



EXPOSITORY SERMON

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I want to wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. May the Christ of Christmas always be the Lord of your life.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT - THE LAVISHNESS OF GOD'S GRACE

Scripture Reading – 2 Corinthians 8:1-9.

Introduction

Two months ago we talked about grace which is the sweet sound of the Gospel. Paul clearly believes that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of grace. He is confident that the grace of God is sufficient in all of the differing difficult events and troubles of life. God's grace is more than enough to see us through the afflictions of life because the Lord said to him "my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9. It was Paul's unshakable conviction that we can be more than conquerors through Divine grace. Rom. 8: 37. In this same letter Paul wrote about grace once again. It seemed like he could not let go of it. It gripped his heart, mind and spirit. During this Christmas season we need to be reminded of the gift of God's grace to us in His Son. John wrote that Jesus who came from the Father was "**full of grace and truth.**" **John 1:14.** Again he wrote "**The law**

was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 1:17. Paul wrote “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, **in accordance with the riches of God’s grace** that He **LAVISHED** on us with all wisdom and understanding. “Eph. 1:7-9. Now Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 8:9** he wrote, **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”** Paul in verse 7 says to the Corinthians **“see that you also excel in this grace of giving.** Divine grace speaks to us of God’s generous lavish love towards us .Paul goes on to tie the generous gift of God’s grace with our responsibility to excel in this grace of giving. God’s generous giving should inspire each of us to live with the spontaneous desire to give this redeeming message of grace to our world. We have received freely of Him so we should also give freely. It is abundantly clear that the Apostles had a fixation on this many splendored truth of God’s amazing saving grace. You will note from just a few of the verses cited that they had a magnificent obsession with it. They did not apologize for this. It was not an appendage to the message they preached nor was it last minute attachment to the truth they declared. It was the pulse of the proclamation of this truth. Indeed they were convinced that apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, there was no salvation for mankind. Fundamentally this is the thrust of the Christmas message. They knew that the “grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” Titus 2:11. This message of God’s grace burned in their hearts, (in the words of Charles Wesley) with an “inextinguishable blaze.” It was this fire that

compelled them to take the Gospel of Grace to the world for whom Christ died..

Furthermore it is also clear that the Apostle John could not escape the impact of the generosity of the Gift of God. He is astounded by it. In one of his letters he is obviously caught up with the overwhelming generous heart of God.

“How great is the love the Father LAVISHED upon us, that we should be

called the children of God. 1 John 3:1. We are children of God because of

His endless bountiful and self-giving love. Paul wrote **“When we were still**

powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Romans 5:6. And again he wrote

“God demonstrates His own love for us in this, while we were still sinners

Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8. While we were without ability and in the

bondage of sin without strength or power to save ourselves, Jesus died for us.

This is the power of God’s amazing and lavish grace.

Christmas then, is a magnificent demonstration of the grace of God poured out

upon us in Jesus. John once again stands alongside Paul and declares that God,

“loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for us.” 1 John 4:10. In

this declaration, all of the magnitude of the lavish grace of God is shown to us in

His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It was because of His grace that Jesus died a

shameful, humiliating and agonizing death on the Cross for us.

The dynamic word or truth that leaps out of these verses is the word grace and

all of its ramifications.. It is one of the key words in the Gospel of God, and it

proclaims the dynamic truth of the redeeming power of the atoning death of

Jesus on the Cross. This is grace in its singular and selfless sacrifice for the

world. Paul was crystal clear on this. He wrote with unmistakable conviction

and clarity. He said “you know the grace of the Lord J sus Christ....” They knew what it was. They saw it clearly manifested in the in the redeeming work of Jesus. The Amplified Bible puts it this way, “you are coming to “recognize more strongly and clearly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – His kindness, His gracious generosity, His undeserved favor and spiritual blessing..” This grace was not a hidden mystery. It is magnificently revealed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

Now Paul in his discussion on grace, brings to light or sheds light on this dynamic Truth. Notice first of all:

