

Let's take our Bibles and turn back to Second Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 and if you can remember, we were in a three part sermon on Happy to Give. It's this part of our series Total Grace. Just keep your Bible open, Second Corinthians 8 and 9 because we'll be hopping and jumping and skipping across this passage as we come to consider the grace of giving.

One of the things that grace will produce in your life and my life is a spirit of generosity, so happy to give. That's where we're at. Now let me say this as we begin this morning, I don't know if you've noticed this as you've read your New Testament, but Paul invariably begins and ends all of his letters with a reference to grace. We're gonna come and look here at Second Corinthians shortly and you'll see that pattern also worked out in Second Corinthians chapter one in verse two, Paul says this, 'Grace you and peace from god our father and the lord Jesus Christ.'

When he finishes his letter, he finishes it in Chapter 13 verse 14, 'The grace of our lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the holy spirit be with you all.' And that's a pattern you'll find repeated in all of his letters. If it's not in the first couple of verses, you'll find it in the early verses and latter verses of all of his letters.

And it's not just a convention. It's not just a writing style. It's a way of thinking. For Paul, the Christian life, who we are, what we've become, what we're able to do, what we have, it all rests on god's free grace. From start to finish, the Christian life is a matter of grace, not karma, not law, but grace. So the fact that he begins and ends every letter in the same manner, it's more than a convention, it's a conviction.

A conviction that the Christian life is a matter of grace given. First Corinthians 3 verse 10. Grace is not simply a springboard, a launching point for the Christian experience, it's a foundation. It's beneath everything we are, have, do, and expect to be. That's why I like the words of C.L. Chase in his book 'Focused Optimism,' 'Grace is the sum and substance of God's handling of your life. Grace's fingerprints are on everything that happens to you and let it be said what doesn't happen to you. You live and move and have your being in grace.'

And we've been trying to argue that, haven't we, in our series Total Grace? We've been trying to show grace as a kind of gem that has many facets to it. We've talked about saving grace. We've talked about serving grace. We've talked about suffering grace, singing grace, speaking grace, strengthening grace, and as we're going to see this morning and wrap this up, we've been talk about sacrificing grace.

That the grace of god produces in us, gracious giving. That all of our giving is a reflex to god's giving. We've been looking at Second Corinthians 8 and 9 where we have a historic record of Paul encouraging the Corinthians to complete a pledge they made to give to a collection that was being raised for the Persians in Jerusalem and as Paul talks about this collection, this money gift that was indeed being raised in Corinth, he describes it as an act of grace.

In chapter 8 and verse 1 he speaks about the grace that was given to the Macedonian churches in chapter 8 and verse 6, he talks about this act of grace. In verse 7, the grace of giving. In verse 14 of chapter 9, he speaks about the surpassing grace of God that was given to them and we wanna kind of pick up where we left off as we look at the grace of giving.

We looked at the motives of grace giving and we started to look at the manner of grace giving. So far, we've identified seven elements of the manner of grace giving. It's costly, consecrated, complete, considered, collective, commensurate, cheerful. If you missed that, you can get the Cd's and catch up. But here's another one, here's a neat pass back to the manner in which you and I ought to give or the manner in which god's money ought to be collected.

Grace giving is certified. That's point number 8. Grace giving is certified. What do i mean by that? As we'll see here in verses 16-24 of chapter 8, when Paul sent Titus to collect the money from the Corinthians, the process was a protected process because handling money is a risky business. Those who handle it may be tempted. Those who handle it may become the subjects of suspicion by others and so money must be handled carefully.

I have a friend whose church was embezzled by 300,000 dollars by someone within the church. Handling money is a risky business and so Paul sets before us here a kind of process. We don't wanna read all these versus, but you'll see from verses 16 through 24 that Paul is sending Titus to Corinth to collect the money and then Titus will join Paul on the journey to Jerusalem. It's also interesting that Paul sends two other people with Titus. We read indeed in verse 18 of chapter 8, and we have sent with him, that's Titus, the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the lord himself.

