

April 27, 2003 Pm

by Stephen Fenton

The sermon emphasizes that biblical giving is rooted in grace and the condition of the heart rather than legalistic obligations like tithing.

Duration: 45:47

Scripture: Proverbs 6:6

Topics: "Faith And Provision", "Gods Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a woman named Sarah who found herself in a difficult financial situation while having to provide for her five college-aged children. Despite the challenges, Sarah joined a mission trip to Ireland and relied solely on prayer for financial provision. After a church service, Sarah received a generous gift from an anonymous donor, which brought her extreme joy. The speaker emphasizes that the amount of money is not important, but rather the transformation that occurred in Sarah's heart, leading to generosity even in the midst of poverty. The sermon challenges the myth that the church needs rich people and highlights the importance of God's grace and love in times of difficulty.

Transcript

It truly is light for our feet, lamp for our path, and Lord, we just thank you that in it there is such wisdom and freedom. Thank you, Lord, that there is such a revelation of Jesus. Lord, we acknowledge again and unashamedly we do it every time we come to this book, Lord, that without you we won't even understand it.

We are that much in need of you. And so we give you our hearts and our minds and ask that you will touch both and refresh and teach us and fill us this evening. For your name's sake and for your glory.

Amen. As most of you know, for 15 years I was the pastor of the church in Marguerite Valley, Nova Scotia. And over those years there was only one thing that I disobeyed the elders over.

Well, I mean, as far as I remember anyway. There may have been other things, but there was one thing they kept coming back to me every year with. One thing I kept saying no to.

And I caused some distress to them, but in the end they tolerated my strangeness and let me just get on with it. But every year, every year, the same elder would come to one of our elders' meetings and say, it's

time you preached about giving. Every year he'd come.

Our last pastor, he'd say to me, who is also a guy I know very well, he preached once a year about giving. And that was just a good kick in the, you know what, for our people. And they needed that little boost just so that they could understand and appreciate what giving was all about.

And I would say no. And I would say no every year. And I would say to them, my practice is that I preach through books.

And if in that given book that the Lord leads us to, there's teaching about giving, then I'll preach about giving. Otherwise I'm not touching it. The same elder would say to me, and another thing, he said, when you teach and when you speak about giving, you've got to tell our people they need to be tithing.

And that was another thing I wouldn't do. And I would usually say to him, show me in the New Testament where it says anything about tithing. And of course he would fluster and bluster and say, but it says in the Old Testament and it's a good sort of business for giving and we should be encouraging our people to give.

And I would say no. So on that issue we had disagreement. And I suspect that as I speak about giving in the next few weeks, because we're going to be in two chapters which speak about it, I may find some of you disagreeing with me too.

I'm okay with that as long as you will be too. And as long as we can see what the Word says and enjoy the truth that comes to us in the New Testament. How about this important issue? You know, giving is often used as a weapon in people's lives.

Giving can be a thing of great terror in the church, a burden of great weight. It doesn't matter what your background is. It doesn't matter what church you've been to in the past.

Any church, every church has been guilty at times of laying this burden upon its people. Whether it's because of some new project or because the giving is dying in general or because they feel that it's a very big part of your expression of your Christianity. The church has laid burdens on people about giving.

As God gives me breath, we are not going to do that here. I would rather that we have nothing than put a burden on people to give that is unbiblical. So I want to lay before you in the next few weeks what I believe is the biblical New Testament teaching about giving.

And later I hope some of the Old Testament stuff as well. In fact, I hope we'll do that tonight. But as we do, let's open our hearts to what the Lord has to say.

And see that God will bless us if we do, because he will. Giving will not be a problem. It really won't be.

So I'm here. I'm here in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and behold, it speaks about giving. So that's what we're going to do over the next little while.

Not because it's the time of the year, not because the elders asked me to, but because this is where we're at in this book. 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 1 begins, And now brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. And here is the very first thing that I want to say about giving in the New Testament.

Giving in the context of the church of Jesus in the New Testament. That it's all about grace. Now that's not something really that should surprise us, because everything about the Lord Jesus in the New Testament is about grace.

Is it not? And what is grace? Keep going, Morris. You're in the right... Favor. Yes, that's it.

God's unmerited favor. It's God's blessing toward us. In every way, in every real way, practically, spiritually, emotionally, it's God's touch upon our lives.

It's God's willingness to reach out and bless us. It's when God commits Himself to us. That's what grace is.

