

2 Corinthians 8

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Tape 8159
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Second Corinthians, chapter eight. The eighth and ninth chapters are really tied together. I was tempted to take them both in one evening because the ninth chapter is such a short one, only thirteen verses.

But, Paul is talking on a subject that is very sensitive, the subject of money and the subject of giving. Paul is very sensitive about his talking about their giving. Paul was never one to press people for money. In fact Paul sort of boasted in his independence of working, of laboring with his own hands, in order to supply his needs, so that he wouldn't have to receive money from the people. And he sort of prided himself in the fact that he never made money an issue in his ministry.

Unfortunately money has been a real point of problems within the church because there are many who have made money a big issue.

Paul spoke about those who would come after him, as he talked to the elders in Ephesus. And he said there will be even those that will rise up within the flock after I am gone, who will not really care for the flock, but whose god is their belly. In other words, they are going to seek to take advantage of you in a monetary way, not for the work of the kingdom of God, but to enrich themselves that they might live a luxurious kind of a life style. That has been one of the real problems in the history of the church, those who have used the position and authority of leadership for their own financial benefit.

So Paul is going to be talking to the Corinthians about this sensitive issue, because Paul is going to Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem has experienced great financial problems. They are poor! They are in tremendous need. The Christians are desperate. So Paul is wanting to take a generous offering to the church in Jerusalem. And so he is urging the Corinthians to give, not to him, but to give to the poor brethren in Jerusalem. So Paul is willing to ask them for money, not for himself, but for the church in Jerusalem.

The interesting thing in the early days of the church in the New Testament, there were men who were going around from church to church declaring themselves to be apostles, declaring themselves to be prophets. They would come in and they would sponge off the church. They just made their living by going in and living off of the generosity of the fact that Christians are loving people and generous people. They were taking advantage of that. So the apostles felt it necessary to set out certain guidelines for the churches, guidelines concerning those that would come in, declaring that they were prophets or declaring that they were apostles, and taking financial advantage of the churches. So they wrote what they called the "Didike". It was the teaching. The didactics of the apostles. It gave certain rules. That is if a man came in and declared that he was a prophet, and he would get this "Thus saith the Lord, prepare a big meal for all of the poor people in the community." Well, the rule said if he eats of the meal, he is a false prophet. If they stayed more than two days without working, they were false prophets, move them on. And they gave a lot of rules to sort of protect the church from those charlatans who would take advantage of people in the aspect of giving.

So it is a sensitive subject. I grew up in an environment where it seemed like there was always some kind of emergency or crisis and God was about headed for bankruptcy court. So it was always bailing God out of His financial difficulties. He was not a very good manager of money. He was always over spending and always in need. And of course I have seen every gimmick in the

world as far as getting people to give. First of all, let's all stand up. Now reach into the pocketbook or the hip pocket of the person in front of you and take out their wallet. And now give as you've always wanted to give. Give from the bottom of your heart, not from the top of your pocketbook.

I mean I have heard it all. And the business of, how many will give a thousand dollars? Stand up, you know. By the time they got down to me and to give fifty cents, you felt like a cheap-skate, but at least you got to stand.

I made a covenant with the Lord when I felt God was calling me to the ministry, a covenant with the Lord that I would never ask people for money. I, like Paul feel very sensitive on this issue. You notice that we never say anything about your giving, except that the ushers will come forward and we will receive. We never say we will take the offering. Many times when we have a new pastor that comes on staff and they are making the announcements on Sunday morning, they will say, and now the ushers will come forward and we will take the Sunday offering. As soon as they sit down, I say we never take an offering at Calvary Chapel! We receive an offering from those who want to give. They only make that mistake once. There is a big difference between taking an offering and receiving an offering. But we made this covenant with God that we would never make giving a big issue.

In fact I was in the ministry for many, many years, in fact it was the last time through, not this time but the last time through that we were going through the Bible, was the first time I ever preached a sermon on tithing. And that was because the Lord nailed me on it. We were in the Book of Malachi. The question is asked (Malachi 3:8), "Will a man rob God?" And they say wherein have we robbed God? And God said, in your tithes and in your offerings. Prove me now, herewith says the Lord and see if I will not promise you a blessing that you cannot contain!