If you go on down to verse 22, and we have sent with them, that is Titus and this brother, another unnamed brother, probably known to them, who's often proved diligent in many things but nigh much more diligent because of the great confidence that we have in you. Point is simply this and you can read about this also in First Corinthians 16 versus 1 to 4. As the collection is raised and lifted and managed, a process is put in place that will guard the integrity of the apostle Paul, guard the integrity of those who are involved. It will ward them off against temptation and suspicion. Good practices are going to govern this collection and distribution of money for the saints in Jerusalem.

There's actually three principles or patterns jump out there, many more probably. Do notice to kind of person involved. Although it's just the handling of money, it's physical, it's material. The qualification is spiritual. You'll notice concerning these two unnamed men, that they are chosen by the church, known to the church, they have a good reputation in the church. They've been tested and proven diligent. Not anybody should be allowed to handle money.

So the kind of person involved is someone who's independent. Someone's who's proven, prominent, chosen, impeachable. You'll notice that there are several people involved. Paul is involved, but not directly at this point. He guards himself by sending Titus and then he guards Titus by sending two other brothers who in a sense guard each other. There's a plurality of spiritual people involved. Now why is there more people involved? One, as they take the money to Jerusalem, it would've guarded them against the act of robbery. There's safety in numbers. Think, that's one implication.

And in number two, the fact that there's more than one or two people involved, it would guard them against any accusation of pilfering or playing with the collection themselves. So it's a very wise move and what motivates this process? Well, we read in verse 21, so that things may be done in an honorable way not only in the sight of the lord but in the sight of men. So the motive is that we wanna do this right, we wanna handle this well so that god is pleased, god is honored in the way we do his work and number two, people can trust the process.

In fact, the implication might be there in the sight of men, that's even those outside the church. The unbeliever can look at how the church handles its money and the way it conducts itself financially and they go you know what, I can trust this process. Now sadly, across church history, the church has been stung by the mismanagement of money. But a good church and a godly church will work hard. None of our pastors in this church can write checks. People outside the leadership handle the collection on a Sunday and there's more than one or two involved. There's a process not unlike this that guards us. You know each year we come, we make statistics, we make ourselves accountable for where the money has gone and how the money's been used. That's all proper and that's all the way it should be done.

It's just the point I want you to see. Grace giving is certified. It's marked by integrity. I like the story in fact that R. Kent Hughes tells in his commentary on Second Corinthians, he tells of an old miser who was dying and he called three of his friends, one a doctor, one a lawyer, and one a pastor. And he said, you know what, they say you can't take it with you but I'm gonna prove them wrong and he handed each one of these men an envelope with 100,000 dollars in it and he said here's what I want you guys to do so we can be sure about this process. When they're about to nail the nail on my coffin, you guys slip it in and I'm gonna prove that you can take it with you.

So the day comes, they're about to nail the lid on the coffin and the guys put in the three envelopes. Shortly afterwards at the wake, the doctor confesses with a conscience that's been stricken, he says you know what guys, I gotta tell you the truth, I'm building a clinic in a disadvantaged area in the city and so I kept 50,000 for the clinic and I put the rest in the coffin.

The lawyer said well, since you're confessing, let me confess. He says I've just established a legal defense fund for poor people and so I kept 75,000. The pastor looked at them and says guys, I'm ashamed of you. I put a check in for the whole amount.

I'm not sure that's a process marked by integrity, but Paul wants you and I to know that when it comes to the public handling of money for god's work, it should be conducted in a spiritual manner by people of the highest integrity for the glory of god and the reputation of the church.