And that's what's at the heart of the New Testament message. It is by grace, the Bible says in the New Testament, in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9, We are saved through faith, and this not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, so that no man should boast.

All that we have in the New Testament, all that we have in our relationship with God, if it's true and real, is about God's favor toward us. The whole balance of the New Testament teaching is that grace is not about what we do for God, but what He does for us. Now that must affect how we understand giving.

And as Paul begins to speak about it here in 2 Corinthians, and he spoke about it briefly at the end of 1 Corinthians, he comes right away to lay the groundwork for giving in the New Testament by saying, I want you to understand, brothers, about the churches in Macedonia, which would be Philippi, Thessalonica, and churches like Berea, which you read about in the Acts of the Apostles. I want you to understand the grace, the favor that God has given to them. Because out of that grace came their gift.

And so he says this in verse 2, Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability entirely on their own. So here's something that we can say right away after we say that the giving of the New Testament church is about grace.

It's about God's work in us. It's about what God does for us. It's not about what we're doing for Him.

The first thing we can say about that giving, the first thing we can say about that grace, is that it came in the lives of these people out of trial. Now, isn't that interesting? Most people, when they think about giving, think of it coming out of richness, out of ease, and out of financial blessing. This giving, the giving that came out of grace, came out of severe trial.

It flowed from joy. And it came from extreme poverty. And because of those three things, and in those three things, severe trial, overflowing joy, and severe poverty, their hearts welled up, the Bible says here.

It literally means their hearts sprung up. It's the idea of a spring in the mountainside that is gushing water. That's what happened in their hearts.

God exercised His grace toward these people. He poured out His blessing upon them. He loved them.

He rescued them from sin. He rescued them from an empty way of life passed down to them by their forefathers. He showed them the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He drew them to put their faith in Jesus. And then they went into times of difficulty. That happens.

Anybody who tries to tell you that being a Christian is an easy thing is lying to you. It's not an easy thing. It's never been easy to be a true believer.

And these people went into severe persecution and severe trial. And yet even in the midst of all of that, even as we mentioned this morning, there are those who by grace, not by their own strength, can still stand and say, Jesus is Lord. And out of that trial, in the midst of that joy, in deep poverty, generosity welled up.

Isn't that strange? It seems so opposite from the world. Chad and I were driving home from a meeting last week and we were talking about things like this. And we both decided that there's a myth.

It's propagated in the churches. And we're prone to believe it and we're prone to suffer because the church needs rich people. And there are some churches that court rich people or people who are very well off in order that they might get from those people what they think they need.

Thinking that if, well, if we could just get so-and-so to come to our church, you know, he's on a six-figure salary. He could be a real good giver. And we could get on with the project.

You know, it's a myth. Giving in the New Testament, the giving of the Lord's people has nothing to do with richness. It has everything to do with grace.

It is not that we need rich people in the church. And don't get me wrong. If you happen to be rich, we're glad you're here.

But we're not interested. We're not interested in you for your money's sake. And if you happen to be poor, we're glad that you're here.

And if you happen to be like most of us, just sort of making it every day and getting the bills paid and still sweating at the end of the month like most of us as you do the budget, you're welcome too. Because giving is not about whether you're able to give or not able to give. It's about grace.

It's about God touching your life with mercy. It's about freedom that comes within. It's about forgiveness of sin.

Most of all, it's about acceptance. Acceptance. Acceptance as we are, not as we should be.

And the grace of God flowing into and out of our lives. It's about even times when we're persecuted or times when we're poor, that joy wells up. And I said to Chad as we were talking about this, you know, the most generous people I've ever known have always been the people who were the least able to express their generosity, practically speaking.

And that is so true. And I'm sure you know it as well. If you've been in the church any length of time, the people that have been the sweetest and the most generous to you, if you're a Christian who's been blessed by other Christians, are the people who can't afford to give.

I think of Anora, who is an old friend of ours from Sheddekamp, Nova Scotia. A lady who lived in some of the poorest circumstances I have ever seen in North America. Who lived in persecution every single day of her life as an adult.

Who experienced some of the most stringent and most difficult times. A lady with five children who when we got to know her, was married, but then through no fault of her own found herself thrown out of her home and having to take care of her kids. Found herself in a context where she had to provide for five children, and all of them under college age.

Just during that time, Sarah was part of a mission trip to Ireland. And as was true of all of our mission trips, we asked the Lord to provide the money. We didn't have any fundraising.