So there is another beautiful passage that I love in Malachi (Malachi 4:16) and it says they who love the Lord speak often to one another about Him and God made a record. God kept a record. In that day they shall be accounted as His jewels. I love that! And I was going to talk to the people about talking to each other about the Lord because God when you talk about Him, He eavesdrops.

Have you ever noticed when someone maybe is walking along? They say your name and suddenly you pick up. You are sort of tuned to your own name. And they may be talking about someone else but they mention your name. You look to see if they know you or whatever. They may be strangers just walking along talking. But God picks up whenever you start talking about Him. He keeps a record of it. And they will be accounted as His jewels. That's a beautiful thought and all.

I was inspired and was going to speak on that. And the Lord spoke to me and He said, why are you robbing the people? I said, Lord, we made a covenant when we entered the ministry that we would never talk about money. And the Lord said, (you know, I was arguing with Him, I said you know, I don't want to talk on the subject.) but you are robbing the people because they don't know the blessings that I bestow upon those who give. Look, I've told them to prove Me. They don't know the blessings that they can have. So, I came from that angle in the message. I had to change it. I mean the Lord would have really nailed me had I not. So I came from the position of the privilege of investing in the kingdom of God and the tremendous dividends that God has promised for those that would invest in His kingdom. Thank the Lord, I got that one out of my system. It is a sensitive issue. It is an abuse within the church. Thus, Paul is very sensitive on this. It is very interesting how he handles the issue of asking them for money, not for himself, but for the church in Jerusalem where he is planning to help them in their distress.

So, *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit* (Oh man, that's old English. It's actually, we want you to know. It's an old English phrase that's just not in use at all anymore. But it's just we want you to

know.

We do you to wit. We want you to know *of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia*; Now Macedonia was the area of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and so forth, whereas Corinth was down on the lower end of Greece. So these are the churches in the upper portion. They were known as Macedonia. We want you to know of the grace of God that was bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.

²*How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.* These people were going through severe trials, financial problems, but, from the abundance of their joy. Now last Thursday night as we were dealing with the purpose of John, writing his little epistle, that you might have the fullness of joy, we pointed out that joy and happiness are not the same. Happiness is an emotional condition of the mind that is predicated upon pleasant circumstances. You are happy. Something good has happened to you. You've just seen a roll of hundred dollar bills lying in the street. No one saw it. It was dropped by some drug dealer, so you know that there is no sense turning it into the police department because he is not going to come and claim it. And you think, oh boy. Whew, all my bills are going to be paid! And so you go down to pay off one of your bills. The bank teller looks at it carefully and say, this is counterfeit. Suddenly your happiness is gone, because happiness is conditioned on the outward circumstances being pleasant. As you are talking to the treasury agent trying to explain why you have so many counterfeit hundred dollar bills, you are not too happy anymore.

But joy is an experience of the spirit. It is deeper than happiness. It is independent of the outward circumstances. We were pointing that out.

Here is a good example. In the great trial of affliction, that is the churches were going through. They were being persecuted there in Macedonia. And in this great trial of affliction, they had an abundance of joy, because joy comes from relationships. A right relationship with God! Rejoice! So your circumstances can be absolutely miserable, but because you are in a right relationship with God, your heart is filled with joy! So in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and from their deep poverty, they abounded unto the riches of their liberality. Though they were poor, they were going through financial struggles, yet they were liberal in their giving for their poorer brethren in Jerusalem.

³*For to their power, (or to their credit), I bear record, yea, and beyond their power (according to their ability and even beyond their ability) they were willing of themselves;* That is one of the keys to giving. As Paul will, in his next chapter where he continues the subject, as he will declare that we should never give out of constraint or out of pressure, but as a man is purposed in his own heart, so let him give. It should always be from a willing heart. Never feel pressured to give to God. Because if you feel pressured to give to God, you might resent your giving.

