

Biblical Giving in the Church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2012

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

Take your Bible, go with me to 2 Corinthians, if you would, chapter 8. 2 Corinthians, chapter 8. And over the next 30 minutes, Lord willing, we're going to cover the majority of this chapter that we haven't gotten to.

And I will try to finish chapter 9 on Sunday. And on Thursday of next week, you'll be in, while I'm in Chile, you'll be in 2 Corinthians, chapter 10. So go with me, if you would, to 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, and verse 1.

And let's read, if you would, just verse 1 to start. And I want you to write down about five things out of this chapter here. The Bible says, Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.

We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. Father, I pray that you would deal with our hearts tonight as we look at biblical giving in the church.

[1 : 02] And I pray, God, that you'd help us to have the right spirit and learn from your word and apply it to our hearts. And I pray that your name would be glorified and magnified. And I pray, God, that you tonight would help us to gain some greater growth and understanding spiritually in how we deal with our money.

And I'll give you praise and honor for all that you do. In Jesus' name, amen. If you would, I want you to write down, number one, that giving is a grace. Giving is one of God's graces that he gives to his people.

Verse 1, if you have your Bible, and I hope you'll keep your Bible open. Notice that it says, To wit, the grace of God. So you might not gather from that one verse, but if you'll get these others, you'll know he's talking about a grace.

He's talking about something where he gives us the ability and the power and the desire to do something for him. The grace of God bestowed on us. Go down, if you would, to verse 6. 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 6.

The Bible says, There's your word used again.

[2 : 09] Grace. Titus is coming. Titus is going to work with you. Titus is going to help you finish up this grace that God started working in you. Look, if you would, at verse 7. Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith, utterance, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also.

Put a circle around. This grace also. There is no doubt now that we're talking about something that is a grace. It's the grace of God bestowed on the churches in verse 1.

It's the same grace in verse 6. It is this grace also in verse 7. Verse 19. And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace.

With this grace which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord and declaration of your ready mind. So would you just think with me just a second about giving is a grace of God.

Something that God's done in our life. Paul's talking about the churches of Macedonia. Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He calls it a grace. The word grace. If you want to write something down there, the word grace is something that causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favor, acceptance.

[3 : 22] It's a favor done without expecting anything in return. It's the loving kindness of God giving his unearned, unmerited favor to sinners. You see, we understand grace when we understand that God loved me when I didn't deserve it.

When we understand that God did something in my life, we understand that kind of grace. But not only did God do something in my life to save me and keep me out of hell. But God's doing something in my life to make me be valuable and usable and somebody special in his economy.

God's doing some things in my life right now to make his grace manifest in me. He has given me the power and ability and desire to do something for him. That's what his grace is.

Why in the world would I want to serve God? Why in the world would I want to give my money to poor saints that live back in Jerusalem that are having major economical problems? Why would I, in major poverty, want to send an offering back?

It must be God doing something in my life. This is not a telethon. This is not somebody talking them into it. But God had done a work in their lives. Now look at verse 7 with me. So you see the grace.

[4 : 25] You see, everything you're doing for God is his grace in you. And you can see that in verse 7 if you look at it. Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and all diligence and in your love, abound in this grace also.

See, the giving is one of the graces mentioned here. The other one is faith and utterance, the ability to speak, knowledge and diligence and love. All of those were graces that they were given.

Do you understand? Look at this tonight. Look at this. You've been given. You give to faith promise. You give to missionaries that come through here. You give to support our church. You give to other people who have needs.

You care about people. Your heart springs up and says, I want to do something there. What you need to know is this. That's God working in you. It is completely foreign to our nature to be so good and so kind.

Don't forget we are a fallen creature. We're sinners. We're depraved. We're wicked unless God doesn't work in us. So you know what? By the grace of Jesus Christ extended towards me to save me, he's also working in me.

[5 : 27] And Paul says, boy, God's doing a work in you in grace. Even giving is God's grace, his love shed abroad in your hearts. Let me read you two passages of scripture, Acts chapter 11, verses 27 through 30.

Acts chapter 11, verses 27 through 30. Here's what happened. This is the actual story. If you want to write it down for later or put it in the margin of your Bible, here by 2 Corinthians chapter 8. The Bible says, and these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

And there stood up one of them named Agabus and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So what's happening in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 is exactly what's being talked about. What's being talked about in the book of Acts. They are giving to brethren who are in need.