We didn't do anything except pray and ask God to provide. One day after our church service, I believe it was, a little Anora came up to Sarah with a packet. And in that packet, there was a generous gift.

And the way she gave it, she didn't want anybody to know. She walked away with extreme joy in her heart as she hugged Sarah and wished her the very best. Wished her great joy as she went on this mission trip.

And we were stunned. Just stunned when Sarah got home and told us how much money there was in that packet. It's not important how much it was, whether it was 30 cents or \$300.

See, it's not about how much. It's about what God has done in your heart. You remember the story of the widow's night.

It's so true. It's so true. Jesus and His disciples sat, and Jesus must have done it deliberately, sat near the place where the collection boxes were.

The Hebrews did not receive an offering. They were clearly not Baptists. They had freewill offering boxes that lay at the first entrance to the temple.

And that was the way they received their offerings. Nobody was ever asked to give anything. You were supposed to just lay your money there as you went in or as you came out.

Most people put it in on the way into church. As they were watching it, they were watching the Pharisees go and put their expensive gifts in with great flurry, with great desire for everybody to see what they were doing. And then they watched an old woman come, and as she came, you know what she put in.

You know this story. What did she put in? She put in a mite, which in the ancient world was nothing more than a half penny. But as Jesus looked at His disciples, and He asked them to think about what was the value of the gift, He said to them, this gift was valuable because it was all this lady had.

Nowhere in the Scripture does God ask anybody to give all they have. Nowhere. In this chapter we'll see, not this week, but we'll see soon, God does not ask us to give more than we have.

But it is always fascinating to me that when people are touched by grace, remember this morning we talked about the fingerprint of God in someone's life. You know, when someone is touched by grace, one of the clear evidences is even an extreme trial, overflowing joy, and a generosity that springs out of difficulty, even poverty, to be good to others. It's a sure sign of God's life in ours.

God doesn't ask us to give beyond our means, but often that was what happened. And it was what happened when Jesus saw this woman go in and He said, this is wonderful because although it was so little, it was her whole heart. See, that's where it is at as far as God is concerned.

Not how much you give, but what's in your heart when you give. Whether it's a reflection of all that God has given you. And you're not measuring out how much and whether it's enough and whether it measures up to any standard that is set.

It is simply a springing joy. It's like the spring that comes from the mountain. You know, you don't measure the spring that flows from the mountain.

You just put a pipe to it and you capture all that's there. And sometimes the pressure is greater, sometimes it's less, but it just springs up and you accept whatever's given. That's the way God looks at giving.

And it comes from the source that is in the mountain. And it has everything to do with what is going on under the ground. So giving has everything to do not with the law any longer, but what's going on in the heart.

Now let me answer you a simple question. Why it is I don't believe that tithing has any connection with the New Testament anymore? And why it is I don't expect or encourage people to tithe? It's not in the New Testament. Do you know why? Because it's law.

What was the tithe? The tithe was a tax. It was a tariff. It was laid as a burden upon the shoulders of the Old Testament people because the priests who had no inheritance in the land, they were not allowed to own land, had no homes of their own, they were not allowed to own homes of their own, had nothing.

And God said to the priests, I will be your inheritance. And then He said to the Old Testament people now to take care of those who minister in the temple. I'm going to lay a burden on your shoulders, a tariff.

I'm going to put a law in place. Give them ten percent, not just of your money, but even of your food and of your first fruits and of your harvest. And so that was the law.

We are not under law. We are under grace. The principle of grace is not the principle that makes me measure it out and make sure I am up to the standard and make sure that everybody knows.

The principle of grace is not about what's going on on the outside. It's not about how much money it is. It's what's going on on the inside.

It's if Jesus has touched me. And to be sure, if Jesus has touched me, then even in the midst of trial, as was with the Macedonian churches, overflowing joy will come and a spring will come up and when there's a need presented, people will respond. And they'll respond with deep happiness and even in deep poverty because of grace.

Isn't that an awesome thing? We don't teach the tithe. I will never teach people the tithe because it's law. Someone will say, oh, you're antinomian, which for theologians means, oh, you're against the law.

I just don't believe that the law is any longer written on tablets of stone. I don't believe it's assessed on the outside. I believe that now the law is written within.

And the law of love and the law of grace overflows in generosity. And I'll show you the standard of the New Testament. You think that the standard of the tithe is a good standard? Some people think the standard of the tithe should be applied all over the New Testament church.