1. THE PROCLAMATION THAT IS COMPELLED BY GRACE. 2 Corinthians

What is the message that is the heart-beat of grace? What does grace really proclaim? What is the proclamation that is compelled by grace? Grace proclaims:

a. AN INCREDIBLE ACT OF GOD. 2 Corinthians 8:9. What is this incredible act of God? It is the truth that by some Divine miracle God became the God- Man in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ was rich and for your sakes He became poor. No matter in what way you look at this, and no matter how you perceive this truth, that fact that God in Christ came to this earth to die for us is the incredible act. This was Charles Wesley’s sentiment when he wrote those eloquent words of his great hymn, “Amazing love how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me...” He was rich for your sakes He became poor....” He became man. One has correctly said



“that Christ became so poor in the act of becoming a man.” And what is so amazing is not so much that he was born in the lowly circumstances of the human, as is the fact that He should be born at all. God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ descended from His throne and His glory, and planted His feet on planet earth, and then identified Himself with men, not with their sin, but with their humanity. “He was rich for your sakes He became poor.” Charles Wesley had it right when he wrote **“veiled in Christ the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity.** “The incarnation or the act of God in becoming a man is the incredible miracle of the ages. But it is not enough just to say this. The lavishness of his Grace calls upon us to recognize

b. AN INCREDIBLE FACT. 2 Corinthians 8.9. What is so amazing about this fact is that the Lord Jesus Christ became poor. Who is this who became flesh. Note that answers this in the title he gives to Jesus. He refers to him as the **The Lord Jesus Christ.** It is more than just a title, designation or a label. It is a name full of significance, powerful in its meaning and redeeming in its significance and rich in its gifts.. Paul without apology designates this man who became poor as;

i. The LORD. 2 Corinthians 8:9. It speaks of His Divine Sovereignty and authority. He is the Lord of the entire universe. His word has power unlimited. He acts with authority unequalled. He is the undisputed Sovereign – King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And He will never relinquish His Lordship to anyone. Thomas Brooks said “though Christ’s coat was divided. He will never allow His crown to be divided.” He is Lord. Paul

says that God, “gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9 -11. But Paul now moves on to declare that He is,

ii. JESUS. 2 Corinthians 8:9. The name Jesus essentially means Savior. The emphasis in the Greek is on the pronoun “He” meaning that it is He who shall save His people from their sins. In other words it is He and He alone who is able to redeem His people from their sins. Peter declared with conviction in Acts 2:12, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved.” There are not many roads to God as some would have us believe. There is only one road to God. I know that this is not a popular message these days but, Jesus, Himself said, “I am the way, the Truth and the Life and **no one comes to the Father except by Me.**” **John 14:6.** The third designation given to Him is,

iii. CHRIST. 2 Corinthians 8:9. He is the Messiah. God’s anointed one. He is the one who is divinely anointed to be the Savior of the world. This designation occurs 529 times in the New Testament. He is the Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ. This is the proclamation that is compelled by grace. This is the dynamic truth by which we should live and the vibrant message we are to proclaim. Secondly Paul talks about a fundamental,

2. PRINCIPLE THAT CHARACTERIZES GRACE. 2 Corinthians 8:9.

There are two qualities of His generous and lavish grace that identify this

principle and stand out in this verse. We see these qualities strikingly and vividly exemplified in Jesus. Notice first of all,

a. HIS COMPLETE SELFLESSNESS. 2 Corinthians 8:9. “He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor.” So often the opposite is true. **We are poor wanting to become rich in our world.** But Jesus deliberately chose to

become poor. He Himself said “I lay down my life...” This was a perfectly selfless choice. His sacrifice was not in self-interest, but for the sake of a lost humanity. Let me underline those incredible words “**...for your sakes**

He became poor...” Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome that,

“God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.” Jesus told us

the “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.” He did

not give His highest angel, or noblest seraph or closest cherubim, but

more and beyond that “He gave us one and only Son...” Though He was

rich, for your sakes he became poor...” He died on our behalf and in our

place. Who then can be in any doubt of His complete selflessness.

Because He was utterly selfless, He was willing to pay the supreme price in

death on the Cross. This total selflessness places Him in clear contrast to the

philosophy of the me generation. The second quality of grace that

identifies this principle which is characteristic of grace was His,

b. HIS COMPLETE SACRIFICE. 2 Corinthians 8:9. “He was rich yet for sakes He became poor....” This is sacrifice in its most complete sense.

