1.

Body

1.

You have begun to give (9-10a)

1.

Faith: Taught by God

1.

First, **you have begun to give.** Paul speaks first of the reason for, then of the fact of, your giving. First, the reason you have begun to give is that you have been " taught by God to love one another. " Paul says this in v. 9, saying,

-

"9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. "

-

Paul didn't need to remind the

Thessalonians of their basic Gospel-duty to love one another, because God Himself was teaching them to do so. Paul is not here denying that the Thessalonians need any teaching whatsoever, for clearly Paul is teaching them about many things throughout this epistle, and even about their duty to love one another. But Paul is speaking here about the fact that God has already begun to give them a working faith, and a laboring love. In giving them faith in Christ as their Savior, God has taught them to love one another, and so now their love has begun to labor, even under persecution, even being willing to suffer so that others might hear the gospel and be saved. In contrast to the Old Covenant, where people would look into the mirror of God's law and then forget its requirements for their lives, now in the New Covenant God in fact writes the law on the hearts of His people, as He promised in **Jeremiah 31:33-34**

, saying

-

"I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it."

-

The New Covenant in Christ is the fulfillment of **Is. 54**, where God says this to His needy, afflicted people, in **v.**

1 ,

-

"Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one will be **more numerous**
Than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.

-

And in **vv. 11-13**,

-

11 "O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, Behold, I will set your stones in antimony, And your foundations I will lay in sapphires. 12 "Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, And your gates of crystal,

And your entire wall of precious stones. 13 "All your sons will be **taught of the LORD**; And the well-being of your sons will be great.

”

-

In the restoration of His people, in the New Covenant,

and in the salvation He would bring through Jesus Christ, God said "Your sons will be taught of the Lord." This is what God is doing for us now, writing His holy law on our hearts by *giving* us holy hearts in our regeneration, and now by sanctifying us, making us more holy, throughout the rest of our lives. We are taught

by God.

-

Love: You do practice it

1.

But not only are you taught to love one another, Paul says, but "indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren."

Paul says this in **v. 10a**

,

-

“10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. ”

-

Paul told us about the way the Thessalonians had shown love to the brothers throughout Macedonia in ch. **1:6-10**, where he

says

-

“6 You also became imitators of us

and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you

became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has

sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has

gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

-

Now how did the word of the Lord sound forth from the Thessalonian

church? Certainly, both in their words and their deeds. But partly through the grace of giving.

Turn with me to **2 Cor. 8**, where Paul says "the churches of Macedonia" generously

gave of their money for the work of the Lord. The three key churches in Macedonia were in Berea,

Philippi, and Thessalonica. The Philippian church was the first to give, but undoubtedly the

others followed (cf. Philippians 4:15). This means the way the Thessalonians

practiced love for the brethren was specifically that they gave of their own material possessions to

help support their needy neighbors.

1

Paul says in

2 Cor. 8:1-7

,

-

“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you

the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia ,

2 that in a

great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in

the wealth of their liberality. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond

their ability, they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much urging for the

favor of participation in the support of the saints, 5 and this, not as we had expected, but

they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 6 So we urged Titus

that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this

gracious work as well. 7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and

knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you

abound in this gracious work also

.

”

-

The NIV translates this last phrase "excel in this

grace of giving

.” Even though they were in “ deep poverty,

” Paul says, the Macedonians gave out of the overflow of their joy in

Christ, so that they could contribute to the "support of the saints," as

v. 4

says. And so Paul exhorts the Corinthians, who were more wealthy

than the Thessalonians, to show the sincerity of their love by doing just as the

Thessalonians have done, as he says in **vv. 8-9**

,

-

“8 I am not speaking this as a command,

but as proving through the earnestness of others **the sincerity of**

your love also

. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He

became

poor

, so that

you through

His

poverty

might

become

rich

”

.