That is such a low standard by the New Testament principles. And that's law. It puts a burden on people.

I said to you two weeks ago, everything that God has ever required in respect to His law has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Everything God has ever asked for, Jesus has provided. Hallelujah! We are not expected to give a cent.

The law is no longer on the outside in reference to us. Hebrews chapter 8 tells us it has become obsolete. It's been fulfilled in Jesus.

There is no longer a priesthood that needs support. We're all priests in the kingdom of heaven. And God supports each and every one of us through His mercy and grace.

Hallelujah! We're not under law. We're under grace. And it's in grace that this rich generosity was shown.

Listen to what Paul says in verse 3. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own. Listen to verse 4. They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

Doesn't that sound a little odd to you? I mean, how often has it happened that getting to the end of the service on a Sunday morning and I've forgotten to receive the Baptist offering. That someone has stood up and said, Steve, I just want to give. You forgot to give us the opportunity.

I love God so much. I want to give. I've never had that happen.

I've had a treasurer stick his hand up. Not here. But a treasurer stick his hand up in Marguerite's... I forgot the offering.

Things are low. We need to get the offering in. There was one guy in Marguerite every week.

And I forgot it consistently. I'm one of those people who don't even think about it. That's true generally.

And I have to say, sometimes that's because I don't bear the burden. Marie will tell me off for being so blase about money because actually she does the budget in our house. She often worries about the budget.

She worries sometimes too much. I don't worry because I don't work for you. I work for God.

And if I starve, it's his problem. And actually, as you can see, I'm not starving. And that's true of the church.

If the church cannot function, if the church cannot pay me, if the church cannot pay Kevin, who's our other full-time minister, if the church cannot go forward in its desires to serve people and have the money, that's God's problem. It's not your problem. We're not going to beat you over the head about it.

We're not going to tell you that you're not giving enough. We're not going to lay down any law. If the money is not there to do a project, you know what? It's because God doesn't want it done.

Because if God touches people's hearts with His mercy, then even in extreme poverty, generosity will overflow. I have no fear nor no doubt about overflowing quite much. Not about what's on the outside, but about what's in the heart.

Amen? That will be true of every project, everything that we're asked to do, everything that we need to do in order to serve people. And it says here, on their own, they urgently, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing. What a sweet thing.

I've had that happen. I have a friend in Mexico who is a missionary, a good friend of Erica's. Where are you? Oh, there you are.

She's here because of Jim. Here is a man who has often urgently pleaded with me for the privilege of giving. For a time in Marguerite, I felt the Lord call us as a family to go off of salary, and we did until the church got so embarrassed by us that they forced us back on salary again.

They were so embarrassed because it looked to the world like they weren't providing for us. They were worrying far too much about nothing. But they made me do it.

I had to go back on salary. In the two and a half years that we were off salary, God provided for us abundantly. And in one of the ways He provided was through this man, Jim.

Jim had appeared on our doorstep by accident a couple of years before this touring in Nova Scotia. This lovely, huge Texan man, six foot seven, gentle giant. How tall are you Cliff? Six seven.

So the same height as Cliff and just as sweet and gentle as Cliff is. And you know, he got a burden and a delight in what God was doing in our ministry. Now he lives totally by faith.

This man trusts God for every bite that goes through his mouth. He lives in the mountains in which province? Sonora in Mexico. He serves the Lord there.

But every year he sends me a gift. And it's a considerable gift. Sometimes he tells me what the Lord has told him it's for.

Sometimes he doesn't. And I have often said to him because I'm no longer living in the way that he is, I'll say, Jim, I feel bad. He'll say, you shouldn't feel bad.

He says, I don't. The Lord has not told me not to give it to you, so you've got to let me give it to you. Tell me how.

Tell me which way you want it to come. And every time we go through this little dance, but Jim, you understand now, I'm sorry. I understand that, but God has not told me not to give.

Now he's the man living by faith. I'm the man on salary. And he's giving to me.

It just doesn't make any sense. But it's grace in his life. That's all it is.

He delights to give, and he plays with me to give. The last time he called me was just before Christmas, and he said, I think that this is for a mission trip. He knew nothing of the African mission trip.

I had already decided that I couldn't go, that it wasn't possible for me. Quite happy, I accepted it. I was rejoicing in the fact that others were able to go.