Let's move on. There's another thought when we're looking at the manner of grace giving. Grace giving is charitable. Charitable. It's motivated by love, it's driven by a compassion and a desire to be a blessing to other people. The text is very clear, you'll see in chapter 8 and verse 8 concerning this collection for the saints in Jerusalem from Corinth. I speak not from commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. The other verses preceding that one held up the Macedonians, those in northern Greece in places like Philippi and Colossi, he has held them up as an example and he says no I'm gonna prove the sincerity of your love. They have proven the sincerity of theirs. Out of their poverty, they have given liberally. So let's prove the sincerity of your love. You get a similar thought in chapter 8 in verse 24, therefore show to them and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

so I want you to see that grace giving is charitable. It ought to be marked and motivated by love. Now you and I know instinctively that love needs to move from words to action. One John is all about that. John's very clear about the fact that you can't say you love a brother and then hate him in your behavior because actions speak louder than words, don't they? One John 4:20, if someone says I love god and hates his brother, he's a liar and he who does not love his brother, he whom he has seen, how can he love god who he has not seen? Again earlier in that letter, he talks about don't say to someone be warmed and be filled. Take them down to Target and get them a coat. Put your words into actions.

But you and I know that right actions must be followed or underwritten by right attitudes because we wanna move from words to action. But the danger is we can do the right thing the wrong way, so we wanna move to action, that's good. But there's one step more, you gotta make sure that you're being motivated properly to do what you're doing. Motive's important, that's why Paul says to the Corinthians, I want to prove the sincerity of your love. That's getting into motive. He wants them to give out of compassion and love and a desire to bless the saints in Jerusalem. He doesn't want them to give begrudgingly. He doesn't want them to give legalistically. He doesn't want them to give heartlessly. Compassion for and a desire to bless others is the outworking of the sincerity of love. That's the well spring of all good giving.

Or as someone put it this way, god is not just interested in the outward of mind, he's interested in the inward motive. That's a good thought. Not just the outward of mind. You can be generous in the gift and yet poor in the motive. In fact if you think about it, I just put my pen down in my study as I thought about that. How god is interested in motives and how right actions must be underwritten by right attitudes. Because if not, you and I can do stuff. Even we can give to the church. We can give to the poor. We can alleviate poverty through our generosity, but we can do stuff for the wrong reason. Didn't the Pharisees do that? The Pharisees prayed and the Pharisees fasted and the Pharisees gave alms, that is they gave generously to the poor. But Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 and 6 and 7, they did it to be seen of men. So they did the right thing, but they did it for the wrong reason.

They didn't do it to glorify god. They didn't do it to bless others. Primarily, they did it for the accolades that would come their way. You can do stuff to be seen by men. You can do stuff out of a legalistic duty. You do it because you know you just have to do it. You may even be driven by a morbid fear of god. So you do it, but there's no heart in it. There's no love for god in it. That was the problem in Malachi's day. I mean, god speaks to Israel through Malachi. Read that little prophecy at the end of your Old Testament. God's nauseated by their worship. He's sick to his back teeth by the way they're acting. They're sacrificing, they're going to the temple, but you know what, it's all empty. It's all legalistic, it's all formal.

So the worship doesn't please god. And here's another thought. We can do stuff to cover disobedience. You ever think about that one? You can act obediently to cover an act of disobedience elsewhere. Who's the best example of that? Saul. Remember how god told him to kill the king and obliterate the kingdom, but he keeps some of the best sheep and livestock for himself and Samuel comes waltzing along and finds him sacrificing the best of sheep to god, that's where we get that famous statement, god would rather you obey than sacrifice. And you look at Saul, he's offering the best of what he has, but what he has, he shouldn't have had. He shouldn't have kept that. He was to slaughter those animals, so he was doing an act of obedience to cover his disobedience. I'm just thinking that out for myself. It spoke to me, maybe it'll speak to you. The real danger of hey, I don't wanna just speak, I wanna do. But that's not enough, I've not just gotta do, I've gotta do it with the right motive.

