



BIBLE *THE* **M**EDITATOR

Volume 18, Number 4

April AD 2007

The Gift of Giving

In this issue

P. 2 THE GIFT OF GIVING

P. 3 MEDITATING ON
ROMANS

P. 7 HOW CAN I KNOW
WHETHER I AM
GIVING, AS I SHOULD?

P. 8 PRAYERS OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

P. 10 MEDITATION TIPS:
THE PLEASURE OF
MEDITATION (PART 3)

P. 12 E-MAIL DEVOTIONAL
SAMPLE



Giving is a logical extension of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ

The Gift of Giving

By Don Ruhl

What is the key to joyful sacrificial giving?

He who masters the passion of the churches of Macedonia will not only give as he has prospered every first day of the week, but he will *beg* for opportunities to give money, having a heart full of joy with no regrets as he gives. Second Corinthians 8:5 reveals why the churches of Macedonia were great givers. Paul wrote, “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

If we can get that same spirit, nothing else in the matter of giving will be a problem. If

the heart is right, what comes out of the heart will be right and that includes our giving. He who loves God with the entirety of his being will give himself to God first and he who loves his neighbor as himself will give himself to his neighbor. Then giving as the need arises will be natural to us.

Second Corinthians 8:1-7 Giving Reveals Our Part in the Grace of God

The grace of God showed up in the churches of Macedonia in the following ways.

First, they had abundant joy (vv. 2, 3). Although they were experiencing a severe trial

and lived in extreme poverty, they were still generous. They were joyful over God’s grace to them, and that joy revealed itself through an opportunity to give to others.

Second, they looked for an opportunity to give (v. 4). If the heart is full

of God’s grace, it looks for an opportunity to pour itself out.

Third, they gave themselves (v. 5). They gave themselves first to the Lord and second to the preachers. This prompted Paul and Timothy to urge Titus to help the brethren to complete a good work that they had begun (v. 6). Often Christians begin good works, but they give up later. Then

what they had done earlier was in vain.

Fourth, they excelled in everything (v. 7). Their gift of giving was not given in exchange for doing other things, but it was an extension of what they were already as Christians and what they were already doing as Christians.

Second Corinthians 8:8, 9 Giving Is a Test of Our Sincerity

God wants us to give, but He also wants to see whether it is something that *we want* to do. Do we give because we have to or do we give because we want to? Are we giving merely because it is commanded, so that when other situations come up we recoil at giving? Therefore, Paul

showed the giving of the Macedonian churches, and he wanted to see how that would affect the Corinthian Church.

Interestingly, Paul then brought up the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Was Jesus commanded to leave heaven and sacrifice Himself? Yes, He was, but He also did these things by His own grace. The Father wanted Him to become poor for us, yet; He also desired to do it. If we keep the magnificent sacrifice of Jesus uppermost in our minds, we will not be tempted to give up, but we will press on even as He did.

Second Corinthians 8:10-12 Giving Finishes Our Work

You have heard that it was said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The right motives are good, but what have we accomplished if we do not follow through and complete the work?

You have heard that it was said that it is the thought that counts. That is true when we carry out the thought. Often others need more than a mere thought, but they need us, even as we needed Jesus Christ to sacrifice for us.

Does the Lord expect us to give what we do not have? No, but He expects us to give from what we have.

Second Corinthians 8:13-15 Giving Equalizes the Church

Is the church contribution designed so that the poor get poorer and the rich get richer? No, what then is the purpose of our weekly contribution?

Continued on page 7

Meditating on Scripture Daily

Based on the New King James Version

By Don Ruhl

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth,
but *you shall meditate in it day and night*,
that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.
For then you will make your way prosperous,
and then you will have good success.
(Joshua 1:8)

Romans

By Don Ruhl

Apr. 1 Ro. 11:17, 18 The Root Supports Us

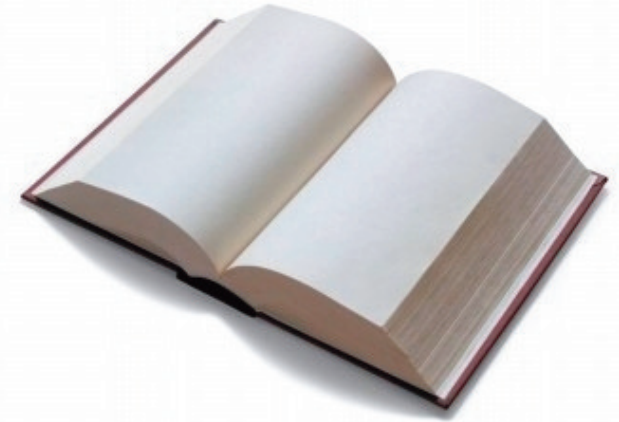
17, 18 *And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them...* Who are the branches that were broken off? According to the context, Paul can only be speaking of the Jews. They were (or are) the natural branches on God's olive tree. Who is the wild olive tree? Paul was reminding the Christians of Gentile background their relationship to the Jews. Therefore, the wild ones are the Gentiles. If the Gentiles were grafted into the tree, do they have any reason for boasting? No. They made the decision to come to Christ, but who made the option available? The Lord is the One who made the whole thing possible. Does the branch support the root or does the root support the branch? Obviously, it is the latter. What are the implications? No one, Jew or Gentile has a right to boast, because we are all nothing more than branches in God's tree and branches can be cut off and the tree survive and prosper without the branches that were cut off.