-

You see, just as Jesus Christ gave

up the great riches of glory and honor which he had at His Father’s right

hand in heaven in order to humble himself, to take on

human flesh and be made in the likeness of a man, in order that we

might receive in His death and resurrection the riches of

salvation from our sins, so now Christ calls you to give of

yourselves self-sacrificially in order that your brothers and sisters in

Christ may come to know Him, to love Him, to be saved from their

sins, and to be delivered from some of the misery of this life. God

has begun to give you a real, laboring, hardworking love for your

brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for all those whom God may call

through your efforts to share His salvation, but now you must

prove the *sin cerity* of your love by giving from your heart, by

giving of your life, of your resources, that others might be

saved. Will you "excel in this grace of giving?"

-

You see, God has blessed you

so that you will be a blessing. Now in the New Covenant

God is fulfilling the promise He made to Abraham in **Gen.**

12:2-3 ,

saying

-

“I will make you a great nation, **And I will**

bless you, And make your name great; And

so you shall be a blessing;

3 And I will bless

those who bless you, And the one who curses you

I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth

will be blessed."

-

And

God

promised to His people in **Deut. 28:12-14**

that if they would keep His command

ments,
then He
would
make
them a

blessing to all nations, saying

-

12

"Th

e LORD

will open

for you

His good

storehous

e, the

heavens,

to give

rain to

your land

in its

season

and to bless all the work of

your hand; and you shall

lend to many nations, but you

shall not borrow.

”

“You shall lend to many

nations, but you shall not borrow. ”

Do you hear what this is

saying?

In Christ

God has

given

you all things, but more than that,

we count all things to be loss in

view of the surpassing value

of

knowing

Christ

Jesus

our Lord.

God

does

richly

bless us, spiritually as well as

materiall

y in

this life,

and in

view of this let us not cling

selfishly to what He gives us, but

rather gladly give of these

blessings to those who are in need.

Is this benevolent spirit not the

heart of what God comman

ded His people to have in **Deut.**

15:6ff

?

God

says

there,

-

6

"For the LORD

your

God will

bless

you as

He has promised you, and

you will lend to many nations,

but you will not borrow; and

you will rule over many nations,

but they will not rule over you.

7

"If there is a poor

man with you, one of your

brothers, in any of your towns in

your

land

which

the

LORD your God is giving

you, you shall not harden your

heart,

nor

close

your

hand

from

your

poor

brother;

8 but

you shall

freely

open your hand to him, and

shall generously lend him

sufficient

for

his need

in

whatever he lacks. 9 "B

eware

that

there is

no

base thought in your heart,

saying, 'The seventh year, the

year of remission, is

near,'

and your

eye is

hostile

toward

your

poor

brother,

and you give him nothing; then he

may cry to the LORD against

you, and it will be a sin in you. 10

"You shall generou

sly give to him, and your heart

shall not be grieved when

you give to him, because for this

thing the LORD your God will

bless you in all your work

and in all your undertakings. 11

"For the poor will never

cease to be in the land; therefore

I

command

you,

saying,

'You

shall

freely

open

your

hand to

your

brother,

to your

needy

and poor

in your land.'

-

Work

to give more (10b-11)

1.

And

so if you have received the

incredible riches of salvatio

n in

Christ,

and

have

been given life, and health,

and material blessing

s in any

measur

e

whatsoe

ver, do

not

harden

your

hearts against your needy

brothers

. Make

it your

ambition

to work with your hands

so that

you may

give

more to

those in need. Make it your

ambition

to give

more

food,

more clothing, more hospitali

ty,

more of

Christ's

love,

more of the gospel, and

more of the ministry of the

church,

to those

who

need

Christ's love so desperately in

the world around you.

Paul exhorts you to do just

this in 1 Thess. 4:10-11

,

saying,

1.

“But we urge you,

brethren, to excel

still

more,

11 and

to make it your

ambitio

n to

lead a

quiet life and attend

to your

own

busines

s and

work

with

your

hands,

just as

we

comma

nded

you, 12

so

that you

will

behave

properly

toward

outsider

s and

not be

in

any

need."