There are many churches that ask you to make a financial pledge to the church. Probably some of you have been in those churches, where they ask you to make a financial pledge to the church of how much you are going to give during the year. And then you begin to get little notices of how you didn't make your payment last month and of how much the church needs your help and so forth. And you start getting dunned by the church for your failure to give. You think, oh, I hate these notices. You write out your check and say I'm sorry I promised so much. And you resent it. It's not willing. Well, you are better off not to give than to give with that kind of an attitude. God doesn't honor it! God doesn't respect it! God doesn't want it! The Lord loves a cheerful giver, Paul will tell us. The word cheerful, in Greek (*hilaros*), is closer to hilarious. The most hilarious part of the service should be when we receive the offering, because God loves a hilarious giver! And so God doesn't want you to give out of a sense of pressure, out of a sense of obligation. And

surely, not out of a sense, well, if I give to God, He's going to give to me, you know. But He wants you to give just because you love Him! Isn't that one of the manifestations of love, giving? God so loved that He gave. He wants that to be the motive behind your giving, your love for God, as a manifestation of that love! God loves a cheerful giver. But the willingness, they were willing of themselves. That is the key issue.

When Moses announced to the people that God had given him the designs of a tent that would be the tent of the congregation, a place where they would meet with God. It was to have golden artifacts within it. The people began to give their earrings and bracelets and so forth, that were made of gold. They gave so freely (Exodus 35:21) and so much that Moses finally had to say, cut it off, that's enough (Exodus 36:3-7). We've got more than we need. No more! Well, that's the way people ought to be giving. That's the kind of giving that God wants. It's that which comes from a willing heart, never out of pressure. So according to their ability and even beyond their abilities they were willing of themselves.

⁴*Praying us* (or they were begging us) *with much intreaty that we would receive the gift*, Paul would see them coming in. He would say, oh man, this poor guy, he's needing shoes himself, you know. Look at those sandals. They are worn out. And yet the guy is bringing in an offering. Paul is wanting to say, man, take it and buy yourself a new pair of sandals, you know. But, they were saying, no, no, you know. They were pressing Paul to take the money, praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, because they wanted to be a part of helping the saints.

God has blessed us here at Calvary Chapel. We thank God for those blessings. He has honored our commitments. The fact that we never make an issue out of money and God has provided for us and for all of the needs. He has given us the opportunity to help. Each month at the board meeting we consider the requests for help that are given to us. Presently the people in Sudan, the Christians are experiencing tremendous persecution from the Moslems. They are being kidnapped and sold. The women are being raped. The Christians are in a desperate plight. Ed Cornwell, one of our pastors along with Gary Kusunoki, one of the Calvary Chapels in south county, and others will be going over to the Sudan within a week, or a little more than a week. And we are sending along with them a healthy sum of money to help these poor brothers and sisters in Christ in the Sudan, who are going through such tremendous problems at this time. And what a joy it is to be able to help believers around the world! And how we thank God! You are like the church in Macedonia, the churches there, who give so freely. We thank God that we are able to help distribute to those who are in need around the world from what God has blessed us with here at Calvary Chapel.

and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. So they were begging Paul to receive their gifts as they wanted to share in the ministry in the saints.

⁵*And this they did, not as we hoped* (or expected), *but first gave their own selves to the Lord*, That's where it starts, giving begins always with giving myself to the Lord! Lord, I'm Yours. That awareness or conscienceness, that Lord, You purchased me. I belong to You. Anything I possess, Lord, You have given to me as a steward. It all belongs to You. I belong to You. And so Lord, You have free access to my bank account or whatever. Whatever You want, Lord, it's Yours.

So they gave first themselves to the Lord, *and (then) unto us by the will of God.* So, they gave then to Paul, money for the church in Jerusalem as it was God's will.

⁶*Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.* Now Paul had sent the first letter to the church in Corinth by Titus. And in his first letter to the church in Corinth, he mentioned the fact that he was going to go to Jerusalem. He wanted them to start taking up offerings for the church in Jerusalem. He was planning to swing by the church of Corinth and pick up the offerings. He said, I want you to, before I get there, to lay in

store. I don't want you to take up any offerings while I'm there. But before I get there, I want you to lay in store so that when I come I'll be able to take you know, your help to the church in Jerusalem, to the poor brethren in Jerusalem. So Titus took the letter of Paul to the church in Corinth. Titus was with them for a while. He started receiving from them, the offering. He started, laid up you know, the bank account and so forth where they could deposit these things. So as long as Titus began that, I want him to come back and to finish that ministry that he began among you, this grace of yours, your giving to this particular need of the brethren in Jerusalem.