Apr. 2 Ro. 11:19–21 Fear

19–21 *You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."* 20 *Well said...* Is it the truth that the Jewish branches were broken off that the Gentile branches might be grafted in? How does Paul answer that question in verse 20? He affirmed that it is a true statement, and then he explained why one was cut off and why the other was added, but that the latter should not become arrogant, but rather should fear. Can God's tree support both Jewish and Gentile branches? Yes, His tree has that ability. Why were the natural branches broken off? They simply did not believe. Why were the wild branches grafted in? It was by faith. Should faith lead to haughtiness or fear? Of what should we fear? We should fear that if God did not spare the *natural* branches, that He will not hesitate to cut off *wild* branches!

Apr. 3 Ro. 11:22–24 Goodness and Severity

22–24 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness...* Is God good or severe? He is both. Unfortunately, it is hard to find Christians who want to acknowledge both attributes about God. Verses 16–21 present the full picture of God. How do those verses show His goodness? They show His goodness by the fact that He can graft in that which is unnatural into that which is



natural. How do those verses show His severity? They show His severity by the fact that He can and will cut off even the natural branches. What is the deciding factor as to when He will graft one in and cut off the other? Let us realize that it is natural for the Jews to be in the church.

God's Ultimate Goal

God's whole plan comes down to one thing

Romans 11:25–32

Apr. 4 To what has Paul been leading us?

What did he, actually, the Holy Spirit, want us to see in the Letter to the Romans? What is God's plan for man from the beginning till now? Once we discover the answers to these questions, which will be revealed in Romans 11:25–32, we may then wonder why are there another five chapters in Romans. What is all that material about? Here is a hint: What we discover that God did toward us in the first eleven chapters is what God wants us to do toward one another in the last five chapters, culminating with a command in chapter 15, which corresponds to something he says in 11:25–32.

Apr. 5 Ro. 11:25 Partial and Temporary

Blindness

25 *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery...* What did Paul not want among the brethren? He did not want them to be ignorant of this mystery. He did not want them to be wise in their own opinion. What then did he reveal? He revealed that blindness in part has happened to Israel. How long will that blindness last? Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Apr. 6 Ro. 11:26, 27 Israel's Salvation

26, 27 *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written...* Does the first line of verse 26 mean, all, that is, every Israelite will be saved, or in this manner Israelites will be saved? Some Israelites are already lost. Therefore, it cannot be the first option. Paul revealed the answer with his quotations from Isaiah. Paul quotes Isaiah as supporting the idea that "And so all Israel will be saved." What did Isaiah prophesy? In the first quotation, Isaiah prophesied that the Deliverer would come out of Zion, and thus turn away ungodliness from Jacob. In the second quotation, Isaiah prophesied that God has a covenant with Israel to take away their sins. Is this not how Gentiles are saved?

Apr. 7 Ro. 11:28 Enemies, But Beloved

28 *Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake...* Why was Paul making a distinction between the Jews' relationship to the gospel and their relationship to the election? Are the Jews enemies of the Gospel? Yes, because they have rejected it and persecuted Christians, whether those Christians are Jew or Gentile. Were the Jews the people whom God elected to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ into the world? Were they the ones whose fathers God used to give His promises and other things to the world? Yes, therefore, their rejection of the Gospel is especially painful, but in a similar way, their acceptance of the Gospel will be especially beautiful.

Apr. 8 Ro. 11:29–32 God's Ultimate Goal

29–32 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable...* The entire Roman Letter comes down to these four verses, and especially verse 32. Are the gifts and calling of God irrevocable? Why did Paul insert this? He inserted to show that God cut off the unbelieving and disobedient Jews, but that does not mean that He hates them, in fact, He still loves them very much. John 3:16 says that God loved the world, and that includes the Jews. What God has done through Israel in the Old Testament, can He take that back? Has He not offered salvation to all people? Has He not prophesied of all these things? According to verse 30, what were the Gentiles to God at one time? They were disobedient. How or why was mercy made available to us? By the Jews' disobedience (Ac. 13), that caused God to send His preachers to

the Gentiles. The Gentiles were disobedient, therefore, in need of mercy. When they heard the offer of mercy, they accepted it.

Apr. 9 Ro. 11:29–32 God's Ultimate Goal

29–32 *...For God has committed them all to disobedience...* According to verse 31, what are the Jews to God now? They have now become disobedient. Therefore, they are in need of mercy, and like the Gentiles, they can now receive mercy. All Israel can be saved the same way as all the Gentiles. The Gentiles can even be the ones who bring the mercy to the Jews. The Gentiles can actually preach it and their acceptance of it brings jealousy to the Jews. Even as God used the male to bring in the female, and now the female brings in the male, so, God used the Jew to bring in the Gentile, and now the Gentile can bring in the Jew! Do you see the wonder of this? What then does verse 32 say that God has done? He committed *all* to disobedience. Why did He commit all people to disobedience? This way He can have mercy on all. Do you see that this is what Paul had developed since the first chapter? God wants all people to see their disobedience. He also wants to show mercy on all people. God loves to show mercy, but mercy cannot or will not be received until the guilty party knows of its need. With the first eleven chapters Paul showed how God worked with the world.