The word poor in this verse occurs no where else in the New Testament.

It is the strongest use of the word that it is possible to make. It indicates

absolute poverty. He became so poor that He had absolutely nothing more materially that He could give away. Wesley tells us that Jesus “emptied Himself of all but love.” When you consider the splendor His heavenly Surroundings - when you reflect on the magnificence of His heavenly garments - when you recognize the unmatched power of His heavenly throne - when you realize the absolute spotlessness of His Holy Character, then and only then can we begin to realize and discover the extent of the sacrifice He made for you and me. **But this sacrifice does not only touch that which he discarded or what he gave up, but it also touches that to which He gave Himself.** Jesus did not come to this earth on a family visit. He not only gave up something, He gave Himself to something for He gave Himself to a roman cross for us. The one who knew no sin became sin for us. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that “Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many.” He gave Himself to the death of the Cross in order to save us from eternal death. He died to make men holy, He died to make them good.” So writes the hymn writer. Tozer said it well “Christ by His death on the Cross made it possible for the sinner to exchange His sin for Christ’s righteousness. It is that simple. No one is compelled to accept it, but at least that is what it means.” The principle that characterizes grace is made up of the spirit of selflessness and self sacrifice. Finally Paul describes,

3. THE PATTERN THAT IS THE CONCERN OF GRACE. 2 Corinthians 8:7-9

The Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern we are urged to follow. His

amazing grace is the design by which we should order our lives. Paul makes quite clear that the very nature of grace is that it gives freely and lavishly. It is not conservative on the giving side. Jesus is the example of grace giving lavishly of Himself. Paul clearly says in v. 7. But just as you **excel in everything.....see that you also excel in the grace of giving.**” This pattern rooted is in the,

a. THE POWER OF GRACE. 2 Corinthians 8:9. “He became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich.” What are these riches about which Paul is talking. Certainly it does not mean that He will fill our coffers and replenish our bank accounts unconditionally. The riches which God gives to us have a deeper and eternal significance than the which is purely material. One has pointed out that He has mentions eight of them up to this point in this letter. In 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5. He has given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come...” In chapter 4:16 “...we are being renewed day by day. In chapter 4:18 we will possess an “eternal weight of glory.” In chapter 5:1 we will have “an eternal house in heaven.” In chapter 5:8 we will have a never ending fellowship with Christ. In chapter 5:18 We have been reconciled to God and in chapter 5:21 in Christ we become the righteousness of God. Paul declares in Titus 3:11 that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” It is almost impossible to explain satisfactorily what grace is. Some have tried. St **Augustine lost in the incomprehensible greatness of God’s’ grace asks, “what is grace? I know until you ask me. When you ask me I do not know.**

There is an answer, but at the end of the day you will discover that you cannot plumb its depths.” It is unmerited favor – an undeserved

acceptance with God. Alexander Maclaren writes that “grace is love that expresses itself to those who deserve something else. Charles Allen declares that in the Bible there are three distinctive meanings of grace.

i.First “It means mercy and the active love of God.

ii.Second It means the winsomeness of God.