They're sending relief unto brethren which to live in Judea. In Acts chapter 20, verse 35, he said, I have showed you all things, how that soul labor and you ought to support the weak, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it's more blessed to give than to receive.

[6 : 44] When I heard that when I was a kid, I thought that was the craziest thing I ever heard. When I heard it was better and I'd be more blessed and I'd be more happy when I learned to give than I would when I was receiving, I did not believe that I found that hard to believe.

But the Lord said it was more blessed to give than to receive. And I understand that grace because, you know, he gave to me and I want to be like Jesus and God gave his son and Jesus gave his life.

And I've experienced what he's done in my life. And then as we grow and mature in Christ, all of a sudden we learn, boy, God did put in us a desire to be givers, a desire to be servers, a desire to love and help and care for others.

And it is a blessing that we get to give. And it's God that puts that in us. Now skip down with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 8. First thing I hope you realize is it was a grace.

It's a grace. I guess I want to stop just a second, make sure you get something. Did you know grace is something that's a gratification? It's happiness. It's joy. He loves a cheerful giver.

[7 : 42] And so you need to understand God wants you to give because you want to give and God puts the want to in you. If the want to is not in there, then God hadn't put that want to in you. And so it ought to be a joyful thing, a desiring thing, a thing you enjoy.

It ought to be a happy time. The fact that you and I do what we do is so much to support the work of God to get the gospel out. It ought to be a happy time, a grace time. The second thing was this.

Their giving would prove the sincerity of their love. Giving would prove the sincerity of their love. Look, if you would, at verse 8. 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 8, if you would.

I speak not by commandment, but by the occasion of the forwardness of others to prove the sincerity of your love. Stop just a second.

Let me show you something. Here's what happened. You ready for the story? Paul had gone over there and spoken to the Corinthians. The Corinthians were going to give an offer like the other churches at Macedonia. And then there's this split that took place between them.

[8 : 38] All of a sudden, there were people rising up against Paul. They didn't love Paul. They didn't care for Paul. They were saying ugly things about Paul. And there had been this division. And so 1 Corinthians, he writes that letter back to them, you recall.

And he tells them, hey, I've heard from the house of Chloe about all the things going on there in your ministry. And I'm disturbed by it. And he corrects him in a lot of things. And he sent Titus to him. And he said, you guys got to get this straight. You got to have the right attitude here.

And now they've gotten it right. And he sent 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Or he sent 2 Corinthians back to him again. And he says, guys, you know, you made a promise. Man, when God was working in your hearts, you wanted to give.

And you were excited. And you were motivated. And you begged me to be allowed to give. And now it's a year later. You're going to find that out in the passage. It's a year later. So prove that you really love God.

Prove that you really love people. Talks cheap. Get out your billfold and give. Prove the sincerity of your love.

[9 : 35] Listen to these verses. James chapter 2, verses 15 and 16. James chapter 2, verses 15 and 16. If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you said to them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, not with saying you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what good's that?

What good did it do for you to talk? What doth it profit for you to say, hey, God bless you. I hope God blesses you. I hope God takes care of you. I hope God does something in your life there.

Be blessed. Bye-bye. I'm leaving here without giving you a dime. He said, what good's that cheap talk? 1 John chapter 3, verses 17 and 18. But whoso hath this world's goods and sees his brother have needn't, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, and neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Do you notice what he said? He said, guys, it's a grace.

And then verse 8, he comes along and he says, and prove the sincerity of your love. Because we love God and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and it's going to affect the offering that they're about to send back to Jerusalem.

[10 : 49] Look at 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 17 to 19. The Bible says, charge them that are rich in this world, and that's us, by the way. Everybody in this room is rich. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in money, uncertain riches that you could lose over a political election, or you could lose over anything happening in the government, or inflation could take away from you.

Or if you had been living in Argentina several years ago, one day the president walked out and froze all the funds in the bank and never let you have your money. You say that couldn't happen. When it happened in Argentina, I watched it happen in Peru.

And look what he says. He said, don't trust in uncertain riches, trust in the living God. Notice what he does with money. He's not against you having money. He says, who giveth us richly all things to what?

Look at the verse. It gives us all things richly to enjoy. So God's not against you enjoying the money. He's not against you going out and having something to eat or buying you that passport or anything of that. But he says, this is what I'm charging you to do.