2.

Paul exhorts you,

then, to

“**work**

to give

more. ”

3.

Now

Paul is not being a

slave-driver here.

He is not exhortin

g you to drive yoursel

ves into

utter

poverty,

but rather he is

exhortin

g you

to work

so that you have no

need.

So that

you will

NOT be in poverty.

But further, he

exhorts

you to

work so

that you may give

to

others.

Just as

you

have

begun

to give

to those

in

Macedonia, he

says, just as you

have begun to show

hospitality, to be

genero us to the

needy

in your

house,

your

neighbo

rhood,

your presbytery, so

now

excel

still

more,

for the

gospel

must go out, for the

needy

will

always

be with you, for you

must continue to

grow

and

abound

in love for one another

, for

you

must

continu

e to

excel in

this

grace

of

giving.

4.

My

parents

have

diligentl

y,

faithfull

y,

worked

all their

married

lives,

not

earning

a great amount of

money,

but

earning

enough

to be

able to

give to those who are

in need.

I have

sought

to do the same.

And I know that

God has begun

to give you this grace

of

giving

as well;

this is why He has

given

you a

job, a

house,

and a

willing

heart.

But

now

Paul exhorts you,

you must excel

still

more.

5.

Practical means

■

■

work.

The

practic al means

by

which

you do

this is

to

work at

your

job.

Paul

had set

a Godly

exampl

e in

word

and

deed to the Thessa

Ionians,

as he

remind

ed

them in

ch. 2:8-9

,

saying

1.

“8

Having so fond an

affectio

n for

you,

we

were

well-pl

eased

to

impart

to you

not

only

the gospel of God

but

also

our

own

lives,

becau

se you

had

becom

e very dear to us. 9

For you recall,

brethre

n, our

labor

and

hardshi

p, how

workin

g night

and

day so

as

not to

be a

burden

to any

of you,

we

proclai

med to

you the

gospel

of

God."

2.

Paul’s

goal

was

not to

take,

but to

give.

He worked with

his

hands

to

earn

money

so that

he

could

preach

the gospel to the

Thess alonian s, so

that he

would

not be

a

burden

to

them.

This

was

his

pattern

, his

habit,

everyw

here

when

he

preach

ed the

gospel.

Sometimes he

even would bring a

gift

from

more

establi shed church

es with

him, in

order

to

impart

to a

needy

church

the

gospel of God.

And now the

Thess alonian s had

become imitato

rs “of

us and

of the

Lord,

”

as

Paul

says in

1:6

,

giving

self-sa

crificial

ly out

of the

abund

ance

of

God's provisi

on,

that

the

gospel

would

go out

to

perfor

m its

saving

work

in the

hearts

of their

neighb

ors.

3.

But

the

tempt

ation

is to lose heart

in

these

acts of

benev

olence

. To

neglect to do good

to all,

and

especi

ally to

those

of the

house

hold

of

faith.

And

some

in fact

in

Thess alonic a, and

even

in

any

churc

h

today,

will fail to excel

in this grace of

giving.

My

friend

s, do

you

think

you

have

nothin

g to

give?

Do

you

think

first of

yours

elf as

some

one

who is

needy

,

rather

than

as

some

one

who can give?

That

you

must

receiv

e

before

you can give?

I know

what

that

feeling is like.

You

may

need

to

hear Paul's warnin

g in 2 Thess

alonia

ns

3:6-13

Turn with

me

there,

and

hear

what

Paul

says to us. He

says,

1.

6

Now

we

comm

and

you,

brethr

en, in

the

name

of our

Lord

Jesus

Christ,

that

you

keep

away

from

every

brothe

r who

leads

an

unruly

life

and

not

accor

ding

to the

traditi

on

which

you

receiv

ed

from

us. 7

For you yours

elves

know

how

you

ought

to

follow

our

exam

ple,

becau

se we

did

not

act in

an

undisc

ipline d

mann

er

amon

g

you, 8

nor

did we

eat

anyon

e's

bread

withou

t

payin

g for

it, but

with

labor

and

hards

hip we

kept

workin

g

night

and

day

so

that

we

would

not be

a

burde

n to

any of

you; 9

not

becau

se we

do not

have

the

right

to

this,

but in

order

to

offer

oursel

ves as

a

model

for

you,

so

that

you

would

follow

our

exam

ple.