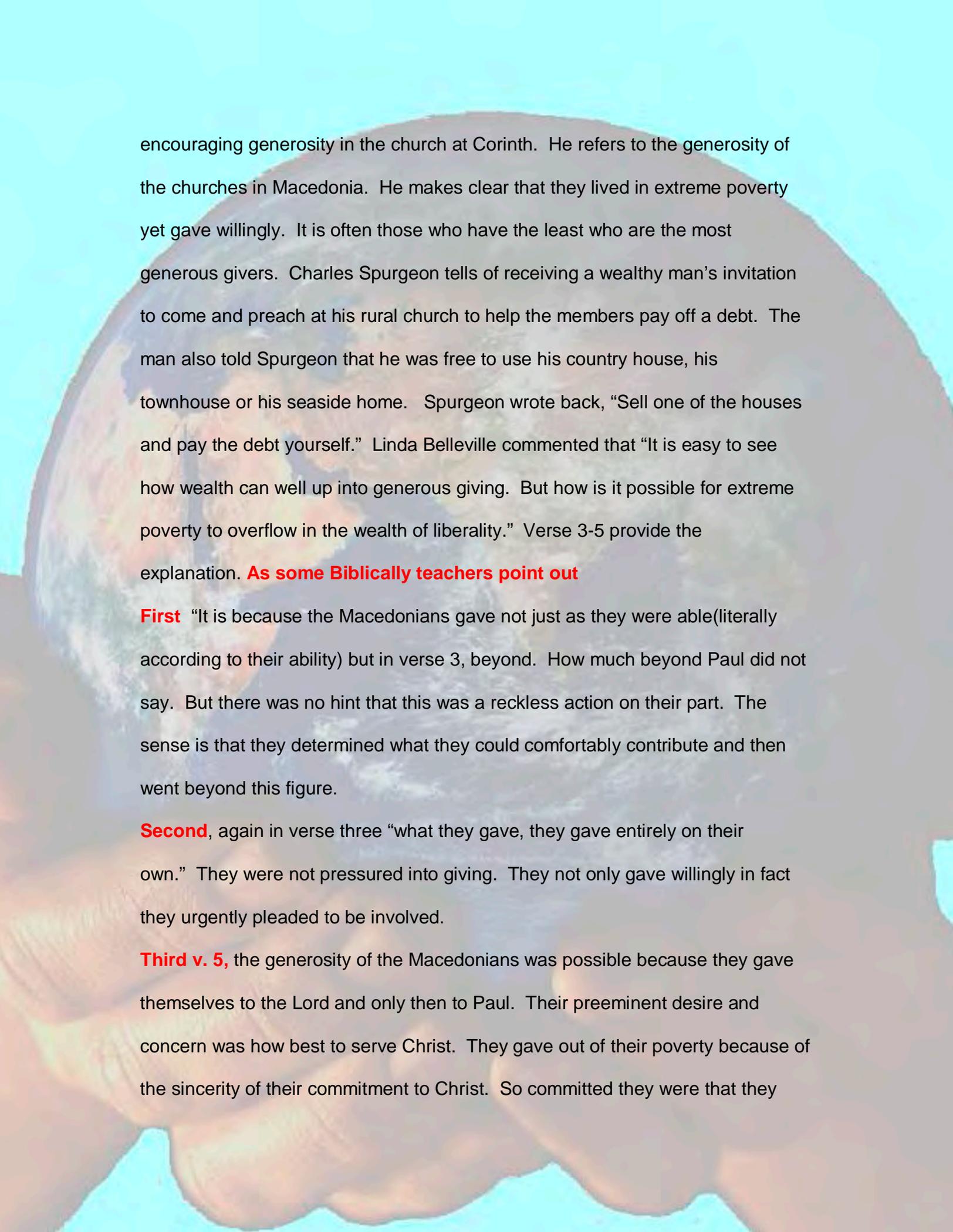
iii.Third . It means the strength of God. It is love stooping from the highest to reach the lowest. It is love descending from the holiest to reach the vilest. It is love that ignores our unworthiness in order to lift us up and place us on plains of purity and holiness. It is love that forgives the apparently unforgivable. It is descriptive of God’s mercy which is like the “wideness of the sea.” It is this grace that plucks us from the poverty of sin and gives to us the riches of salvation.

“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ , that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Such is the power of God’s grace. Paul moves on to highlight,

b. THE PURPOSE OF HIS GRACE. 2 Corinthians 8:7-9.

Man without God is destitute both morally and spiritually. Jesus was made poor in order to move us from poverty of sin and destitution of depravity into the marvelous riches of His amazing grace. The purpose of His grace was to redeem men and women from the penalty and power of sin and place us on the road to heaven. It is clear that there is more to it than that. The example of Jesus is the design or pattern by which we should conduct our giving. Paul is



encouraging generosity in the church at Corinth. He refers to the generosity of the churches in Macedonia. He makes clear that they lived in extreme poverty yet gave willingly. It is often those who have the least who are the most generous givers. Charles Spurgeon tells of receiving a wealthy man's invitation to come and preach at his rural church to help the members pay off a debt. The man also told Spurgeon that he was free to use his country house, his townhouse or his seaside home. Spurgeon wrote back, "Sell one of the houses and pay the debt yourself." Linda Belleville commented that "It is easy to see how wealth can well up into generous giving. But how is it possible for extreme poverty to overflow in the wealth of liberality." Verse 3-5 provide the explanation. **As some Biblically teachers point out**

First "It is because the Macedonians gave not just as they were able (literally according to their ability) but in verse 3, beyond. How much beyond Paul did not say. But there was no hint that this was a reckless action on their part. The sense is that they determined what they could comfortably contribute and then went beyond this figure.