In fact, the word sincere here is a Greek word that means without wax and I've told you before, the ladies can identify with this, you know, maybe you're out shopping down at the local market and you decided you needed a piece of pottery for your home. You know, something ceramic for your home. You could lift up a piece of pottery and it might look all good to the eye, but what you'd find in that they, the ladies would hold up the piece of pottery to the sun. In fact, they'd go outside the tent or the bazaar and they'd hold it out to the sun. Because bad merchants would buy stuff that they knew had wax added to it. Maybe there was a crack in the pottery and in those days you could take wax that you colored and just put it in the fine line and gloss over it and to the naked eye, you wouldn't have noticed that, but the sunlight shows it out.

And so if something was a genuine article, you know. Had the kind of good housekeeping stamp of approval on it, it was without wax. Without wax. And you and I have got to work hard of eradicating the wax of hypocrisy in our lives, where we do the right things but not with the right motives. And Paul says, guys, not only do I want you to give and I want you to give generously. I want you to complete what you promised. I want you to certify the whole process. I want you to make sure you're doing this for the right motive.

There's a great story regarding Billy and Ruth Graham in the early days of their ministry and marriage. Billy was preaching in a little country church and he was sitting on the platform and to his surprise, one of the deacons during the offering come up and basically stuck the offering plate right in under his nose. And so he reached for his wallet and he pulled out what he thought was a one dollar bill because that's what he intended to give, but as he put that note on the plate, he saw it being carried out into the coffers of the church, he realized he had just given away his one and only ten dollar bill. And there was no getting it back. And then to kind of rub salt into the wound, it seemed like the church treasurer had forgot to give him his honorarium also.

So on the ride home, he wasn't in a particularly good mood and thinking that his wife might be consoling him. Ruth did nothing in terms of sympathizing with him. She said this, Billy, and just to think the lord will only give you credit for one dollar. You get the point? He put ten in, but he only meant to put one in so you get credit for what you intended to do. Motive. It's a good point, Ruth. She didn't spare her husband that night.

Here's the last thought, grace giving is commendable, although the last thought of this thought. We have a little bit to go yet. Grace giving is commendable. What do I mean by that? Again, we're hop, skipping, and jumping across this passage, one of the little words that appears here and there is the word boasting. Paul boasted to the Macedonians about the Corinthians. Let me show you this. Did you notice at the end of Chapter 8 verse 24, therefore shoulder them and before the churches the proof of your love and our boasting on your behalf? We've told others about you guys. Now earlier on in chapter 8 versus 1 to 5, he has boasted about the Macedonians and he's used their generosity in the midst of their poverty to just light a fire under the Corinthians.

But now we're learning that when he was in northern Greece collecting the money from the Macedonians, he did say, do you know that the churches in the south have pledge to give generously to this also? So he boasted about Corinth while he was in Macedonia. And as he writes here to them, look at chapter 9 in verse 3, speaking again about the sending of Titus and all of that, yet I have sent the brethren, basically inferred to you, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect. That as I said you may be ready, lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared. We should be ashamed of this confident boasting. Interesting point. A little wrinkle in the passage, something that you might overlook but I think in not so subtle a manner, Paul is kind of embarrassing them into action. Embarrassing them into action.

He's basically saying hey, I've put my cards on the table. I've told the Macedonians you guys are gonna come through. Now in response to what I told them about you, they have come through so here's the last thing you can do is embarrass me by not coming through. Don't leave me red faced among the churches. I think he's also inferring, wouldn't it be an embarrassment now that we know that the churches in Macedonia out of their poverty gave liberally? And the implications seem to be and I think geography and social economic standing tell us, the northern churches of Greece, like Philippi and Colossi, they were poorer than the southern churches in Greece like Corinth. So there's also this added

little thing mixed into it, hey don't be embarrassing me. I've boasted about you and you know what, wouldn't it be embarrassing if you don't come through? And it would be double embarrassing if the poorer churches out give the richer churches.