Apr. 10 Ro. 11:29–32 Paul's Argument

What we have seen of Paul's argument?

- 1:18–32 showed the disobedience of the Gentiles.
- 2:1–29 showed the disobedience of the Jews.
- 3:1–20 showed that both are sinners.
- 3:21–5:21 showed that both are saved by faith because God has been graceful to both.
- 6:1–23 showed that we cannot continue in sin once we are saved.
- 7:1–25 showed the place of the Law in that it cannot save.
- 8:1–39 showed that Jesus Christ is the Savior of all.
- 9:1–11:32 showed the problem of Jewish unbelief.

Apr. 11 Ro. 11:29–32 Paul's Argument

God worked marvelously to bring righteousness to a hell-bound world. He shows all people their miserable condition, but it is not to condemn them, for they are already condemned, but to show them that there is free mercy for all! It is like meeting a person whom you know has a terrible disease, but you have the free cure. It is convincing that person of his need that is the trick, especially if he is stubborn. God spent centuries convincing the world that it is sick and He has the remedy. What do you think of all this? Are you ready to hear Paul's reaction? Next, we shall hear how Paul responded to God's plan to show mercy to all.

The Riches of God's Wisdom and Knowledge

What can we say about God's ways?

Romans 11:33–36

Apr. 12 Ro. 11:33 Unsearchable Riches

33 *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God...* Paul said it all at verse 32, ending his dissertation on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Suddenly, he cannot continue on, but bursts out with praises for God. Have you had an experience when you meditated on the word or searched out some great doctrine and the wonder of it all made you stop, and you were both speechless and full of words simultaneously, you could not go on, but you had to have time just to look at the wonder of God? What was Paul's experience that led him to declare the unsearchable ways of God? Do you understand why Paul was amazed by God's wisdom, knowledge, judgments, and ways? Could any man have come up with or executed the scenario we witnessed in the first eleven chapters? How could anyone have so intertwined wrath and mercy? How deep are the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge? Can we search the entirety of His judgments? Can we find out all His ways? Shall we learn more of these things in eternity in God's presence?

Apr. 13 Ro. 11:34, 35 He Gives

34, 35 *"For who has known the mind of the LORD?... Has anyone known the mind of the Lord? On the other hand, does the Lord know our minds? Has anyone become His counselor? Or is He our Counselor? Who gave first: man or God? Does God need to repay anyone for anything? As James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." The truth is God knows our minds; He is our counselor; He gave to us first; and we are debtors to Him.*

Apr. 14 Ro. 11:36 He Is It

36 *For of Him and...* Does not this verse say it all? All things are *of* Him. All things are *through* Him. All things are *to* Him. What do each of these mean? What, therefore, belongs to Him? Truly, everything belongs to God! What do you say to Romans 1–11 and to Paul's glorification of God in 11:33–36? We are compelled to agree with Paul and say, Amen! Wiersbe wrote, "We cannot explain all the purposes and plans of God, but we can worship and praise Him for who He is (vv. 33–36). The end result of all Bible study is worship, and the end result of all worship is service to the God we love (*Bible Commentary*, p. 125). The material from 1:14–11:32 is not that we might boast of what we know, but that we might see the glorious beauty of

our God. We are moved not to argue with others, but to praise and worship God!

Living Sacrifices

**For all that God has done for us and to us,
what shall we offer in return?**

Apr. 15 Ro. 12:1, 2

Having established the doctrine of God in chapters 1–11, Paul next showed the duty of Christians. Our principles determine what we practice. What we believe determines how we behave. Our theology shows up in our morality. Therefore, we must have the beliefs of chapters 1–11 rooted in our hearts and minds, that the right fruit might be produced in our lives. Paul showed us in the first eleven chapters where God lives, moves, and has His being, then in the closing chapters of Romans, “This is where we all live and move and have our being” (J. Vernon McGee, p. 728).

Having shown God’s ways toward us, we now see what ought to be our ways toward:

- Our Lord (12:1, 2)
- Ourselves (12:3)
- Our brethren (12:4–16)
- Our government (13)
- Our brethren with whom we disagree (14, 15)

Paul ended the Roman Letter in chapter 16 by showing the love among first century Christians. May it be ours also.

