

Intro.

- A. The BE-Attitudes = is one of the most encouraging & challenging studies for both new Christians & those mature in the faith.
 - 1. Poor-n-spirit; mourn, meek, hunger & thirst, merciful, pure-n-heart, peacemakers, persecuted for righteousness sake, the reviled.
 - 2. 7 BE-Attitudes of Jesus in **Rev.** – read & hear, dead in the Lord, he who watches, the *invited*, has part in 1st resurrection, keep these sayings & does God’s commands.
 - 3. Luke recorded an additional beatitude (*forgotten beatitude*) in **Ac. 20:35**
- B. In Paul’s teaching & travels, he put as much emphasis in this beatitude as he did on evangelism & edifica.
 - 1. Time & again Paul assisted w/ the collection for the poor (**Ac. 11:27-30; Gal. 6:10**)
 - It wasn’t *just* assisting the poor that made his efforts worthwhile; he knew effect of sharing & **Gal. 2:6** fellowship => strengthen unity among Jews & Gentiles as brethren. He promised to strengthen poor--↑
 - 3. The Corinthian congregation needed encouragement to act on their good intentions. (c. **2 Cor. 8:10**)
- C. Paul used 9 different words to refer to **giving** (ministry, fellowship, debt, fruit, => **grace**).
 - 1. It is a wonderful thing when Christians develop in *this grace also*, **2 Cor 8:6**
 - 2. **How** can we tell when we have grown in the grace of giving???
 - 3. **What** are the benefits of maturing in *grace giving* ???

Discuss.

I. HOW CAN WE TELL WE ARE MATURING IN OUR GIVING???

- A. When we give *in spite of the circumstances*. **2 Cor. 8:1-2**
 - 1. Christians in Macedonia were *in a gt. trial of affliction* (i.e., destitute – like a beggar who has nothing!)
 - 2. (Many new Christians in N.T. times lost jobs when converted – thrown out of trade guilds => idolatry.)
 - 3. Remember the generous offerings (**Ex. 35:5-6**) when tabernacle was being built, & temple (**1 Chro. 29**).
 - 4. Easier to give => remem. God is just letting us use a few material things for a while. (stewards –S.Hook
- B. When we give *enthusiastically*. **2 Cor. 8-4** threshold of pain.
 - 1. One defini. of *giving generously* = “give ‘til it hurts”. Trouble w/ that standard, some have low --↑
 - 2. The Philippians & Macedonia brethren *begged* to have a part in contributing to the cause!!! **8:4**
 - 3. When we learn to appreciate God’s grace, realize it not only frees us f/ sin, but also frees us f/ ourselves
- C. When we give *as Jesus gave*, **2 Cor. 8:5-9** **2 Cor. 5:15**
 - 1. Jesus gave *himself* (**Gal. 1 & 2; Eph. 5; 1 Tim. 2 & Tit. 2**) so we might live for Him, not ‘selves --↑
 - 2. Motivation of such giving ≡ mature
- D. When we give *willingly*, **2 Cor. 8:10-12**
 - 1. Corinthians had boasted to Titus (**vs. 6**) about the *promise* they had made to contribute. (1 yr. ago)
 - 2. Promises must be followed by *performance* & what we do we need to do *willingly!* **Phil. 2:12f**
 - 3. The heart of the poor widow (**Mk. 12:42**) was like that of Christians in Macedonia.
 - 4. God wants our heart to be in our giving!!!
- E. When we give *by faith*, **2 Cor. 8:13-24**
 - 1. Begins w/ God-given desire to serve, **vs. 16-17**
 - 2. **Vs. 18** – Includes a *burden for lost souls* { Our *motive* for giving = God’s sp. blessings in our lives
 - 3. **Vs. 19** -- A desire to *honor God*. { But our *measure* for giving = is God’s material blessings.
 - 4. **Vs. 20-22** -- A reputation for *honesty*
 - 5. A cooperative spirit = further evidence, **vs. 23-24**

II. FIVE BLESSINGS OF MATURE GIVING. 2 Cor. 9

- A. Our giving will *provoke others* in a positive way, **vs. 1-5**
 - 1. Occasionally one insist on *secretive giving* (c. **Mt. 6:3**), but inconsistent & far less literal w/ praying **6:6**
 - 2. Paul believed planned, promised giving = appropriate.
 - 3. (Barnabus’ gift prompted others to imitate his good example, **Ac. 4 & 5** (=> *bounty/generosity*))
- B. Our giving will *be a blessing to us*. **9:6-11** * Read -- **Lk. 6:38**

1. While the world may never grasp principles (c. **Prov. 11:24f**), Christians know giving = way of life.
2. Those principles & rules of reaping are:
 - a. The principle of **increase**: we reap in measure as we sow.
 - b. The principle of **intent**: we reap a good harvest *as we sow w/ right motives*.
 - c. There = a principle of **immediacy**: we reap even while we are sowing (**vs. 8-11**) “**sufficiency**”
- C. Our giving will **meet the needs. 9:12**
 1. *service* = public, priestly service ≡ a spiritual sacrifice
 2. Mature givers look for an opportunity to do good, not needing additional reasons. **Gal. 6:10**
 3. If you look for excuses for not doing more, you’ve got some growing to do. communicate
 4. **1 Tm. 6:18** - That the rich do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to ↑
- D. Our giving will glorify God, **vs. 13**, not us (**Mt. 5:16**).
 1. It’s hard to imagine just how grateful the Judean brethren must have been for the help f/ the Gent. bro.
 2. *unto all men* – They knew others were being helped, & were glad their immed. needs were being met.
 3. Ask ‘self: Is any one thankful for us, for our obedience & generosity????
- E. Our giving will fortify our unity with brothers & sisters. **Vs. 14-15**
 1. Several motives are apparent in the minds of the Corinthians as they gave for the relief effort.
 - a. There was obviously an element of love & compassion.
 - b. A sense of obligation – as debtors, also provokes us in our giving, **Rom. 15:25-27**
 2. Having fellowship in a cause we support usually includes an awareness reflected in our prayers
 - a. Sharing with others prayerfully & financially draws us closer to God & to one another.
 - b. The grace of giving is but another dimension of genuine Christian living.

Concl.

- A. Our salvation is possible because God believed in the grace of giving.
- B. It is only appropriate that we develop *in this grace also*, & demonstrate it by...
 1. that initial response to Jesus’ invitation in submission to His will,
 2. and that we press on to maturity in the faith as we exercise ourselves in godliness & holy living
- C. If you have not yet been bapt. into Christ, thenrepent, confess & wash away your sins.
- D. If you have not been letting your light shine as a Christian in such a way that God is glorified in your life, then you need to be restored to Jesus this hour, & we stand ready to pray with you as God awaits your coming w/ open arms.