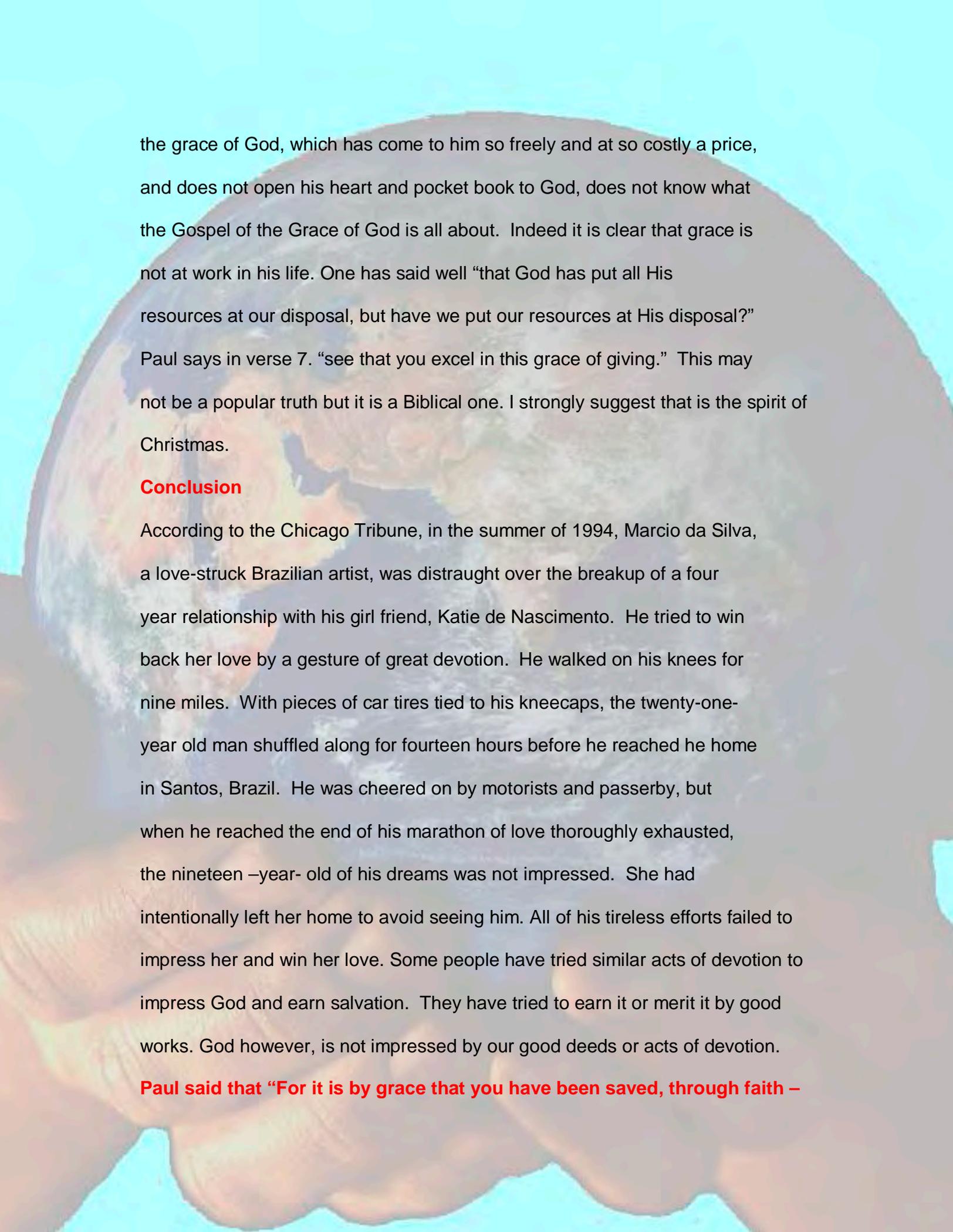
Second, again in verse three "what they gave, they gave entirely on their own." They were not pressured into giving. They not only gave willingly in fact they urgently pleaded to be involved.