By the way, do we not feel embarrassed in the West at the giving of the churches in the East? And our poor brothers across the world who lay it on the line for Jesus Christ, but we sit in our air conditioned sanctuaries in Britain and in America and you know what, we're nowhere near as generous and as sacrificial as our brothers comparatively speaking. That's embarrassing. But you know what, embarrassment can be a good motive. In fact, I think Paul is adding, and this is gonna sound wrong until you think it out, he's adding a little bit of friendly competition into the mix.

Now I'm a pretty competitive guy. I like competitive sports, that's what gets my juices going. I don't like to run by myself. I don't like to play by myself. I like to get challenged, you know. Kick me and I'll kick you back. Score against me and I'll try to score against you. That's just part of nature when it becomes base, human pride. But it's a good thing when it's harnessed. Wasn't it Walt Disney who said, I have been up against tough competition all my life and I wouldn't know how to get along without it? Baker Mathey who played for the Oklahoma Sooners and now quarterback for the Browns, he said this, any time you get a better competition level it's always better for you because you want to get the best out of yourself and you want to compete against the best. Connor McGregor said this, I enjoy competition. I enjoy challenges. If a challenge is in front of me and it appeals to me, I want to go ahead and conquer it.

So harnessed, a little bit of competition's good. It pushes us. It urges us and that's exactly what's being done here. Don't embarrass us. Look what the Macedonians have done. And they're poorer? You guys better step up to the plate. And you know what, do your own studying, you'll find out, we should be embarrassed in the West. At the luxury in which we live, the standard of living we enjoy, and yet how little the Lord's work is supported. The average Protestant Evangelical only gives 2-3% of their income to the Lord's work. That's embarrassing. That's sinful. But let's move on. As you want me to move on.

Here's a third thought. We're back now to our main outline for a few minutes, we'll get two thoughts in here. What I call the multiplication of grace giving. We've looked at the motives. We've looked at the manner. Now we're looking at the multiplication of grace giving and this has us in chapter 9 verses 6 through 11. Paul says this, but I say he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one of us give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity for god loves a cheerful giver and the grace of god will abound towards us in all things as it is written, he has dispersed abroad. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. Notice verse 10, now may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for the food, supply and multiply the seed you have shown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

While you're enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to god. Interesting point, ladies and gentlemen. Paul has talked about giving, but here he talks about getting by giving. Yes? That's what I said. Paul talks about getting through giving. Now he takes the picture of a harvest. He talks about the laws of the harvest. He puts us into the farmer's field, we're now in the open air. We're out in the world of agriculture and everybody knows, there's several laws of the harvest and one of the laws is what? If you sow little, you'll reap little. If you sow bountifully, you'll reap bountifully. That's just one of the laws of the harvest. It's a no brainer.

And Paul says that's true spiritually. I think he's inferring, you know what if you give generously to god's work here and help here, you'll find that god will indeed bless you. That this thing will boomerang in

your direction because we reap in direct proportion to what we sow. And you know, that's just a principle you'll find throughout god's word. I'll give you a couple of other verses that will kind of reinforce this. In Proverbs chapter 11, versus 24 to 25, we read there is one who scatters yet increases more and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich. He who waters will also be watered himself. The people will curse him he who withholds grain and blessing will be on the head of he who sells it.

Challengings of wisdom principle. If you look out in life, generally speaking, you'll find that the most generous people are the most blessed people. God is no man's debtor. You can't out give god. You act in obedience, you do what you ought to do with the right motive and god will bless you. If you've got a similar thought, don't you by the lord Jesus in Luke chapter 6 in verse 38, well known words, but they kind of help us with our thought. Give and it shall be given to you. Let me say that again, give and it shall be given unto you. Good measure. Pressed down, shaken together, running over. In Galatians 6, what a man sows, that shall he reap. That's a biblical principle. Sow little, reap little. Sow much, reap much. So the point Paul's making is, when a believer desires to produce the greatest possible blessing in another at a cost to himself, that often boomerangs to their blessing. That's what's being taught here in the versus before us.