Verse 18, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, rich in good works, ready to distribute, ready to distribute, ready to give out, ready to give out, willing to communicate.

[12 : 05] That's the same word used in Philippians chapter four. That's what we do when we give, like when they supported Paul as a missionary, laying up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Cheap talk could never replace sacrificial giving. True love is sacrificial. God's people should be concerned about others and especially the poor.

And that's the poor in Jerusalem in this passage of scripture. Everybody in this room, I think we all understand this. I think if we just get right down to it and be honest, it's pretty easy to, we all love missionaries, but we don't give anything.

We don't sacrifice anything. We, we want to see all these poor people reached. We want to see this happen. And we don't, if we don't sacrifice them, that's what he's saying. He said, do you really love, if I looked at your checkbook, would it show that you really love?

If I looked at your checkbook, would I see what's important to you? Whether you admit it or not, he would see what's important. And if he could pull out a spreadsheet and see how you spent your money and what percent went to what place, he'd know exactly what you love.

[13 : 13] It shows up. It might be our belly. It might be our children. It might be a hunting or, or, or fishing or golf or flying airplane or whatever it is. Any of that, it would show up what we love.

Number three, go with me. If you would down to verse 10, the next thing is promising was easy. Now it was time to perform. They had taken a pro of faith promise offering to go back to Jerusalem.

I told you, it's not about world evangelism. It's not about missions. We can use these principles for that, but this was an offering. They were taken up to send back to Jerusalem. And he said, y'all made a promise. Look at you.

Look at verse 10. And here, here in, I give my advice for this is expedient for you have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago, circle a year ago.

You guys made a promise a year ago. You guys got excited about doing something for the Christians that live there in Jerusalem. Verse 11. Now, therefore perform the doing of it, perform the doing of it, perform the doing of it, that, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of which you have.

[14 : 27] being willing to give was great, but now you got to get involved and do something. Verse 11. Now, therefore the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will there, so there will be a performance.

Also that which you have, would you put a circle around the word that which you have? Cause we, we're not going to go back and look at it. You realize it was a proportionate offering. It was a, it was a measured offering, just like tithing.

When you start talking about when that, when you, if you talk about 10%, that's a, that's a proportionate gift. A guy who makes a lot of money, his 10% is going to be a lot bigger than a guy who makes a little bit of money. Uh, he said, Hey, you're going to give according to what you have, that which you have.

He said, you, you were, you were willing and you made a promise and you ought to give according to that, which you have. He wasn't trying to get, get them. Uh, he wasn't trying to get what they didn't already promise.

If they really wanted to do something with God, it should have been more than just an emotional, emotional stirring. You know what? One of the problems is when you've been in church as many times, as many years as I've been in church, emotions won't last.

[15 : 33] I mean, people go to church and they love emotional churches and they love shouting and they love loud singing and they love, love emotional decisions and people jumping up and said, I'm going to do this for Jesus.

But I learned a long time ago, man, a lot of people will say that and I never see anything from them. And Paul said, Paul said, I'm not, it's not just the willingness. It's not just the desire.

It's the performing. It's not just having a willing mind. It's the giving verse 12, willing mind, according to the man half. Go down to verse 13.

Paul wants them to understand something. You're giving is not so that these other people can have a good life. Boy, and that's one of the things that most of us are like, why should I give?

Why should I give? If I give, guess who loses? I lose. If I give, they get it better. I get it worse. Doesn't make sense to me. And the apostle Paul said, that's not the point at all.

[16 : 27] Look at verse 13. I mean, not that other men be eased and you burdened. Paul was not trying to say, I want to take it off to you guys and put it back on Jerusalem. Paul did think that the church at Antioch owed the church of Jerusalem.

He thinks that because the gospel came from Jerusalem and he knew that those guys had sent the missionaries and those guys that the word of God had come from there. And he thought they ought to help them. But he said, I'm not trying to take a burden off, put a burden on you and take a burden off of them.

He says, he said, that's not what I got in mind. Verse 14. What I want to see happen is that your abundance would supply their want, their need, their lack.

Look at verse 14. By an equality that now is at this time, your abundance may be a supply for their want. And their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be an equality.

It's amazing. Now listen to this. See, God wants us to be a church and a body, a body, a group, a church, a congregation, a called out assembly.

[17 : 31] And he wants us. He wants some of those that have to take care of some of those that don't have. And there's going to be a blessing among us because there's some that have it. This man's going to New York city.

