving the regular giving that I do for my church for a few months so that I

can give them a gift to help them get back on their feet or you know maybe you've been saving up for you know that new set of furniture right and you're about ready to buy it and then this need comes up you know what I really want to find a way to love them and so we can wait another four or five months to get that furniture let's meet this need right now the other thing that comes to mind is especially in light of this video that we've been watching when there's a there's a I think the first one is when helping hurts or when charity hurts the first part of this poverty cure and when you're giving is just checking off a box it's easy to just you know find somebody or some cause to donate to and not really give too much thought about it you're just kind of checking off a box you just you have that percentage that you're giving and find a place to go to but when you're giving because you love people you tend to be more wise and to think through what you're giving to and they talked in that video about ways that especially

I think it's mostly focused on overseas giving to poverty that's typically overseas but really it could be anywhere and when you give to someone that ends up hurting them when that guy is on the corner of the street you know just asking for money and you know everybody knows exactly where he's going to go as soon as you give him that ten bucks where's he going he's going to the liquor store right and so that might make you feel good it might make you feel proud that you gave to someone but if your giving is coming from a heart of love and compassion you might find some other way to help him won't you right that's not going to hurt him so last question here if you are in a place where you don't feel like you're as generous as you want to be and we all have opportunities in our lives to grow spiritually to grow in character to grow in generosity to as the bible says as we just read to abound in grace well how do we do that how do we make that shift

I recognize that I'm a little bit stingy but I want to grow in virtue and there could be a temptation to say you know what I'm going to do I'm going to go to this Jewish law about tithing and I'm just going to give 10% whenever I get a paycheck I'm going to do the math and I'm going to give 10% and then I'll feel better that I've kind of I've become a more generous person that could be a temptation and you think oh I'll become a better person that way just follow the Jewish tithe at least what we think is the Jewish tithe or I could just create my own obligation and say God I promise that I'm going to give you this much or whatever it might be we create our own regulations for ourselves or we might think you know what if I just kind of beat myself up all the time about kind of what a loser I am because I'm so stingy maybe that'll help just like take the law you know and just like beat myself over the head with it just come under guilt and focus on my guilt and condemnation and those things might work for a while but even if they work and there's actually more giving coming from you is that what

[46 : 47] God really wants does he just want to see that transfer of money or resources or whatever is that what God really wants no God wants us he wants our hearts God's goal for us is for him to have you and for you to have him he wants to transform us from the inside out to be like he is and have you ever asked this question why is God so generous why has he been so generous to us is it because he felt guilty and I I'm kind of a loser I should probably be more generous to people I shouldn't keep all this stuff to myself is that why he's so generous is it because there's some kind of a commandment and an obligation on him that he's got some kind of ten commandments up on his wall and he's like I gotta follow that commandment and so that's why

God is generous to us is that why he gives why is it that he became poor so that we could become rich the reason he did that is because he has he had and has a love that is wider and longer and deeper and higher than we can even comprehend a love for us and we want to get that love that he had and has in his heart we want to get it in us and be transformed to be more like him one more verse and we'll end with this Ephesians chapter 3 in Ephesians there's two two sections where Paul prays for the Ephesians he says hey I want you guys to know I'm praying for you in Ephesians 1 and then again in

Ephesians chapter 3 and I want to look at his prayer in Ephesians chapter 3 and I like these because these are actually good prayers if you want to know how to pray go to Paul's epistles and see how he prays and it's a good template for how we can pray and these are prayers that we can pray not just for others but we can pray for ourselves too have you ever prayed for yourself anybody yeah is that wrong sometimes it feels guilty oh I shouldn't pray for myself of course we should pray for ourselves but we can follow this Ephesians 3 14 says this Paul says for this reason I bow my knee sorry Ephesians 3 14 through 19 for this reason I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named that he would grant you

according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might through his spirit and the inner man that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of God which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God Paul knew that the way that he could get Christian maturity and growth from the Ephesians is for them to grow in knowledge and understanding not knowledge and understanding of a list of rules which is the temptation that we all have if we just grow in the knowledge if we can just memorize those ten commandments memorize all those proverbs about what we should and shouldn't do if we could just do that then we'll grow and that doesn't work but if we can grow in the knowledge of him and his love and start to comprehend the height and the depth and the width and the breadth of that love that will transform us so we want to grow not just in giving but in every virtue and this applies not just to giving but to every virtue we want to grow to be like him we need to know him more and more and grow in our knowledge of his love and what he's done for us always reminding what he has done for us amen he's so good to us isn't he he's so good to us well we'll we'll end there and see if anybody wrote wrote down anything for us to talk about any comments or questions yeah go ahead