As one gives to bless others, one is blessed themselves, Proverbs 3:9-10 and Proverbs 28, 27. In fact you see it, don't you, in Paul's letter to to Philippians, where he acknowledges the gift that they gave and the generosity with which they gave and they'd given not only once, but many times and as he finishes that note of thanks, he says what? And my god shall supply all your need. Thank you for meeting my need, you've sown into my life, I believe you'll reap. And god will bless you. That's one of the paradoxes of the Christian life, isn't it? The way up is down, the last shall be first, standing still moves you forward, losing your life saves it, if you wanna be a slave to Jesus Christ, you'll be free. If you're weak, you'll be strong and if you give more, you'll get more. Now let me just qualify that, les you think I've gone health and wealth this morning.

Because in the context, I'm not gonna take time to develop this, I think it's clear from chapter 9 versus 6 through 11, god will give you more love because god loves a cheerful giver. And he'll love on a cheerful giver. God will give you more grace because he'll make all grace abound to you. God will bless you materially because in verse 11, we read that indeed, they were enriched in everything so that they could be more generous. But the point not to be missed is this, the blessings that are given to us, whatever that increase might be, whatever that blessing might be that boomerangs back to us, grace, love, material things, it is not to feather our own nests, that's the main point. This is where we part company with the health and wealth preachers.

It's not to feather our own nests. It's not so you can trade in your Honda Civic for a BMW. It's so that you can give more to those who have less and you can abound in good works. Notice verse 8 of chapter 9, and god is able to make all grace abound to you that you always having all sufficiency in all things may have an abundance for every good work. So god's gonna bless you for what reason, to what end? So you can be abundant in every good work. The more you have, the more you're able to give to those who don't have. Because having food and clothing, your needs are being met. Take the rest and bless other people with it. Look at verse 10. Now I may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread to the food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. A similar language. The fruit of god's blessing in your life is not bigger houses, faster cars, smarter clothes. No, it's abundance of good works. It's fruit of righteousness. Look at verse 11, while you have been enriched in

everything, for liberality, why has god enriched you? So you can be more liberal and generous in what you give.

So the Christian's personal wealth is never to be viewed as an end to itself, but as a means to an end. God doesn't bless us to make us more comfortable, god blesses us to make us more useful. That's the point. Let me give you a quote and move on to our last point. Here's what Sam Storm says, god's promise is that he will never stir your heart to give in the field and then fail to supply you the resource to do it. But the idea that we should give so that god should enrich us personally with a view to increase our comfort and convenience and purchasing power is foreign to Paul's teaching. Personal wealth here is viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means to get a higher goal, continued generosity to those in need. One thing that will undermine the outworking of this principle is the lie that 100,000 dollar salary, leads to 100,000 dollar lifestyle. That's what's wrong with the church in the West. Our 100,000 dollar salaries lead to 100,000 dollar lifestyles. That ought not to be. God doesn't bless us for faster cars, bigger houses, smarter clothes. He blesses us so we can be a blessing to this who don't enjoy that blessing.

John Piper, god has made us to be conduits of his grace, not cul de sacs. The danger is in thinking that the conduits should be line with gold, it shouldn't. Copper will do. You know what he's saying there? You gotta decide as a Christian, for a certain lifestyle and then everything else you use for god's blessing and the advancement of his kingdom. Isn't that what John Wesley did? In his early ministry, he got 30 pounds a month, or was it a year? I can't remember, but he decided he could live on 20 and could give away 2. But when he got 60 pounds, 90 pounds, and 120 pounds, he still lived on 28 pounds and gave the rest away. It's copper, not gold.

Okay, let's get to our last thought, what I call the message of grace giving, very quick and simple thought. The message of grace giving, John Stot helped me with this, I'm not sure I'd have seen this myself, but in verse 13, Paul says something interesting about their gift. While through the proof of this ministry, they glorify god for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ and for your liberal sharing with them. So Paul anticipates this gift eventually gets to Jerusalem and they bless god because of the blessing from Corinth. But I want you to notice how he describes their gift. It's a confession of the gospel of Jesus. That's interesting. Someone has said money talks. In fact, someone else said money talks and it usually says goodbye. Okay, we can all identify with that. But money does talk, how you spend your money, you make your money, what value you put on your money, it all speaks. It all says something about you and me.