He's going to do something. Almost every one of us in our hearts would say that ought to be done. Somebody ought to do that. That's a good deal. Somebody ought to do that. And that's going to be an abundance for him, but a lack for us.

But we might have money. That's an abundance for us. It could meet his lack. It could make an equality. Look at verse 14. Last word equality. Paul said, there's some guys back in Jerusalem and they're hurting.

But can I remind you, that's where the apostles are. Can I remind you? That's where the church got started. Can I remind you that that's where Barnabas came from? Can I remind you? I'm from those guys. Can I remind you?

Let's get involved in giving. Hoarding. We'll never be blessed by God. Hoarding. We'll never be blessed by God. Look at verse 15.

[18 : 29] Another Old Testament picture for us. Verse 15. As it is written, he that hath gathered much hath nothing over, and he that hath gathered little hath no lack.

You know what happened in the Old Testament? Do you remember this gathering verse? They would have understood that verse if they had Bible knowledge of the Old Testament. You should have Bible knowledge. The manna fell down. And some guys were extremely industrious and went out and picked up a whole lot of manna and brought it back into the house.

But by the end of the day, the manna was gone. And other guys might not have got quite as much, but by the end of the day, they had enough to get through the day. The manna was, give us this day our daily bread.

And God did that. You know what he's saying? We ought not be like the guy, the rich guy who said, wow, I have really got a great harvest this year.

Boy, I have really made, I'm going to tear down my barns and build greater barns and store all my stuff. Man, I have got life made. He said, no, don't you hoard. No, don't you hoard.

[19 : 30] Don't you hoard. Don't you try to hold back. You made a promise. Get involved in giving. Look at verse 18. This is so beautiful.

It's right in the Bible. There ought to be integrity and accountability when we manage the offerings. There ought to be integrity and accountability when we manage the offerings.

Look at what happens in verse 18. Paul said, and we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord and the declaration of your ready mind.

For the sake of time, just let me kind of summarize this and then I'll go through a little bit of each of those verses with you. You know what happened? They're going to take up this offering and Paul didn't want anybody thinking, hey, I'm taking up an offering and I'm going to have the offering and I'm going to manage the offering and I'm the man of God and you can trust me and I'm going to take the offering back over to Jerusalem and I'll take care of that and y'all can trust me.

That wasn't, nothing like that was said by Paul. The apostle Paul said, I really don't care what people think of me. I'm never worried about what people think. He said that over and over in other places, but in this chapter, he's going to say this, I always want to do what's right and honest and open and transparent.

[20 : 48] I want to do that with the money. So go through these verses with me. In verse 18, Paul said, I won't risk my integrity or what people think about me and how I handle the money.

I got a brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. He's got Titus and some other guy. We're not sure who it is. And these two men, man, they are known.

They are respected. The people in the churches know who they are and Paul said, I'm not going to take the offering. These guys are going to travel with me. In verse 19, he said, by the way, I'm not the one chose him because y'all could easily say these are my yes men.

We're just going to put a cover on, put a sham on, walk out the door and we're going to do whatever we want to do with the money. He said in verse 19, underline it in your Bible. He said they were chosen of the churches. The churches chose these guys to travel with us with this grace which is administered by us.

I may be in charge of the administration of it. I may be in charge of the management of it to the glory of God and the declaration of your mind, but there are men traveling with it. It wasn't that Paul couldn't be trusted, but he couldn't trust accusers.

[21 : 56] It wasn't Paul couldn't be trusted, but he couldn't trust accusers. Paul's not saying, hey, you got to worry about me, so send a couple of guys along to check me out. Paul said, verse 20, look at it, avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us.

Paul said, I don't want anybody blaming me. I don't want anybody getting back there and saying, look what Paul's doing with the offering. Look how Paul's managing all the money we took up. All these churches, all over the place, taking up all this money and there's old Paul, him and Barnabas running around with the money.

I'm not for that. Paul said, no, no, no, no. I don't want anybody to blame us in this abundance. Our church ought to be transparent, ought to be open. You say, does he really say that? Look at verse 21. Verse 21, he said, providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord but also on the sight of men.

He said, you know what? I don't just want God to know I'm doing right. I want men to know I'm doing right. I don't want to handle the money. I want an audit. I want to be checked out. I want people to know that what I'm doing is open and transparent and right.