Apr. 16 Ro. 12:1 Living Sacrifices

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God... Listen to Paul’s language. First, what method of appeal did he use? J. Vernon McGee says, “‘I beg of you’ the language of grace, not law. There is no thunder here from Mount Sinai. Moses commanded; Paul exhorts. Could Paul have commanded? Well, he told Philemon that he could have given him a command, but he didn’t. Paul doesn’t command; he says, ‘I beg of you’” (McGee, p. 729). How did Paul address them? He called them “brethren.” By what did he make his plea? He based it on the mercies of God. Why is that significant? Has not the mercy of God been the dominant theme from chapter one, and especially in chapter eleven? What do we do toward someone who has been merciful toward us? We make an offer back to him. What can we offer to God after what He has done *for* us and *to* us in the Gospel Plan of Salvation? What did Paul say we should offer to God? We offer our bodies. In what form do we offer our bodies? We offer them as living sacrifices. Under the Law of Moses, what was offered as a sacrifice? Animals, grains, and oil were offered as

sacrifices. As such, they were given up completely to God. The worshiper no longer possessed the item. The animal was dead to itself. Oxymoronically, Paul referred to our bodies as “living” sacrifices. Why is that oxymoronic? A sacrificed animal was dead, but we do not literally kill ourselves, because we continue to live in this world, and we do so for God.

Apr. 17 Ro. 12:2 Transformation

2 And do not be conformed to this world... Think on this verse in relation to the previous verse and the teaching of the Letter to the Romans thus far. What got us into trouble with God in the first place? It was the opposite of that first clause. We were conformed to the world. What then does God want us to do? We are to change from one form into another form, like the caterpillar turning into a butterfly. What is the old form from which we are changing and what is the new form to which we are changing? Look at the verse carefully, because it reveals both forms. The old form is the world. The new form is the will of God. Where does this transformation take place? What then do we prove about the will of God? That it is good, acceptable, and perfect. This is what we want to prove, that is, we want to show the will of God, not our wills.

Apr. 18 Ro. 12:1, 2

Living Sacrifices and Transforming Ourselves

We cannot offer to God our bodies, and withhold our minds. Total transformation and complete sacrificial living come from both our bodies and our minds. Searching the Scriptures is good, but if it is only for information, if it is only an intellectual quest, if it is only to refute someone, we will miss the point of the Scriptures, which God gave to us to communicate with us. Understand, therefore, that God is talking to you in Scripture.

**Think According to Your Measure of Faith
Since we have been disobedient, but God
showed us mercy, how should we think?**

Romans 12:3–8

Apr. 19 Ro. 12:3 Thoughts of Self

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than... Why did Paul preface his warning on high self-thinking with the fact that he said this through the grace that was given to him? In light of everything we have seen in Romans, why do you think we are warned not to think highly of ourselves? Interestingly, we are

not warned in Scripture against thinking too lowly of ourselves. If we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, how did Paul say we ought to think? We are to think soberly. What does that mean? Our thinking is according to the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of us and that leads to proper thinking about self. Notice that the attention is upon God. God is the One who has given us the measure of faith. Therefore, our thinking is upon Him. We think of ourselves in relation to Him.

Apr. 20 Ro. 12:4, 5 Members of a Body

4, 5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function... High self-thinking leads to low thinking of others. It exalts us over our fellow-members of the body of Christ. Does any one of us comprise the entire body? No, but each of us is merely one member among many in the body. Do all the members of our body have the same function? No, for that would make for an odd looking body, if, for example, every member were an eye. Do all the members of the body of Christ have the same function? If we were all teachers of 2 and 3 year olds, that would make for an odd church. What do you do if one of the members of your body thinks it is better than the rest of the members? For example, if you have one strand of hair that suddenly sticks out above the rest, what do you do?

Apr. 21 Ro. 12:6–8 Use Our Gifts

6–8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them... Now, we understand more of why Paul said in verse 3 that he said these things based on the grace given to him. Paul was not speaking arrogantly or without heaven’s authority. What was his part in the body of Christ? He was an apostle and he used that gift to the best of his ability. Then he listed some of the gifts that others in the body have. We have all been taken into the body of Christ by the mercy of God. God has a purpose in doing so. Am I fulfilling my gift? This is the picture of cooperation. Are you cooperating with your brethren to build up the body or to tear it down?

Non-Hypocritical Love

**Remembering God’s mercy toward us,
here is how we should live**

Apr. 22 Romans 12:9–21

When you read Romans 12–16 always remember what is written in 1–11. If we do not obey what is found in 12–16, why should God show us mercy? Should not God’s display of mercy toward us move us to display mercy toward our brethren and others?

Now, as Paul moved into the details of the Christian life are we surprised to see what comes first?

I will use Grubb's analysis of verses 9–21. His analysis of the whole Letter to the Romans is very good. His analysis of Romans 12:9–21 helps to show that Paul was not random. It is not as though he started throwing out bits of advice, but this section is as calculated and organized as the rest of his argument.

Apr. 23 Ro. 12:9a

Love in its reality enjoined

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. What is wrong with hypocritical love? When others are hypocritical in their love toward you, it is easy to see what is wrong with it. Therefore, we should be careful not to show hypocritical love ourselves. How do we let love be without hypocrisy? The rest of the chapter shows how to show love that is without hypocrisy.

Ro. 12:9b Love's most general forms of manifestation

9b Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. What does it mean to abhor evil? It means to have an extreme hatred for it. Clinging to evil is what committed us to disobedience. Why embrace it again? What is the picture of clinging? See someone literally holding on to something and refusing to let go. To what are we to cling? Paul said to cling to whatever is good. Therefore, be repulsed by evil, but run to that which is good and embrace with all your strength.