Money speaks and the money that they sent to Jerusalem spoke, communicated, there was a message in their grace giving. Paul would agree with that idea that money speaks because he says that their money confessed the gospel. In what way, confessed or spoke or communicated the gospel? Well I would make an argument as some do, remember one of Paul's motives is, the Greek churches helping the Jewish churches would bind the church together because in the gospel there's neither Jew nor Gentile. This is the early church and you know what, those two rivers are now becoming one river and Paul wants to help that happen. And their gift is communicating what, confessing what they believe in the unity of the church through the gospel. Neither male nor female, neither gentile nor Jew, neither free nor slave. They were giving a message in their giving.

Your giving sends a message. My giving sends a message. If I give to missions, I'm sending this message, there's only one name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved. People need to hear the gospel or they're going to perish. That's what I communicate when I give to missions. I communicate Jesus is the only savior, the gospel is the only answer, and hell is a reality apart from the

gospel. If you and I give to the poor, to the destitute, to the famine stricken, I'll tell you another thing we're communicating, that in the most destitute person, we find the image of god stamped and that person's worthy of our love and help.

You give to Christian education, you're acknowledging that we need to raise up a generation who realize that wisdom begins in the fear of god. Not in a textbook, but in the book. The bible. Give to Christian media, like Know the Truth, you're communicating your commitment to the great commission and the power of preaching. Give money to the local church and you're committing to the importance of pastors doing their work free of the burdens of everyday life. You're communicating your belief that the church is the vehicle by which people are disciplined in matured in their faith. Money talks. In fact there was a biography written recently on the Duke of Wellington, not a hero among most Americans, but having grown up in Britain, he was somebody we learned about in school. 1815, he beats Napoleon, very famous, furious general and the recent biography, the writer touted the fact that his biography maybe give us insights that former biographies didn't have because in recent years, they discovered a ledger, a kind of checkbook ledger of how the Duke of Wellington spent his money.

And as he looked over this ledger, he felt that he'd got insights into this man that others had missed because he believed that money talks and that the ledger spoke about the Duke of Wellington. Money does talk, our checkbooks say a lot about us. In fact, most of us don't even have checkbooks. I'm the one hold out in the church office who still gets a check and I'm still holding out. I don't know about you, you can do it electronically if you like, but I like the pain of writing those checks. Every month for the mortgage, for the electric bills, the gas bills. Just physically having to write it in and subtract. Watch my wealth diminish. It just reminds you a little more than clicking a button. I just like the process. And I've got boxes of checkbooks. And you know what, some day if you got to read them, you'd get a little bit of an idea of what I like, what I don't like, what I'm committed to, and what I'm not committed to because checkbooks tell a person's story because money speaks.

And what we do with our money speaks about what we're committed to and they give and they communicated a confession of the gospel of the lord Jesus.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for our study of Second Corinthians 8 and 9. So much to learn, so much to gage. So much to glean. Help us to realize that we cannot serve you and serve money at the same time. Pray that money would be a servant in our life, not a master. We thank you that you've blessed us in everything and you've given us all things to enjoy, but help us to know what copper is and what gold is. Help us to know that level of living that you'd be enough so that our giving can increase and our sacrifice for the sake of the gospel can advance.

Lord, help us to check our motives. We pray you'd keep our church from financial scandal. Pastors, our budget, we pray indeed we would do honorable things in the sight of god and all men. Thank you for generosity of our people, their faithfulness in 2018. Pray that we would be able to count on them in 2019. They won't embarrass us as we write a new budget and forge ahead with new goals.

And as we come now to the table and the one who was made poor for us, may we glorify him richly and thank him generously. For Jesus' sake, amen.