Jim called up and said, I think this is for a mission trip. Two thousand miles away, the Lord said to him, Jim, give, because Stephen needs money. So he called, and he pleaded for the joy of giving.

He called me one time, and he had a gift, and he said, I've got to give it to you. I said, I don't need it. He said, I've got to give it to you.

Sent it away. A week later, after we'd had our little fencing match on the phone, a week later, he called me back, and he started chuckling on the other end of the phone. He said, you know, Brother Stephen, or Brother Fenton, he never calls me Brother Stephen.

He shows me great respect. He doesn't really know me that well, I don't think. He shows me great respect.

He said, you know, Brother Fenton, that's what he calls me. He said, I give you a gift, and he told me exactly how much it was. He said, you know, I've been doing this for years.

I have been trying to out-give God. He said, honestly, he said, I have, I've been trying to out-give God. You know what? I can't out-give him.

He said, a week and a half ago, I sent, I wired this money to you, and he gave me the exact, and he said, five days later, I had a guest arrive from a brother who was supporting me in Texas, and he said, do you know how much it was? It was exactly what he'd sent to me. He said, I can't out-give God. You know, we worry too much about our giving.

We look at our own, our own lives, and we think, oh, we can't afford it. These people couldn't afford it. Oh, we can only give so much.

We can only give our tithe this month. If God touches us, we will overflow with generosity, and as a need is presented to us, we will express God's love in our lives, and we will never out-give the Lord. He will never be a debtor to us.

It should never be an issue. Time and time again, the Lord has taught us about this. We saved up a great deal of money in order to adopt a Chinese baby, and we worked hard in order to get that money in the bank, and we were all set to go, and then the Lord called us to P.E.I. and said, put the money into the house that you're going to build when you go there, and we stomped around and had a little bit of a tantrum and pited for a while and put the money into the house.

It was gone, invested into our home. Never regretted it. Our home is the Lord's, the place of mission and ministry.

It still is. It always will be, but we had no more money left. Two friends of ours who have two Chinese children of their own and are in the process of adopting a third African child came to us and said, so how are things going with the process? Now we had prayed with them.

We had felt that God was telling us that we needed to do this. Our hearts had been bind already even though we didn't know this baby yet, to a baby that is yet unborn. We knew that the Lord wanted us to do this, but the money was gone, and so they asked us.

We hung our heads and said, we just can't do it. We had the money, but we had to spend it, and just occasionally, just occasionally, I get rebuked. I say I get rebuked a lot, but this was one such occasion.

It was by a woman. It was hard to take, and she looked at me and she said, Steve, what on earth are you talking about? Do you believe that God is in this? I said, yes. We both believe that God is in this.

Do you still believe that God wants you to have this baby? I said, yes, we really do. The money is not an issue. How could money be an issue? I said, yes, God is in this.

You just keep moving forward, and God will provide, and no matter what it seems you need, God will be there to provide it for you. You know what? We have been for well over a year now. It seems to take forever.

It's the hugest, most outrageous, lengthy process I've ever been in in my life, but every stage, when we have looked at our bank account and had no money, but needed to pay a bill in relation to this, this desire we have to be a ministry and to rescue one little girl from a life of absolute emptiness, the money has been there. Sometimes we've gathered a little bit, thinking, oh yeah, this will be for that. And then God puts another need in our faces that has nothing to do with that, and we have to give it away.

So there's nothing left, so that when it comes to the next step for the other thing, He can provide it for me. And He has been faithful, has He not? And we're still only about halfway through the process. A social worker who did our home study was an interesting lady who asked us everything from the toothpaste we use to the major issues of our lives.

And when it came to our finances, she would look at me and she'd say, it's really not a whole lot of money. And we would say, no, there's not. Well, how are you going to do this? You know exactly what the Canadian and the Chinese government asked us.

We don't know. Well, what am I going to write down? And we can't tell you. All we can tell you is this, that every time there's been any part of this process that has needed provision because we believe God is in this, we believe God will provide.

Now this lady wasn't a Christian. But after the second time she asked us about our finances, we spent two and a half hours sharing the Lord with her. Because she saw that there was something that came not out of rationale, but out of relationship.

She saw that there was something that was coming from our hearts that had to do with what God was doing for us, not what we were doing for Him. She saw that He was faithful because we were able to pay her when we shouldn't have been able to pay her. It's because of His work in us.