10 For

even

when

we

were

with

you,

we

used

to

give

you

this

order:

if

anyone is

not

willing

to

work,

then

he is

not to

eat,

either.

11 11 For we hear

that

some

amon

g you

are

leadin

g an

undisc

ipline d

life,

doing

no

work

at all,

but

acting

like

busyb

odies.

12

Now

such

perso

ns we

comm

and

and

exhort

in the

Lord Jesus Christ

to

work

in

quiet

fashio

n and

eat

their

own

bread.

13 But

as for you, brethr

en, do

not

grow

weary of doing

good.

2.

And

so I

exhort

you

as

well,

do not

grow weary in

doing good! If you

are tempted to

lead a disorderly

and

undis

cipline

d life

so

that

you

end

up in

poverty, or if you

are tempted to

depen

d on

others

rather

than

work

to

suppo

rt

yours

elf, or

if you are tempt

ed to

spend

your time acting

busy,

interfe

ring in

the

affairs

of

others

,

rather

than

worki

ng

diligently at the

tasks

which

God

has

set

before

you to

do,

then

Paul gives you

one

very

solid,

trustw

orthy,

and

inesc

apabl

e

piece

of

advice—work

with

your

hand

s .

He

says in v. 11

of

1

Thes

s. 4

,

“make

it

your

ambiti

on to

lead a

quiet

life

and

attend

to

your

own

busin

ess

and

work

with

your

hands

, just

as we

comm

anded

you.”

My friends,

even

if you

are

needy

, even

if you

are in

deep

pover

ty, a

s the

Thess

alonia

ns

were

, work so that

you

will

have

some

thing

to

give

to

those

who

are in

need.

Do not think

of

yours

elf

first

as a

ward

of the

churc

h or a

ward

of the

state,

do

not

think

of

yours

elf

first

as

one

of the

needy

, but

think

of

yours

elf

first

as

one

who

can

give

to

those

who

are in

need.

The Lord DOE

S

richly

bless

us in

this

life

with

all

things

, even in giving

you

this

grace

of

giving

, and

just as He has

begu

n to

sancti

fy you

in this

area,

so He

will

contin

ue to

bless

you

so

that

you

will

be a

blessi

ng to

your

neigh

bor.

So

that

throu

gh

you

all

nation

s will

be

bless

ed.

Whether you

give a tenth of all

you

have,

wheth

er

you

offer

more,

even

if you

give all that

you

own,

as

did

the

wido

w in

the

templ

e,

reme

mber

that

throu

gh

your helping

hand

they

will

come

to

know

the

love

of

Jesus Christ . And

so if

His

love

is at

work

in

you,

you

will

work

to

give

more,

to

give

to

the

needy

, that

they

may

know

the

salvat

ion of

the

Lord.

-

Then

you

will

bear

much fruit (12)

1.

And the result,

then,

is that

you

will

bear

much

fruit.

Paul

says

this in

v

.12

,

sayin

g

1.

12

SO

that

you

will

beha

ve

prope

rly

towar

d

outsid

ers

and

not

be in

any

need.

2.

You

see, if

you

grow

and

abou

nd in

love

for

one

anoth

er,

then

your

growi

ng

holine

ss will

beco

me

manif

est to

the

unbeli

evers

who

know you.

You will

not

be

know

n for

your

desir

e to

take

from them,

but

rather

for

your

desir

e to

give

to

them.

You

will

not

be

know

n for

bein

g

selfis

h,

greed

y,

covet

ous,

but

rather

you

will

be

know

n for

bein

g

self-s

acrific

ial,

gener

ous,

hard-

worki

ng,

and

kind.