Third v. 5, the generosity of the Macedonians was possible because they gave themselves to the Lord and only then to Paul. Their preeminent desire and concern was how best to serve Christ. They gave out of their poverty because of the sincerity of their commitment to Christ. So committed they were that they

would not allow their poverty to keep them from being in God's work. This is why in verse 4, Paul calls the offering a service and not just a financial obligation.

And Paul says to the Christians at Corinth in verse 7, "just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving. **The magnificent grace of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals His the extent of generosity to the giving of His own life for us. He did not hold back and Paul is saying that those who have received of His grace ought to show the same spirit of giving. If we have freely received the riches of His grace, then that grace should liberate and motivate us to give freely to the His Lord's work.** This generosity is evidence of the activity of His grace in our lives. Many Christians need to be more aware of this indispensable truth.

Louis Cassels wrote that "if each church member in America were to suddenly go on welfare , and if each were to give the Lord the 10% He asks for, the income of America's churches would be 35% higher than it is now." The does not mean we must be bound by a legalistic rule whereby we have to give to God. It does not mean that at all. What Paul is saying here, is that if we have received the great grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who with so much selfless generosity, gave Himself for us - if we have received and enjoy the riches of that grace, then our giving to Him should be a spontaneous, joyful, and grateful response to His generosity. Our giving should be born in gratitude, not in dutiful obligation. Joyful generous grateful giving is an evidence of the working of the grace of God in your life. An individual who has received



the grace of God, which has come to him so freely and at so costly a price, and does not open his heart and pocket book to God, does not know what the Gospel of the Grace of God is all about. Indeed it is clear that grace is not at work in his life. One has said well “that God has put all His resources at our disposal, but have we put our resources at His disposal?” Paul says in verse 7. “see that you excel in this grace of giving.” This may not be a popular truth but it is a Biblical one. I strongly suggest that is the spirit of Christmas.

Conclusion

According to the Chicago Tribune, in the summer of 1994, Marcio da Silva, a love-struck Brazilian artist, was distraught over the breakup of a four year relationship with his girl friend, Katie de Nascimento. He tried to win back her love by a gesture of great devotion. He walked on his knees for nine miles. With pieces of car tires tied to his kneecaps, the twenty-one-year old man shuffled along for fourteen hours before he reached he home in Santos, Brazil. He was cheered on by motorists and passerby, but when he reached the end of his marathon of love thoroughly exhausted, the nineteen –year- old of his dreams was not impressed. She had intentionally left her home to avoid seeing him. All of his tireless efforts failed to impress her and win her love. Some people have tried similar acts of devotion to impress God and earn salvation. They have tried to earn it or merit it by good works. God however, is not impressed by our good deeds or acts of devotion.

Paul said that “For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith –

and this is not from yourselves, It is the gift of God – not by works, so that

no one can boast. Eph. 2: 8-9. Salvation is all about the lavish gift of God's

grace in Jesus Christ. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich for your He became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich."

Christmas tells us that because of God' lavish grace we can

freely receive full salvation. The question is have you??? You can receive it!! It is

the gift of God. It is ours for the asking. If we come to the Savior with a heart filled

with godly sorrow for our sins. If we with true repentance confess our sins and

surrender ourselves to Him, "He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to

cleanse our hearts from all unrighteousness. (see 1 John 1:9.)We are saved by

grace through faith the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not acquired by works for it is a the

gift of God. (se Ephesians 2:8-9.)It is the lavish generous extravagant grace of

God. This is the God's Christmas gift to us. **My prayer is that the rich and**

bountiful lavish grace of God that was revealed in the Christ child at

Christmas rest upon you all. Have a happy and blessed Christmas.