I want you to know I've got men that you've chosen, men of great integrity and I'm doing everything not just because I know God knows I'm doing right. I want men to know that I'm doing right.

[23 : 05] Look at verse 22 if you would. Verse 22. And he had proven the diligence of Titus. Look at that. He says, and we have sent with them our brother whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things but now much more diligent upon the great confidence which I have in you.

Would you underline this? Proved diligent. Proved diligent. I want to take just a stop here and two or three things that are really interesting to me. Number one, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Paul who had integrity above integrity but he'd been accused by the guys at Corinth.

He'd been accused by division in the church and the Apostle Paul said, I've got to think this thing through. I've got to be very careful about how I handle money. I've got to be very careful about how I manage things because people are looking at me and people might say something about me.

So I think it's very, for all of my missionary buddies, it's pretty obvious here. Paul was concerned what people might say about how he handled all that money that came from all those churches. Maybe I ought to be concerned about that.

Another thing I just love it's found in this chapter and it's a whole nother message and we could have taken a whole nother night to go over it is this, did you know there were men that were chosen by the churches and known by the churches?

[24 : 17] Can I just stop a second and say you're known? People in our church know you. They know whether or not they trust you with the money. They know whether or not they trust your testimony. They know whether or not you are who you ought to be and what happened?

He says, hey, I'm going to take the offering by guys you chose. In our churches, sometimes, not in this one, but there could be a bickering. There could be a bickering. There could be a fussing and a fighting. There could be a, why'd you choose him?

Why didn't you choose me? He said, y'all know these guys. You've watched these guys. You know their testimony. They are praised among the churches. I think it's exciting.

Paul chose Timothy to be one of his apostles. If you recall the story in Acts chapter 16, he shows up in the town and everybody's saying, y'all know about Timothy? Hey, Paul, y'all heard about Timothy? And everybody's talking about how Timothy had, there's something special been done in Timothy's life.

And Paul says, but I'm taking that guy with me. I'm taking that guy with me. He was praised by the brethren. And I love it that this guy, Titus has been proved diligent in many things.

[25 : 19] God, just stop and say, God's proven all of us too. We are going to go through trials and troubles and tribulations and heartaches and difficult times while God tries us.

And he does it in front of people. And God's saying, let's see if you are who you claim you are. Let's see if you're made out of what you claim you're made of. And God's doing a work in our life. By the way, the church, Paul, the leader, proved him diligent in many things.

It wasn't just how he handled money. It was many things. He was proving that Titus was right. And Titus was a good man. I'd just like to say, this is really for missionaries.

It's a sad and sinful thing today a missionary thinks he ought not be a giver. It's a sad thing when you say, well, since I live of the gospel, why should I have to give to the gospel?

Because you see, you ought to be proved in front of everybody in the churches ought to know this man loves Jesus. This man manages his money the right way. This man gives. This man never asks us to do what he's not doing with his own money.

[26 : 25] Go down to verse 23 if you would. Verse 23. Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ.

I wish you'd underline this. Paul says, if anybody's got a question about old Titus, I have proven him. I don't look at him as a boy. I don't look at him as one of my guys I tell to run around and do stuff.

He said, he is my partner. That's a pretty, like, equal word. He's my partner. He didn't say, I'm the big man, this is a peon man.

He said, he's my partner. And he said, he's my fellow helper concerning you. And if anybody wants to ask about the brethren, can I remind you that they are messengers of the churches?

Other guys, probably more than one are going to go with Titus and Paul and Barnabas with this offering. There's going to be several people checking everything out. I don't have time to do it tonight.

[27 : 27] I started to, I've skipped a whole bunch of verses at the very beginning of this. So I'll be sure and try to finish it with you. But in Peru, I even showed them in the Old Testament. Did you know when they left with an offering for the temple, they counted it all, they wrote it all down and they took it all over there and when they got there, they counted it all and checked it all and made sure that every fork that got sent got where it was going.

They were transparent. I hope vision's always transparent. Hope I'm always transparent. I hope you expect that. I hope that you do that. And I hope that you rise up to the occasion that you will be that kind of transparent.

Go with me to verse 24, the last thing. Good testimony before men. Before I read the verse, look this way just one second. It is so easy for you to think I really don't care what people think about me.

Boy, that is so common in churches. Can I just tell you I care very much what people think. And in this verse, you're going to find out that the Holy Spirit cares very much. Look at verse 24.