If you

humb

ly

work

with

your

hand

s,

and

work

in

order

to

give

to

those

who

are in

need,

you

will

behave

prope

rly

toward

outsiders.

3.

But also

then

you

will

not

be in

any

need.

You

will

not

need to ask

other

s for

their

help

witho

ut

also

being able

to

freely

and

joyou

sly

give

of

your

own

lives

at the same

time.

And

so

you

see,

you

will

be

able

to

share God's

savin

g love

with

those

who

need

to

hear

the

gosp

el.

This

IS the result

of

worki

ng

with

your hand

s—it

is an

expre

ssion

of

love

for

your

broth

ers,

and it

results in

the

sprea

d of

the

gosp

el.

Jesus said

in John

13:35

that

1.

35

&quot

;By

this

all

men

will

know

that

you

are

My

discip

les, if

you

have

love

for

one

anoth

er.&q

uot;

2.

What sort

of

love

is this

love

which

we

must

have

? 1 John

3:16-18

says that

1.

16

We

know

love

by

this,

that

He

laid

down

His

life

for

us;

and

we

ough

t to

lay

down

our lives

for

the

bretheren.

17

But

whoe

ver

has

the

world

's

good

s,

and

sees

his

broth

er in

need

and

close

s his

heart

again

st

him,

how

does

the

love

of

God

abide

in

him?

18

Little

childr

en,

let us

not

love

with

word

or

with

tong

ue,

but in

deed

and

truth.

2.

Jesus

speaks of

this

love

as

the *fr*

uit

whic

h we

must

bear

in

our

lives,

sayin

g in

Joh

n

15:8-

9

,

1.

8

&qu

ot;M

y

Fath

er is

glorif

ied

by

this,

that

you

bear

muc

h

fruit

, and

so

prov

e to

be

My

disci

ples.

9

&qu

ot;Ju

st as

the

Fath

er

has

love

d

Me, I have

also

love

d

you;

abid

e

in

My

love

.

2.

Jesus

confirms

that

this

fruit

is *lo*

ve

for

one

another

her

in

Joh

n

15:16-17

,

sayi

ng

1.

16

&qu

ot;Y

ou

did

not

choose

Me

but I

chose

you,

and

app
ointe

d

you

that

you

woul

d go

and

bear

fruit

,

and

that

your

fruit

wou

Id

rem

ain

, so

that

what

ever

you

ask

of

the

Fath

er in

My

name

He

may

give

to

you.

17

&qu

ot;T

his l

com

man

d

you,

that

you

love

one

another

2.

We

mu

st

bear

this

fruit

of

love

for

one

anot

her

by

givin

g

gen

erou

sly

of

our

resource

s

that

the

gos

pel

may

go

forth

,

and

that

the

lost

ma

y be

save

d.

And

my

frien

ds, if

you

work

so

that

you

may

give

to

the

Lord

’s

work

, so

that

you

may

sho

W

God’

s

love

to

thos

e

arou

nd

you,

He

will

sup

ply

your

ever

y

nee

d to

ena

ble

you

to

shar

e

His

love.

And

He will

use

your

effor

ts to

bring

grea

t

praise

and

glor

y to

His

nam

e

thro

ugh

the

salv

atio

n of

man

y.

Paul

says

thes

e

thin

gs in

2

Cor. 9:6ff

Turn

with

me

ther

e, to

2

Cor.

9:6ff

Paul says

,

1.

6

The

poin

t is

this:

who

ever

sow

s

spar

ingly

will

also

reap

spar

ingly

,

and

who

ever

sow

s

bou

ntiful

ly

will

also

reap

bou

ntiful

ly. 7

Eac

h

one

mus

t

give as

he

has

made up

his

min

d,

not

relu

ctan

tly

or

und

er

com

pulsi

on,

for

God

love

s a

che

erful

give

r.

