

A Generous New Year

Giving of Our Resources and of Ourselves in 2020

Introduction: Blessing & Fruitfulness

- Before God commissioned our first parents to multiply on the earth and exercise dominion over it, He _____ them.
Gen. 1:28a—And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...”
⇒ God’s blessing meant that His _____ was upon them and His _____ were extended to them.
- The God’s blessing upon them would enable them to be fruitful, multiplying worshipers on the earth and cultivating the creation in order that it might flourish.

Key Point: Human fruitfulness is a _____ to the favor that God has bestowed upon us! As we begin a new year, we want to consider together some areas of our lives where we can fruitfully serve the Lord and others in 2020.

God’s Grace & Our Giving — 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

The Context: The Christians in Judea were suffering lack because of persecution and other circumstances. Paul encouraged congregations from around the Mediterranean to give towards their relief. Apparently, the Corinthian church had not responded generously as had others and Paul therefore saw an opportunity to instruct them about the importance of grace giving.

Significance: These verses are the New Testament’s most clear and detailed instructions about giving and must therefore be understood to convey the principle (*grace giving*) that is to serve as the basis for how Christians are to honor the Lord with their material resources.

Important Observations:

1. _____ is the theme of Paul’s instructions to the church at Corinth concerning giving.

“grace”—*χάρις* (*charis*)—A beneficent disposition toward someone or its application; the effect produced by that favor or the response of gratitude to it. This word is used five times (8:1, 3, 6-7, 9) within this passage.

2. Grace is to serve as the _____ for giving.

⇒ Believers must recall the grace of the Lord Jesus towards them as demonstrated through His _____.

1 Cor. 8:9—For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

“He was, in the words of Frank Houghton’s hymn, ‘rich beyond all splendor’...He possessed all the majesty of deity, performed all its functions and enjoyed all its prerogatives. He was adored by His Father and worshipped by the angels. He was invulnerable to pain, frustration, and embarrassment...His supremacy was total, His satisfaction complete, His blessedness perfect. Such condition was not something that He has secured by effort. It was the way things were, and had always been; and there was no reason why they should change. But change, they did...the humiliation of Christ was not a point, but a line. Its greatest single step was that by which He became the child in the manger. The condescension involved in that is beyond imagining. Yet it was only the beginning of the long journey through homelessness, poverty, exhaustion, shame and pain to Gethsemane; and beyond that to Calvary.”

— Donald Macleod, The Person of Christ

⇒ Giving is therefore the response of a gracious _____ to the person and work of Christ.

- * The Macedonians had first given themselves to the Lord and had then given in response to His grace (8:5)
- * Because of their love for the Lord (8:24), Paul expected the Corinthians to do the same, eagerly (9:2), and from the heart (9:7)

3. Grace is to be the _____ of what is given.

⇒ A specific amount is not commanded, but one should give _____ from what one has been given by God.

2 Cor. 8:8—I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

- * The Corinthians were exhorted to give because of their love for God and for His people (8:10-11)
- * The Macedonians had given generously, even beyond their means, because of their deep love for the saints (8:1-4)

⇒ Believers are to recognize that God _____ for His people so they might collectively meet the needs that arise.

2 Cor. 8:12-15—¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, “WHOEVER GATHERED MUCH HAD NOTHING LEFT OVER, AND WHOEVER GATHERED LITTLE HAD NO LACK.”

Key Point: Our generosity in _____ giving is evidence of God’s work to graciously produce fruit in us.

God's Grace & Our Service — 1 Peter 4:10-11

The Context: The believers of Asia Minor found themselves in a position where the culture around them was growing ever more hostile to the message of the Gospel and they were about to enter a season of persecution. Peter knew that their love for, and service to, one another would be vital amid such circumstances.

Significance: These verses serve as an exhortation to believers and convey the principle (*gifting for the purpose of service*) that is intended to sustain and equip believers to live faithfully during the days that we have been given.

Important Observations:

1. God has graciously given various spiritual _____ to the believers who comprise the church.

“varied”—ποικίλος (*poikilos*)—Pertaining to the existence of various kinds or modes; diversified, manifold.

The General Categories of Gifting

- (1) Gifts of _____ — Exhortation, prophecy, teaching, leadership (Rom. 12); discernment, wisdom (1 Cor. 12); evangelism, shepherding (Eph. 4)
- (2) Gifts of _____ — Giving, mercy, service (Rom. 12); administration, helps, faith (1 Cor. 12)

2. Believers are to properly _____ the gift with which they have been entrusted by God.

⇒ Our gifting is to be exercised in response to the grace of the Lord Jesus and in service His _____.

1 Pet. 4:10— As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

⇒ Our gifting is to be exercised for God's _____.

1 Pet. 4:11—whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

* The one who speaks is to do so in accordance with the Word of God.

* The one who serves is to do so by the enabling power of God's Spirit.

Key Point: Our willingness to _____ others with our gifting is evidence of God's work to graciously produce fruit in us.

Concluding Thoughts and Questions for a New Year

1. If we desire to be fruitful in 2020, we should be _____ about our giving and our service.

Question #1

Question #2

2. If we desire to be fruitful in 2020, we should be _____ in our giving and in our service.

Question #3

3. A key way that we can be generous both financially and in our service to others, is through _____.

Heb. 13:1-2—¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

1 Pet. 4:9— Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.