Apr. 24 Ro. 12:10

Love's manifestation in respect to brethren

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another... What picture do you see in these words? Preference goes to our brethren, but how are we to relate to the world? J. Vernon McGee wrote, "...three men are sitting together. Two of the men are identical twins; one twin is a Christian and the other is not. Sitting with these men is a believer from Africa. His culture, background, and language are all different. The color of his skin is different, but he knows the Lord as Savior. The Christian twin is actually closer to the man from Africa than he is to his twin brother" (p. 732).

Apr. 25 Ro. 12:11, 12

Love's manifestation in the Lord's service

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer (Rom. 12:11, 12). What is the picture of a servant that you see in verse 11? He is not lazy, nor is he looking for excuses to miss work, but he is eager to do what his master wants. Is that not what a Christian should look like? What is

the picture that you see in verse 12? We see someone who has complete control of his person, because he is a devout man of God, trusting God for everything.

Apr. 26 Ro. 12:13 Love's manifestation in the use of our means

13 distributing to the needs of the saints... If the saints have a need, even if it is a whole congregation, what should we do? Does a saint or congregation of saints have to do everything right before we will help them? Remember the church in Corinth. They had many problems, but Paul still considered the congregation a church of God. To what did Paul say in verse 13, should we be given? Why not today look for opportunities to do the two things that Paul mentioned in this verse? Find a saint who is in need and supply that need. Look for an opportunity to show hospitality. You will not regret what you do.

Apr. 27 Ro. 12:14

Love's manifestation toward enemies

14 Bless those who persecute you... Have you tried doing what Paul says here? Try it in prayer. Is someone against you? Pray for him or her, not just saying, "Father, I pray for John Doe. In Jesus' name." For what did you pray with such a prayer? It is vague. Be specific. Paul said to bless that person. Ask God to bless that person with health, with prosperity, and other good things. If you do as Paul by the Holy Spirit said to do, it will change your attitude toward persecution and persecutors, criticism and critics, enmity and enemies.

Apr. 28 Ro. 12:15

Love's manifestation in general sympathy

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice... All of these teachings in verses 9–21 stress that we must come together with people. How can Christians be effective by staying away from people? What do we want when we rejoice or weep? We want someone to rejoice with us or to weep with us. If people make you uncomfortable, try doing what the Holy Spirit says here, and see what happens. If someone has good news, do not be the wasp at his picnic. Do not try to counter it with bad news. If someone has bad news, do not ignore it. Often people say that they do not know what to say to someone who is sorrowing. What did Paul say we should say? Verse 15 says nothing about saying anything, but weep with them. Sometimes our weeping says more than our words.

Apr. 29 Ro. 12:16

How love is exhibited in concord and condescension

16 Be of the same mind toward one another... Learn to bring your thinking in alignment with the thinking of your brethren. We always expect others to conform to us, but do we need to conform to them? Rather than setting our minds on high things, what should we do? We should associate with the humble. Paul said not to be wise in our own opinion, but why should we not be wise in our own opinion? Remember the teaching of Romans 1–11. It is such arrogance that made us disobedient to God. Even Christians will offer excuses or rationalizations as to why they should not conform to the things listed here, that is, in verses 9–16. However, did Paul list any exceptions? Did he say you are just hardwired the way that you are and everyone has to accept you. Consider what the wise man Solomon wrote, "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Pr. 26:12).

Apr. 30 Ro. 12:17, 18

How love manifests itself in conduct toward those that are without

In verses 9–16, Paul dealt mainly with our brethren who are like us, although he did touch once upon persecution. Is everyone going to be like us? Is everyone going to like us? It is guaranteed that if we follow Jesus Christ, we will have enemies, even as He had enemies in the world, and among the people of Israel. Therefore, we will have severe problems with brethren and with the world. What do we do? How shall we handle these situations and those people?

17, 18 Repay no one evil for evil... First, do not give in to your natural inclinations. When someone does evil to us what do we naturally want to do in return? Why should we not repay evil for evil? Remember chapters 1–11. What if God repaid us evil for evil? Where would we be today? What would happen to us, if God should start marking all our sins, faults, and mistakes? "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared" (Ps. 130:3, 4). Going on to the second sentence in verse 17. Is it right to do things that are good in the sight of all men? Is it compromising, liberal, or denominational to do such? Will we always be able to live in peace with all men? If someone will not have peace with us, let it be said that we made every effort to have peace. If someone does not want peace, it is best to stay away from him rather than continuing to make peace efforts, for that will only irritate him. †

- That there might be equality (v. 13).
- That he who gives today may receive tomorrow (v. 14).
- That each might have his needs (v. 15).

Second Corinthians 8:16–24 Giving Shows Our Honor

There is always the possibility that funds, whether intentionally or unintentionally, be mishandled. This could even happen among godly people. Therefore, Paul thought it wise to have brethren accompany him. Moreover, even Titus, who was from Paul's group, and had the approval of other churches, accompanied Paul and the contribution for Jerusalem so as to avoid the appearance of a conspiracy.

Verse 21 is the key to this section. We must do everything we can to do what is right and honorable in the eyes of the Lord and in the eyes of men. Why is this necessary? If we do not take precautions, people may speak evil of our good, and then it all ends up being in vain.

