Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – September 2, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s ***Second*** letter to the Corinthians

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 8:16–9:15 Give With Grace-Sharing Churches

The Background: Follow through! Others are watching.

Here is a textbook example of relational wisdom. On the one hand, there is the practical matter of the collection, but the back-story is how Paul gently draws out the Corinthians to partner with other churches and himself, just by getting them to keep their promises. Paul is helping the Corinthians sort out and see through the lies of his critics by aligning himself with brothers of impeccable character from a number of churches. There are layers of accountability (8:16-24), an explanation for that accountability (9:1-5), and the blessings resulting from a well-ordered collection (9:6-15).

Accountability: The Cross calls us to model grace to others.

When the Bible speaks of giving, it’s always in a context of love and grace, not compulsion and law. Of course, the ultimate Giver is God, who has given Himself in Jesus, and we, as New Creatures, are made in His image. Rather than “work up” an attitude of giving, it is better (by God’s Spirit) to put those sins to death which prevent us from giving, namely selfishness, covetousness, fear, unbelief, and cynicism. Any of these can and does short-circuit our spiritual inclination to be as generous with others as God our Father has been with us. The Cross changes everything.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(16) Thank God for Titus, who is enthusiastic about helping you with this collection! But he’s not coming alone: with him will be a well-known brother among the churches whom they appointed to accompany us in taking these gifts to Jerusalem. We are determined to be above reproach in this matter. In fact, we are sending another well-proven brother with them who will be delighted to see your proof of love and grace in your gifts.

(1) Of course I don’t have to elaborate on this matter, since you were the first to offer to help and we’ve already told everyone about that. But I mention it just to be sure that you are ready when it’s time to meet your pledge. (That ensures that no one is em- barrassed and also that the giving is free, not hurriedly coerced.)

(6) The principle of giving always is the same, according to the law of sowing and reaping, free from guilt or necessity, that is, just the way God gives to us! He is the Model Giver, and He rewards those who are generous to others. Others will see your joyful giving and respond with thanksgiving. All this redounds to God’s glory. After all, He gave us Jesus, the Ultimate Gift.

The Challenge: Am I doing my part to share the love of Christ?

***Memory Verses: 1 John 3:16***

*Grace Giving Principles are simple, but profound: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4*

Is my giving purposeful, regular, and proportional (to my lifestyle)?

Is my giving accountable (do I know where it’s going)?

Is my giving (at least most of it) channeled through a local church?

Is my giving grace-based and joy-producing? Acts 20:35

Is my giving reflecting my liberation from materialism? Matt. 6:19-34