⁷*Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence,* The characteristic for which the church in Corinth was noted. They were noted for their faith. Paul said in his first letter, you don't come behind in any spiritual gift and in their utterance. In their witnessing, their proclaiming Jesus Christ and in their knowledge of explaining the Scriptures and in their diligence in serving the Lord, *and in your love to us,* (they abounded in these things) *see that ye abound in this grace also.* Abound in your giving.

Then he says, ⁸*I speak not by commandment,* Look, now I'm not commanding you. Get this straight. And so Paul is wanting, you know, I'm not speaking this by commandment. I'm not commanding you to do this.

but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. I want you to prove the sincerity of your love. Don't feel like I'm commanding you to do this. Just let it be an expression of your love.

⁹*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,* (So here's now the example of giving, Jesus Christ, Himself. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.) *that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* Jesus Christ, the Supreme example of giving, He was rich. He was a part of the triune Godhead. He was God the Son. He was worshipped and adored by the angels.

And all the angels of heaven worship Him, God declared. Unto which of the angels, said He, at any time, Thou art My Son, this day I have begotten Thee. He was above the angels.

He was in the beginning with God and thought it not something to be grasped, to be equal with God.

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was rich! And yet for your sake, He became poor.

He was born into a poor family. Mary and Joseph, their poverty was manifested in the fact that when they came to give the offering, required by the law, for the first born child, they brought turtle doves instead of a lamb, which was an allowance in the law for the poor people. You didn't have to bring a lamb if you were poor, you could bring a turtle dove. So they brought a turtle dove for an offering, a poor family. He was born in another man's stable.

When He wanted to make an illustration, He didn't even have a coin to do it. He had to borrow a coin when He said, whose image or superscription is on this coin?

When they were demanding unfair taxes from Him in order that He not be an offense, He didn't have the money for it, but He said to Peter, go down and catch a fish. You will find a coin in it's mouth. Then pay the taxes.

He had to borrow a donkey to make His triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

He was buried in another man's tomb.

Though He was rich for your sake. He became poor. There is the grace of God in giving! That you through His poverty, He gave in order to enrich you. So the idea is, look, God has blessed you in Corinth. These people in Macedonia, they are poor people here. And yet they have given liberally.

You have a wealthy church. You are in good circumstances. You are in a bustling, commercial community. You have good jobs. Now Jesus is the example in the grace of giving. Now may you abound in this grace of giving.

¹⁰*And herein I give my advice:* This is necessary for you. I don't command. I'm advising you. You can do with it as you please, but I'm not commanding you. I am advising you.

for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. A year ago, you started this. And you started this fund and now it's necessary to complete it. I'll be coming along soon. And so I want you to complete, now, this fund that you began for the brethren in Jerusalem.

¹¹*Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.* ¹²*For if there be first a willing mind,* (Now remember, this is the criteria for giving, a willing mind.) *it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* But God won't accept it, if it doesn't come from a willing mind. You have to want to. You have to be willing to. And then it is accepted, not according to—it's accepted according to what you have, not according to that he hath not. God accepts that too, but it's that which you are willing.

¹³*For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:* In other words, I don't want to put the whole burden on you.

¹⁴*But by an equality,* (In the body of Christ.) *that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want* (or their need), *that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:* In other words, right now, you are being prospered. You are being blessed. And so give for their needs! They are in big trouble. But it could be that things could be reversed one day and they will be blessed and you will be in need, and thus I'll take an offering from them to bring to you. That there might be an equality that is worked out within the churches.

¹⁵*As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.* This was when God gave the manna to the children of Israel in the wilderness. They that gathered a lot at the end of the day had nothing left over. Those that gathered only a little, they had enough. And so it is. God equals things out.

¹⁶*But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.* I have this great concern for you and thank God. Titus shares the burden I have. You know, you were good to him. You received him. He loves you. He has the same care and concern for you, that I have.

¹⁷*For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.* In other words, Paul said, Titus, would you go to the church in Corinth? Would you take this letter and deliver it and minister to them? So he accepted the invitation, but even he was eager to accept it. It wasn't with a reluctance that he came, but he was eager to come of his own accord. He went unto you.