Paul, the other churches, and the Corinthians approved all these men. Therefore, Paul urged the Corinthians to prove themselves worthy of Christ and worthy of Paul's boasting of them.

Second Corinthians 9:1–5 Giving Completes Our Promises

We cannot stop in our walk with the Lord, because we need to backup our good intentions and promises. If we do not back those things up, our eagerness will appear to be hollow and we will let the people down who were expecting our help and the people who had boasted of us. This is important, because as Paul stated in verse 5, our former promises and commitments we want to keep as willing gifts and not as grudging giving.

Second Corinthians 9:6–11 Giving Blesses Us Later

Here Paul set forth important principles to remember in our giving.

First, we reap in quantity what we sow in quantity (v. 6).

Second, we decide for ourselves what we shall give (v. 7). That way we give cheerfully and not with reluctance or because we think we are being forced.

Third, we must have faith that God will supply whatever we need to give to do good works (vv. 8–11).

Therefore, he who gives sparingly or with a grudging heart does not have confidence in God's ability to supply what he needs.

Second Corinthians 9:12–15 Giving Brings Thanksgivings to God

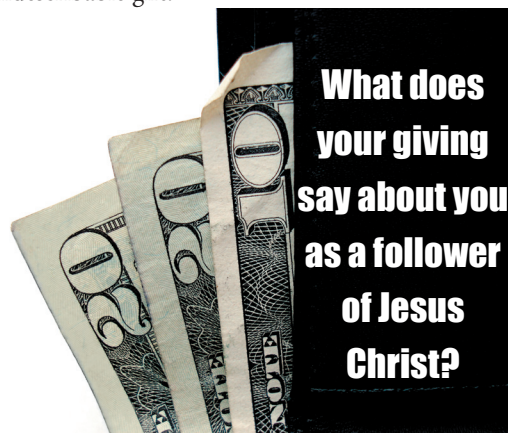
In verse 12, Paul explained the two-part effect that our giving has.

First, it supplies the need of God's people.

Second, it causes many people to give thanks to God.

Then in verses 13 and 14, he explained his second point further. Others, both in and out of the church, will hear what our local congregation is doing and they will think that it is a good thing, leading them to think good things of God.

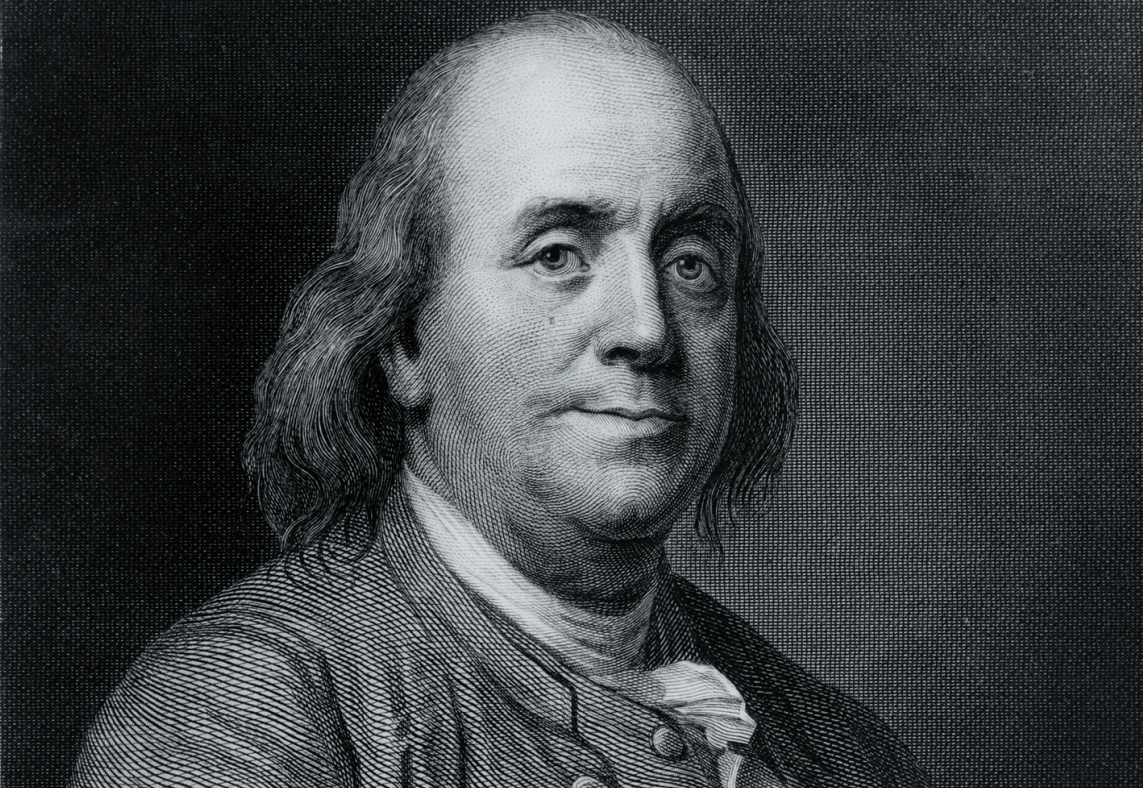
Finally, in verse 15, he demonstrated exactly what he meant, thanking God for His indescribable gift. †



After meditating upon Second Corinthians 8 and 9, a Christian might conclude that the only way to give is to hand over one's entire paycheck. Yet, somehow we know that we cannot and should not do that. At the same time, we do not want to give less than we know that we should and are capable of giving.