8

And

God

is

able

to

make all

grac

e

abo

und

to

you,

so

that

havi

ng

all

content

men

tin

all

thin

gs

at all

time

s,

you

may

abo

und

in

ever

y

goo

d

work

9.

As it

is

writt

en,

&qu

ot;H

e

has

distri

bute

d

freel

y,

he

has

give

n to

the

poor

; his

right

eou

snes

s

endures

fore

ver.

&qu

ot;

10

He

who

sup

plies

see

d to

the

sow

er

and

brea

d for

food

will

sup

ply

and

multiply

your

see

d for

sowi

ng

and

incr

eas

e

the

harv

est

of

your

right

eou

snes

s.

11

You

will

be

enri

che

d in

ever

y

way

for

all

your

gen

eros

ity

,

whi

ch

thr

oug

h us

will

pro

duc

e

than

ksgi

ving

to

God

12

For

the

mini

stry

of

this

servi

ce is

not

only

sup

plyin

g

the

nee

ds

of

the

saint

s,

but

is

also

over

flowi

ng

in

man

y

thanksgi

ving

s to

God

. 13

By

thei

r

app

rova

l of

this

serv

ice,

they

will

glor

ify

God

bec

aus

e of

you

r

sub

mis

sion

flow

ing

fro

m

you

r

conf

essi

on

of

the

gos

pel

of

Chri

st

,

and

the

gen

eros

ity of

your

cont

ribut

ion

for

the

m

and

for

all

othe

rs,

14

whil

e

they

long

for

you

and

pray

for

you

,

bec

aus

e of

the

surp

assi

ng

grac

e of

God

upo

n

you.

15

Tha

nks

be

to

God

for

his

inex

pres

sible

gift!

2.

Con

clus

ion

1.

And

so

now

let

us

give

than

ks

to

God

for

His

inex

pres

sibly

grea

t gift

of

salv

atio

n,

and

more

and

mor

e as

He

ena

bles

us

let

us

now

exc

el

in

this

grac

e of

givin

g.

Let us

work

with

our

han

ds,

that

thos

e

who

are

in

nee

d

may

rejoi

ce

with

us

not

only

for

thes

e

material

bles

sing

s,

but

for

the

love

of

God

she

d

abro

ad

in

our

hear

ts

thro

ugh

Jes

us

Chri

st

our

Savi

or!

Let

us e

xcel

in

this

gra

ce

of

givi

ng

1 Paul

has

the

Mac

edo

nian

s’

giving of

their

fina

ncial

reso

urce

s

whic

h he

des

crib

es in

2

Cor. 8-9

in

min

d

whe

n he

spe

aks

of

the

The

ssal

onia

ns’

“pra

ctice

” of

love

towa

rd

their

Mac

edo

nian

neig

hbor

s in

1 The

SS.

4:10

Paul

’s

spec

ific

conc

ern

with

giving

is

app

aren

t

whe

n

thes

e

two

pass

age

s

are

com

pare

d

with

one

anot

her.

The

dati

ng

of

the

two

epist

les

lend

s

sup

port

to

this

view

But only

one

com

men

tary

(Green)

amo

ng

the

seve

ral I

was

able

to

cons

ult

saw

that

Paul

’s

spec

ific

conc

ern

was

with

the

grac

e of

givin

g

,

and

men

tion

ed a

con

necti

on

with

2 Cor.

8-9

on

this

poin

t.

Oth

er

com

men

tator

s

divid

e

this

pass

age

into

two

sections

with

the

loos

ely

related

conc

erns

of

brot

herl

y

love

and

work

, but

Gre

en

right

ly

sees

thei

r

dee

per

con

necti

on

in

Paul

’s

conc

ern

that

the

The

ssal

onia

ns

give

Gre

en’s

insig

ht

per

mits

us

to

reco

gniz

e

the

pass

age'

s

clea

r

con

necti

on

with

Paul's

over

arch

ing

the

me

of

faith

,

love,

and

hop

e.