¹⁸*And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;* Now who is that brother? Paul is sending Titus back. He said, now Titus, you go back, you know, and get this job finished. So Titus was eager. He wanted to do that. So Paul sent along a brother with him, perhaps Luke, who was the author of the Book of Acts and a travelling companion of Paul. Perhaps it was Silas, who was with Paul in Corinth. Perhaps Apollos, because he became one of Paul's company, too. We don't know. If we needed to know, Paul would have named him.

So God puts a few things in like this to keep theologians busy. It gives them room to argue and to speculate, you know. They can write their doctoral papers on who this brother was, you know, as

though it made any difference. And so we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. In other words, he was a well-known brother. All of the churches acclaimed this fellow. I mean he was respected. His ministry was respected in all of the churches.

¹⁹*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 declaration of your ready mind:* So, all of the churches chose him to go with us to Jerusalem, to take the offering. And he was one that has been selected. He is going to help us to administer the giving of these monies that we had collected from the churches.

²⁰*Avoiding this,* (Because we want to avoid this, Paul said.) *that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:* Paul was very careful about money. He didn't want anybody to say, well, he is collecting and he is, you know, using for himself, you know.

There are a lot of times that offerings are taken for a, you know, a mission. We want to help the people in Sudan. We're going to take an offering for the Sudanese believers. And maybe an offering, maybe the generosity of the people would be a hundred thousand dollars, given in the offering. And we would say, well, they really don't need that much, we'll send them fifty thousand, you know. That is a common thing.

Some of these TV evangelists that take up offerings for the orphanages in Haiti, they show pictures of the children in the orphanages. And for ten dollars a month, you can support this child and so forth. We had a lady in our church who was supporting a child in Guatemala. She got a monthly letter from this child, through one of these Christian organizations of support an orphan. And this little girl in Guatemala would write to her every month. Her husband had to go to Guatemala on a business trip and she thought we'll go down and meet our little adopted orphan, the one that we have been supporting, monthly. And when they got to Guatemala, to their amazement, the little girl wasn't an orphan. She was living in a home, with her family who were well off, but she was going to this Christian school and a part of the assignments was writing these letters each month back to those that were supporting her and the pictures and so forth. But it was a scam, a rip-off.

These orphanages in Haiti and so forth, the evangelists say well, we are raising money and we're going to send it. What was it, one of these TV shows, you know, ninety minutes, or whatever, one did a program? They interviewed the people who were in charge of the orphanages there in Haiti. This particular evangelist had raised a hundred thousand dollars or so for the orphanage. They asked the head of the orphanage how much did they give to you? Well, they give us a hundred dollars every time they come down to take pictures, about every six months. They come down with the TV crews and they take pictures. They give us a hundred dollars each time they come. But they raised thousands of dollars. Now, that is corrupt. That is wrong, but unfortunately, that happens.

And it's happened from the beginning. Money is a great corrupter. And so Paul wants to be extremely careful when it comes to money.

I believe that God approves of that. I think that when we are handling God's funds, we have to be extremely careful. We need to be very prudent. We have double signatures on all of the checks from the church. Our accounting department, I don't make out any church checks, it's all done through the accounting department. I'm usually one of the two signators because I want to know where the money is going. And though it takes a long time to sign all the checks and to go through them, I feel that it's part of my responsibility to at least see. We have then every month the accounting department gives us a full accounting of where the money is going. And we feel that obligation. So, I don't want to handle the money. I don't know who is giving what. I don't care

who is giving what. The Lord knows! And because if I knew that someone was a very generous giver, I'm carnal and I might play up to that person. Well, they are a heavy giver, you know. So I don't want that because I don't want to have any difference in the way I treat people.

So Paul is concerned that he might avoid any blame, any accusation that might come because of the abundance of the money that he'll be taking to Jerusalem. So he is taking these others, Titus and these other brethren with him. So that there can be no accusation made that Paul, you know, took all of the money and then stayed in first class hotels and had a suite. He didn't want those kind of accusations made.

²¹*Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* Now Paul had this awareness, that what I'm doing, I'm doing in the sight of the Lord. That is the big problem with those who misuse money. They don't have that conscienceness that God sees me. Are any of you on some of the mailing lists of some of these sharks, these charlatans? I used to be on some of the mailing lists. They've all seen fit to drop me because I have written to some of them, accusing them of being false prophets.