And in that context, it's a joy to give. In that context, people want to give. I honestly believe this, but I think Baptists have trouble with this.

I honestly believe that if we didn't receive an offering, God would still provide. I do. And I think sometimes we have succumbed to the whole issue of money by receiving an offering because when you put a plate in front of somebody's face they feel obligated.

It doesn't matter what you say to them. I am not trying to change the church's policy on this. I'm just telling you what I think.

You can disagree, and actually because we're in this kind of democratic thing here, the church will have its way. And that's fine with me. I'm absolutely, absolutely happy with this.

But let me tell you, I believe that if we never lifted an offering, God would still provide. People would be coming to us and saying, please give me the privilege of giving back to God something of what He's given

to me. And we'd have happy givers instead of embarrassed ones who stick the plate in their face.

Look at what it goes on to say. I've got to get off that. It's too convicting for us because we're Baptists.

Look at what it says next. They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service. What a delightful experience to the saints.

And there was a need. There was starvation happening in Jerusalem. The people were being asked to respond to it.

I'm just going to finish with this next verse. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. These Macedonian churches, they kind of surprised us because they did two things before they give anything to the need in Jerusalem.

They give themselves to the Lord and they give themselves to us. I don't believe that true giving will ever start in anybody's life until first they give themselves to the Lord. And then true giving will be expressed.

You know why? Because you know what? When you give yourself to the Lord, you give everything. You know that everything is His. Your heart, your life, your children, your family, your home, everything is His.

You give it all. Therefore, when He comes to you and says there's a need, I'd like you to respond to it. It's not an issue because it's His anyway.

What do you own, Mr. Christian? Well, let me tell you, if you have given yourself to the Lord, you don't own anything because it's all His anyway. The privilege of giving is the joy that comes when we rejoice in what God is doing in our lives and we give in absolute fearlessness, knowing that we will never out-give the Lord. We don't give in making a big noise about it.

We don't give in order to get all kinds of recognition. We don't give in order to seem to be wonderful. We do it quietly.

We do it secretly so that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing so that only God gets the glory. We give because it's a delight to Him. If they're not asking us, we want to do it.

We find people. We find ways to express it. That's the Christian experience.

But it'll never happen until we first give ourselves to the Lord. And there'll never be an issue. See, I don't believe there'll be ever a problem with giving as long as our emphasis is first on this.

Give yourselves to Jesus. Realize that He's everything. Understand what He has done for you.

He has poured out such grace in your soul. Just yield to the joy of Christ. Don't even think about money.

Don't even think about giving. Don't even think about time. Don't even think about the first fruits of your harvest.

Just give yourself to Jesus. Everything else will fall into place. It's the same message we're learning about everything else.

Jesus is everything. Jesus is enough. And if Jesus is first in our lives, then giving in the church will never be an issue.

It'll be a privilege. Right? Right. And when there's a need, people will be tripping over themselves to respond to it.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. We're going to come back to this next week.

But look at the standard, and I'll really well finish with this. Look at the standard in verse 9. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty, so that you through His poverty might become rich. There's the standard of the New Testament based upon grace.

If you understand that Jesus gave everything for you. If you understand that He became poverty stricken in order that you might become rich, spiritually speaking. It's not about materialism.

Never is. Never. If you understand that He has blessed you deeply in your soul, then your heart will overflow in thanksgiving in a number of ways.

That's the standard of the New Testament. Jesus gave everything. We give everything in return.

Everything. The car you drive is not yours, it's the Lord's. The money in the bank is not yours, it's the Lord's.

You better be asking Him how you're using it. And as He gives you the joy, as He puts it upon your heart to give, do not be afraid. You will never outpace Him in your generosity.

I don't even need to teach you that. Just give yourself to Jesus. Even as He has given Himself to you, your generosity will overflow.

Has generosity overflowed from Heaven toward us? Did God give us 10% of Himself? Did He? Is it Romans 8? He who has freely given us His own Son, how will He not also give us all things? That's God's standard of giving. And all that happens in the New Testament church is that He reflects it in us. As we trust in Jesus, as we give ourselves to Him, He just reflects that same generosity that just comes out of us.

It's not us, it's Him. The same generosity that sent Jesus into the world is the same generosity that overflows in the church. Isn't that beautiful? The tide's gone.

That's part of the law. We're not under law, we're under grace. The standard of grace, man, is everything.