Wherefore, show you them, show it to them, show ye them and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf. The Apostle Paul in one verse will say, I really don't care what people say about me.

[28 : 37] I don't really care what people think about me. I'm just going to do right. God knows I'm doing right. My conscience is clear and I don't care if you judge me if you don't judge me. Boy, we love that part. So we all jump on that like, yep, that's me.

Foo on all of you. God knows I'm good and drop dead the rest of you. That's totally not what God says in here. That's totally what's not going. There is a side of you that's going to say, I'm doing right before God and if other men don't stand with me, I'll still do right.

But on the other hand, you have a testimony. On the other hand, you have a testimony. You ought to be praised among the church for loving Jesus and doing right and taking a stand and being a man of integrity.

You ought to stand up to all the challenges and be proven in many things that you love Jesus. Paul says, hey guys, I've been bragging about you and I've been telling everybody about the offerings that you and the other guys that massed on you were going to sin.

I've been bragging about that. I've been telling everybody how much you love Jesus. Now show them. Put your actions where your mouth was. It's pretty easy to sing, I surrender all.

[29 : 42] It's pretty easy to say, though no, I have decided to follow Jesus. Spanish is coming out again. I've decided to follow Jesus. I will not turn back.

It's pretty easy to say that. But here's what he was saying. No, that's not going to be our attitude. Our attitude is going to be, I want to provide things honest in front of men. I want people to know.

Last thing, it's time for me to wrap this up, but just let me say this. Money is a real testing time. Money really shows what's on the inside of your heart. How you deal with money really speaks loudly about you.

It shows who you love. It shows what you love. It shows what you want to do with your life. It shows what's important to you. It shows. Money shows a lot about you.

I left out a bunch of verses and there's a whole bunch more and I'll get to them another day. But I went, money shows what's going on. Money shows about what a church is like.

[30 : 40] We have a testimony as a church and how we manage money and how we give and how we handle things. We have a testimony and you have a testimony about how you deal with things and we ought to be concerned.

I want Jesus magnified. I want Jesus magnified. Can I just tell you, can I just tell you that when I thought for a few days that I was going to die, you know, I had only one thing on my mind.

I got to do this right. People are watching. I want Jesus glorified. Can I say this? We're going to stay alive. It looks like I want to do this right. I want to make sure Jesus is glorified.

I want to make sure that Jesus is glorified. I want to make sure that the gospel is glorified. God. And Paul said, hey, I want there to be some glory. I want there to be some, some, some proof in the good testimony.

Just like Paul, we do not do our giving and obedience just in the presence of God. We have a testimony as a church. We have a testimony as individuals. Paul wanted the Corinthians to show that they really loved God and they really loved other Christians.

[31 : 40] Paul wanted the Christians or the Corinthians to show that he'd been right to brag on them. Amazing. This wasn't about an offering for Paul.

It wasn't about an offering for his local church. It wasn't about seats, chairs. It wasn't about a building. It was take care of some other brothers that were hungry back in Jerusalem.

And Paul said, guys, this is a grace of God in our lives that would make us ever care about anybody but ourselves. Years ago, I was taught in a pastoral administration class.

Never build, always build a building for the adults because they'll pay for their seat. Don't try to build something for the children unless they got children. If they got children, they'll pay to build that.

But you got to figure out what they like because they ain't coming off that money unless it makes them more comfortable and them more happy. Well, that's pretty sad but pretty true, isn't it? And here's what Paul was saying.

[32 : 43] Boy, it's a grace or you wouldn't be doing it. But guys, let's just prove that grace and prove that sincerity. Guys, it was easy to talk about doing something for God.

It was easy to say I love Jesus. It's easy to sing the songs but let's make sure that it's real. And by the way, let's be very transparent and very open in how we handle funds and how our church operates.

That's why there are men's meetings. That's why there's two men back there counting the offering. That's why everything is open so you can see it. Let's have a good testimony in front of the world.

Father, I love you and I pray that you'd help your church tonight to grow in this grace of giving. Help us to grow in integrity and character. Help us to prove your great work in our lives.

Help us to magnify you and I thank you for your richness and your goodness and your kindness to us. I thank you, Lord, for all you're doing. I pray that you would show your power and I pray, God, that you would come and work in our midst in a big way and we'll give you praise.

[33 : 42] You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church. For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to www.visionbaptist.com.

To be continued...