Principles by which to evaluate your weekly contribution to the church

1. Have I given myself to God first? (2Co. 8:5)
2. Does my giving show that I am a loving person? (2Co. 8:8)
3. Do I give so others can be equal to me? (2Co. 8:12–15)
4. Would the work of the church continue if everybody gave like I did? (Ne. 13:10, 11)
5. Am I giving as I have purposed to give? (2Co. 9:7)
6. Do I give simply because I have to? (2Co. 9:7; De. 15:10)
7. Do I give cheerfully? (2Co. 9:7; Ex. 25:2)
8. Do I know I could (or rather should) give more when I do give? (1Jn. 3:19, 20; Mt. 3:8–10)
9. Do sermons on giving make me uncomfortable? (Lk. 16:14)
10. Does the Lord come first in my budget? (Pr. 3:9, 10; Book of Haggai; Mt. 3:10, 11; Mt. 6:33)
11. Do I give more for things of my own pleasure? (Am. 2:6; 6:1, 6; Ez. 16:49)
12. Am I hurting my family financially? (Mt. 15:4–6; 1Ti. 5:8)
13. Am I simply giving out of my abundance? (Mk. 12:41–44)
14. Do I give according as I have been prospered? (1Co. 16:2)



Prayers of

Benjamin Franklin

In a book about Benjamin Franklin by Carl Van Doren, there is a list of prayers that the American statesmen started praying often when he was about 23 years old.

“That I may be preserved from atheism and infidelity, impiety and profaneness, and in my addresses to Thee carefully avoid irreverence and ostentation, formality and odious hypocrisy, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be loyal to my prince and faithful to my country, careful for its good, valiant in its defense, and obedient to its laws, abhorring treason as much as tyranny, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may to those above me be dutiful, humble, and submissive; avoiding pride, disrespect, and contumacy, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may to those below me be gracious, condescending, and forgiving, using clemency, protecting innocent distress, avoiding cruelty, harshness, and oppression, insolence, and unreasonable severity, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may refrain from censure, calumny, and detraction; that I may avoid and abhor deceit and envy, fraud, flattery, and hatred, malice, lying, and ingratitude, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be sincere in friendship, faithful in trust, and impartial in judgment, watchful against pride and against anger (that momentary madness), —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be just in all my dealings, temperate in my pleasures, full of candour and ingenuity, humanity, and benevolence, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be grateful to my benefactors, and generous

to my friends, exercising charity and liberality to the poor and pity to the miserable, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may avoid avarice and ambition, jealousy and intemperance, falsehood, luxury, and lasciviousness, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may possess integrity and evenness of mind, resolution in difficulties, and fortitude under affliction; that I may be punctual in performing my promises, peaceable and prudent in my behaviour, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may have tenderness for the weak and reverent respect for the ancient; that I may be kind to my neighbors, good-natured to my companions, and hospitable to strangers, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be averse to talebearing, backbiting, detraction, slander and craft and overreaching, abhor extortion, perjury, and every kind of wickedness, —Help me, O Father!”

“That I may be honest and open-hearted, gentle, merciful, and good, cheerful in spirit, rejoicing in the good of others, —Help me, O Father.”

“That I may have a constant regard to honor and probity, that I may possess a perfect innocence and a good conscience, and at length become truly virtuous and magnanimous, —Help me, good God; help me, O Father!”

“And for as much as ingratitude is one of the most odious of vices, let me be not unmindful gratefully to acknowledge the favours I receive from Heaven...”

“For peace and liberty, for food and raiment, for corn and wine and milk, and every kind of healthful nourishment, —Good God, I thank Thee!”

“For the common benefits of air and light, for useful fire and delicious water, —Good God, I thank Thee!”

“For knowledge and literature and every useful art, for my friends and their prosperity, and for the fewness of my enemies, —Good God, I thank Thee!”

“For all Thy innumerable benefits; for life and reason and the use of speech; for health and joy and every pleasant hour, —My good God, I thank Thee!”



1777 Jean-Baptiste Greuze portrait of Franklin.

Meditation Tips

By Don Ruhl

The Pleasure of Meditation (Part 3)

Studying Is Digging for Diamonds; Meditation Is Finding Flowers

Digging for diamonds is hard work. Therefore, very few people do it. Then again, flowers are diamonds. Finding flowers is too simple. Therefore, few people do it. In fact, many people look at a field or a forest and see nothing but a field or a forest. If they would just stop and look down a little, they would find unbelievable things.

Meditating Is Getting Lost in the Bible

Let me tell you something that my dog Coda does. When we give her food, she eats it, even if we are standing right there petting her. If we give her a dog biscuit, she gobbles it down and wants more. If we give her a special treat for obeying us, she sucks it in and looks to see if more is in our hand. If we give her a bone, she does something much different. She takes it and gets away from us. She then slowly gnaws and munches on it, enjoying it in ways that she does not the food. She does not want me to bother her.