Brother Andrew is with us in November and he lives by this standard. Sometimes he gets onto a plane with only his socks and his clothes. He doesn't get on naked, thankfully.

He told us that a number of times. Because he lives by this standard. He believes he cannot outgive God and when a need is presented to him, not the need of tomorrow or next month, but the need of today, he responds.

He takes the joy that has been given to him as he rejoices in what God has done, as he enjoys the fullness of Jesus. He just lets that fullness overflow. He gives away his clothes.

He gives away his shoes. Sometimes he says, I've given away all my clothes and my suitcase. The only thing I've left is the clothes on me, my socks and the plane ticket.

He arrives in Holland regularly like that. He's famous now for it. He said there are people who own clothing stores in Holland who wait to see when he comes home from a trip, to see what he's got left.

And they already have clothes for him. He said, I cannot escape. He said, I've got wardrobes full of leather coats.

And he said, I take them and I give them away and they give them back to me. Brand new. Shoes! He said, I keep getting new shoes.

I get new shoes all the time. He said, there's a Dutch shoemaker who constantly supplies them. So he gives them away and then he gets them back.

You can never outpace God. What are we afraid of? It comes from the heart. Well, that's the start.

Let's close in prayer and rejoice. And if you've got questions, don't be afraid to come and ask me them. We'll keep on.

There's two chapters of this. But first remember, it's from grace. Always from grace.

Remember, the privilege of giving will often come out of poverty, not richness. It will come in such a way as people will ask for the privilege. You don't have to demand it from them.

We never will. God help us. If we ever get to the place where we're demanding money, we're done.

We're done for. And the New Testament principle is one that's given to us in the life and in the surrender of Jesus Christ. He gave Himself to us.

And when He lives in us, He continues to give Himself away to others. There's such freedom in it. Such delight in it.

Such joy in it. Some of you are showing such an example. I was so blessed to go last night and eat those African delights in charlottetime.

I've watched this lady, this dear lady sitting in the back, work her... I better not be rude. Work herself... work herself so hard. These two people could be making a lot of money.

They're both extremely talented and gifted. I know they don't want me to do this, but I'm going to do it anyway. And they have so blessed me.

I went in to see Nita the other day. She couldn't stop working. She had to keep working because she was preparing stuff in order to be a blessing to others so that she could get this container of clothes away to Africa.

They could be making a fortune anywhere. Jean is almost a doctorate in his studies, in the level of his education. He's an amazing man.

Nita has been involved in taking care of huge areas in Africa in terms of the guest home that she oversaw and managed. She's a remarkable woman. They live at a level that many of us wouldn't want to live at in order to be good to others.

They have an understanding that God has poured out grace. One of the first things Jean said to me when we were in a conversation, God has been so good to me through others, I feel that I need to be... I want to be good to them. That's grace.

That's God at work. Bless your hearts. Bless your hearts for such an example.

We need to learn from them and from others. Just give ourselves to Jesus and let him just give himself away. You don't have to work out how to do it.

Just give yourself to Jesus and he will overflow from you. He's still like this, isn't he? Still like this. He wants to give himself away and he will show you how.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. How much did you raise last night? Do you know yet? Does that put you over the edge as far as getting enough money or do you still need more? Not there yet.

This is to get the container of clothes into Africa. Also presented to you, Klishne this morning. Just presenting them to you.

We're not demanding anything. Don't give. I'm telling you, don't give unless you first give yourself to Jesus.

Then you can give yourself to others. Presented to Klishne, still needs support. Still needs support for our mission trip to India.

We also put before you this morning Diane's need of a vehicle in Africa. She needs a vehicle. Nine.

There it is. See if you can out give God in the process. What a great testimony we'll have.

If we could sit sometimes after all this and hear the stories. I did this, God did this. I did this, God did this.

Let's pray. We made a start on a subject that can be such a painful and emotive and challenging thing and can cause splits in churches and people to get grumpy. We realized something very simple tonight that it's all about grace just as everything else is that we're learning.

Not about what we do for you but about what you're doing in us. It's what you're giving yourself away to us and then giving yourself away through us every day. That's not a burden.

That's nothing to get grumpy about. That's a delight. And we praise you for the opportunity to be a vehicle.

Just a vehicle. It's not us that's giving, it's you. To be a tool in your hands.

To be poor people who overflow with generosity. And I will give you praise. And I ask that you'll teach us what it is to excel in the grace of giving.

Because we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Lord bless you.

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