Caleb we are a runner anyone right up here the front in chapter it's on in chapter nine there it talked about you give because of what's in your heart yeah you give with a joyful heart and you cannot have a joyful heart if you're grudgingly given to this call yeah not of obligation not grudgingly but from a cheerful or a joyful heart that's right I always like to know how the story ends yeah how did it turn out did they give generously oh they're in the Corinthians let's see I mean it seems so it seems so I don't know is anybody

[52 : 43] I don't know if there's any hints in the Bible beyond what we kind of read there in those two chapters I don't know if anybody else knows but it sounds like he was pretty confident that they would anyway yeah Ron go ahead and take the mic oh I'm sorry when he was going back to Jerusalem there when Paul was going back he was bringing those gifts to them yeah and it was from multiple locations Macedonia and Corinth and I'm sure other places too he was bringing gifts from all those different places I wonder if he had armed guards sounds like a lot of money he was bringing any other thoughts or so kind of like with just the contrast of law and grace when you look at giving it seems that you know there's this hang up

I think with people to say well we can't just trust people to do the right thing yeah right and really what that is it's a lack of faith in God right it's really a lack of faith in God to his spirit that he will actually work in the hearts of his people and so I think that's one of the things that comes to mind right when we're talking about this and every time with law and grace when we put people under the law we're basically telling God you know I don't think you know what you're doing really here you know here's a better way you know if we put them under obligation throw on a little guilt and that does something but it's not God's perfect way for us to grow in those areas so that's so good right up here yeah when you were mentioning people who were begging for things that on the side of the road and you figure oh they're just going to go get alcohol or drugs these people are sinners and they're in need just like all of us and quite often we don't do things because we judge you know that differently than we would other sins and it's important and it's hard sometimes to know like as a woman especially how do you you know do things without giving them money how do you do things for someone in a situation like that but you know

I think it's important that we at least try and think about ways that we can love them because I've heard testimonies I heard one this last week about the change in a life because of the love that was deposited in that person's life and it wasn't the money it was the time spent with them so I think that's important to remember that no matter what situation if the Holy Spirit leads you to give whatever it is whether it's money or time or food or whatever we should obey that and not be living in fear that's good you know it's easy right to say well I know what they're going to do with that money and just walk away and it's not like you have to stop every time there's somebody asking for money but there are ways to help them I have a friend he owns the heating and cooling company he has a past out of cycles of addiction and so he hires them he says come work for me and I'll give you a second chance you know your life's a mess right now but you know what you need you need a job you need a job and he invites them to Bible studies and you know what most of the time he's just kicking on the butt he's doing that a lot he's you know they got custody of their kids again they're back in the house maybe they even restored their marriage and they're like you know

thanks for kicking me in the backside that's what I really needed and so there are ways to help and ways we can and we need to look for those and not just be always well you know because it is a lot of times these are people we don't get where they're coming from and it just seems like they're a hopeless cause and we should be willing at times when there's opportunities to go that extra mile anything else okay

Caleb when you said earlier about some people feel guilty praying for themselves if nobody prayed for themselves no one would go to heaven wow that is hugely insightful isn't it that's exactly right all who call upon the name of the Lord right will be saved I love it anything else going once all right back back there is Lynette you know something small you can do for somebody that may change their life if they're on a corner or something sometimes I'll have extra things or get something like bags of pretzels from the dollar tree or something and just put several of them in a Kroger bag and bring home from church here one of the daily breads and stick that in and when you see somebody roll down your window and hand them that bag and they don't know what's in it you don't know how that's going to impact them it might do something and you don't have to give them money but here you're feeding them a little bit and feeding them spiritually too that's so true and you know it's so easy to think they're just going to throw that in the trash but

[59 : 10] I've heard stories somebody gave me this tract or this thing and I read it and I never knew that God loved me or I never knew that I could have eternal life I don't know how many times I've heard that from people and we think they're just a drunk they're not going to read that they don't care about that and maybe most of the time right that's true maybe most of the time but we shouldn't let that stop us right anything else Caleb there was a story well when you said they're probably going to throw that in the trash that reminded me of a story of this guy got a track in the mail he threw it in the trash and when the maid came to clean it out she saw the track in the trash and became a Christian oh wow so it yeah nice what does the

Bible say his word does not return void his word does not return void all right let's let's end in a word prayer father today we pray for ourselves what Paul prayed for the Ephesians that you would open up the eyes of our understanding each and every day and some of us you know we've been Christians for a while we think we understand your love I mean we've heard the stories over and over and over again but do we really renew in us just give us a refreshed understanding open our eyes even further to show how much you have loved us that that love is so contagious would be set afire in our hearts afresh again today in Jesus name amen amen thanks everyone thank you