As a boy, we had dogs and I would try to take their bones, but they would growl at me, not wanting to hurt me, but not wanting to give up their bones either.

Isaiah 31 makes this interesting observation about a lion with its prey. “For thus the LORD has spoken to me: ‘As a lion roars, and a young lion over his prey (When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, he will not be afraid of their voice nor be disturbed by their noise), so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill’” (Is. 31:4).

The lion delights in his prey. He makes noises as he eats. He makes threatening noises if anyone tries to take his meal. He not

only consumes the meat and gnaws on the bones with his mouth and stomach, but he does so also with his mind. Take the image of the lion and the dog and see the connection with the two following Psalms. “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2). “When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches” (Ps. 63:6).

Where is the attention of the lion and the dog as they eat? It is 100% on the food or the bone. Do you read the

Scriptures like that? Is your reading cumbersome, light, and easily distracted? Like the lion and the dog, so should we be with the Lord and His word. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Ps. 34:8).

Get lost in the text. Even as you savor your favorite food or dessert and you take it into your mouth, discovering and enjoying every taste, so discover and enjoy every detail of Scripture. Meditating is ingesting material that is not merely information, but life changing knowledge.

You are getting in touch with God. When you read a love letter from your spouse are you gathering information? No, you are experiencing further your relationship with your spouse. Do you handle the Word of God as a technical manual or as a story from God and your place in that story?

In meditation, you recognize the power of words. What word does John use to symbolize Jesus? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"



(Jn. 1:1, 14). Why is Jesus the Word? He is the message from God and God wants to get that message into us.

The words of Scripture are intended to get into us in ways that other writings are not. The writers of Holy Scripture want to form within us the mind of Christ. Therefore, meditating is more than reading, although it starts with reading, but it gets into us, and we have to sit back from time to time and literally picture what we are reading. We literally have to hear what is being said. We literally have to feel what is before us. We have to experience the text. Be there. See it with you. In meditation, the Spirit enters our minds. He wants to look around and tell us what needs to be removed, cleaned, remade, and so on. He wants to add new things.

Why do we not meditate in Scripture?

- It requires our whole lives, not just our intellectual powers, and that is more than we want to give.
- We do all we can to avoid what seems like a risk to us, and that risk is living by faith in God.
- We pre-determine what we are going to believe and to do.
- It seems like a lot of hard work.
- It seems like a waste of time.
- We do not know how to do it.

Let the Passion of Biblical Writers Be Our Passion

"My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, 'When will You comfort me?'" (Ps. 119:82). "Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction" (Ps. 119:92). "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1Pe. 2:1-3). †

What appears below is the e-mail devotional for the evening of March 27, 2007. The evening devotional is from the New Testament and the morning devotional is from the Old Testament. If you would like to receive these free e-mail devotionals, the information is at the bottom of the devotional.



Read the Bible in a year by reading Luke 5:17-39 today

How Could Jesus Associate with Such People?

By Don Ruhl

It is odd what we want the church to look like. In many places, we only want everyone to look the same, to be full-grown Christians, who have no problems, and have good reputations. The critics of Jesus were the same way. They saw Him eating with undesirable people. Luke wrote, "And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, 'Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Lk. 5:30). Who else should the tax collectors and sinners been eating with? Who else should Jesus have been teaching? Those people needed what He had to offer so that they could become holy people of God. Should those undesirables have merely associated with themselves, making themselves worse? No, they needed someone who could show them the light.

What do you think when you see an undesirable in the worship services?

www.GrantsPassChurchofChrist.com

<http://associate.com/groups/emaildevotionals/>

To unsubscribe, send ANY message to: emaildevotionals-leave@associate.com

To subscribe, send ANY message to: emaildevotionals-join@associate.com

The Bible Mediator
is a monthly online publication
edited by Don Ruhl

Subscription is free, but donations are welcome. Mail checks to: The Bible Mediator • 4693 Redwood Avenue • Grants Pass • Oregon • 97527-9225

Visit
GrantsPassChurchofChrist.com
for more articles by Don Ruhl and
to listen to sermons by Nathan
House and Don Ruhl

Welcome About Us Upcoming Events Short Articles Articles
Listen to Sermons The Bible Mediator

The Savage Street Church of Christ

220 NE Savage Street
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526-1310
541-476-3100

Contact for further information:
Nathan House: GPEvangelist@aol.com
Don Ruhl: RDRuhl@aol.com

Do you live in Grants Pass and have you received the publication House-to-House from us? Click on the link below to learn more.

Sermons for **March 25th**:

Morning Service:
"The Fall of Spiritual Babylon"
Revelation 18
Don Ruhl

Evening Service:
"The Healing of a Lame Beggar"
Acts 3
Nathan House

Click below to listen to past sermons:
Savage Street Sermons

www.HouseToHouse.com
House to House
Heart to Heart

Phone: 541-441-1005

Visit:

TheBibleMediator.com

to download or to sign up to have the publication e-mailed to you, or send an e-mail to SSteinless@aol.com and request the PDF of TBM.