They send out these letters that look to be personalized. They are done with a computer. Dear brother Smith, as I was in prayer this morning, suddenly I got a great burden for you. I wanted to come out and visit with you in your home, in order that you might just share and you could open your heart to me and share with me the problem that you are going through, in order that I might more intelligently pray for you. But I know that you are so busy, you probably wouldn't have time for me, but if you will use the enclosed envelope, you can share with me the difficulty that you are having. I can pray for you and oh, incidentally, we are going through a tremendous financial problem at this time. Could you enclose twenty-five dollars or fifty dollars? Or if you could give a hundred, it would help tremendously. If you don't have it, maybe you could go to the bank and borrow it, you know.

When the TV did the exposé, they showed the big dumpster where all the requests were offered. The envelopes were ripped open and the checks taken out, but all of the requests for prayer were only seen by the trash men. You see, a man can't do that and have the fear of God in his heart. You can't really believe that God sees what I am doing.

So Paul said I want to be clear before God. That's first. That's foremost. That's most important! If I'm clear in my conscience towards God, in the sight of God, if I'm doing what is right in the sight of God, that's the main thing. But yet on the other hand, I want to do it in the sight of people, too. Because I don't want people to get a false impression and to think that I might be using the things of God for my own personal gain. So providing things that are honest in the sight of God and also in the sight of men.

²²*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.* So, sending along, with Titus, the brother, in order that everything might be above board, in order that there be no questions.

²³*Whether any do enquire of Titus, (Do you want to know about Titus?) he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren (That we are sending, if you are asking about them.) be enquired of, they are the messengers (the apostolos, So in the early church, the apostles were not limited to the twelve in Jerusalem, but these brethren that Paul was sending, Paul calls them the apostles. They are the apostles. They are sent out by the Lord. And they are the apostles.) of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

²⁴*Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.* I been telling of what a great bunch of guys you are. I've been telling about what a

wonderful church, there in Corinth. Now prove to them that I wasn't just bragging out of turn. And so Paul talks on the delicate subject of giving.

He continues on into chapter nine. He gives there in chapter nine, some interesting principles concerning giving, that are taught elsewhere in the Scriptures. They are important principles. So read about it and find out how we ought to give.

There are always questions, you know, tithing is an Old Testament law. Are we as Christians, then to give tithes? Are we to tithe from the net or the gross, before or after the government had taken its share? What if I don't have enough money to meet all of my bills, should I still tithe? And a lot of questions concerning giving, what is required, What is my obligation? What is New Testament giving? So Paul will deal with some of these issues in the next chapter as he finishes the subject of giving in chapter nine.

They first of all gave themselves to God. That's first! Lord, my life is Yours, I give myself to You. All that I am, all that I have is Yours.

It used to be that I would think how much of my money can I afford to give to God this month? I no longer think that way. I now think, how much of God's money should I spend on myself? What I have belongs to Him. I need to use it wisely. I should not use it lavishly or for luxury, but just the necessities, in order that I might be able to give to Him.

God taught me lessons on giving that I'll not share with you because it would sound like bragging. God knows that I've responded to the lessons that He had taught me, concerning giving and God has blessed me and continues to bless me. And blesses me more than I can ever imagine or dream, because it is His. And He knows that I will use it for Him. He knows that it is His. And so He uses me as the channel. He uses His money for His glory and for His work and for His will.

Father, how we thank You for the opportunities of giving. We thank You, Lord, for this church and for the giving heart that the people have. Lord, You have been so good. We appreciate, Lord, Your many, many blessings. Lord, we feel a tremendous obligation before You to invest wisely in the kingdom of God and for the kingdom of God, the funds that You have made available because of the liberality of the people and of the generous hearts that they have. And so, Lord, guide and continue to guide as month by month, the board looks over the requests and seeks to determine how best to invest the monies that You have made available to expand the kingdom of God throughout the world. And Lord, we thank You for the way that we've been able to expand the kingdom, the ministries that have gone out and are going out. Thank You, Lord, that You have blessed so abundantly. In Jesus' name. Amen.