

I. Introduction to 1 Corinthians 16 and the Corinthian Church

We enter the last chapter today, and we will be in this for probably a couple of weeks. There is some really good stuff in here that we want to look at and talk about. I am really excited about getting into 2 Corinthians when we are done. I think that our church is at the point now where so many of you are really ready to get into that phase of ministry where you really start working with people. Really, that is the ministry; the ministry is people. Most churches' aspect of ministry is ministering to inanimate objects. In the Bible, ministry is people. Have a church full of people who minister to people, and you have a healthy church. I am excited about helping you fine-tune what God has already given you the burden for and to bring others along and really help you in all of that.

We will finish up this chapter here in the next month or so and glean out of this what we can. We already know that this church is the most carnal church in the New Testament. It really stands in great contrast to the book of 2 Corinthians when they kind of get their act together. We know that what we have been doing up to this point is looking at these books in the New Testament, really throughout the whole Bible, and seeing how Christ is being portrayed in them. We know that in this book, Christ is portrayed as Christ my Lord. But that is far from the case, isn't it? We now know if there is anything that is clear in this book, it is the fact that Jesus was not definitely the Lord of their lives, neither as a church nor in the individual lives of the people in that church. Every chapter so far, we have seen an issue. In most chapters, we have seen multiple issues. That is typical of God's people who just do not grow. They fall under the influence of other Christians who do not grow, and the whole system just kind of breaks down.

I am going to read 1 Corinthians 16:1-8, and then we will make some comments on it as we get into it. I pray that you will open your Bible and open your heart and hear what God has for you today as we come down through this chapter.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we do love You. We ask You today to open up our hearts and let us see and have from this great text what You have for us. Lord, we do love You. We praise You now, and we just ask Your blessings upon it. Let us clear our heads of the things of this world and the things of this life that we may receive the Bible document. Let us clear our hearts and our minds of the things that have cluttered them all week long. Let the Holy Spirit of God confess any sin in our life. We put aside those things that have blocked our fellowship with You, that for this moment of time, the Word of God would come in and touch our lives. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The First Day of the Week and the Resurrection

I want to look at 1 Corinthians 16:1 for a moment, and it simply says this: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." With all the other problems this church has, and they have a lot of issues, it is no wonder that as we open up this chapter, Paul has to give them instructions on something the other churches are already doing. It is no surprise that they have an issue with the concept of 1.) giving to the saints and 2.) giving to their own church in general.

The first thing I want you to see, and I like the continuity of the Bible, I like how the Bible always kind of pulls itself together and stays consistent. The first thing I want you to see, I think it is important for those of you who are trying to get your Bible figured out, is the connection between chapter 15 and chapter 16 and how it ties into the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ really changed the world in every aspect. We grow up in Christian homes, and we go to church, and we think of, we never really step outside the box of how it all started and how it all affected everything. But I cannot impress upon you this morning how radically the world was changed based on the resurrection of Christ.

One of the ways is the fact that up to that point, the devil really had run the world through all of the nations. That is why you find such a large emphasis back in the Old Testament on nations. Daniel's 70th week and Daniel laying out the great vision are all based on nations. The reason for that is, and those of you with a Bible basis will remember this, I told you how that when God does something throughout the Bible, the devil does something to counter it. So what did God do? We now know that the Old Testament is about the establishment and the calling out of the nation of Israel. So in the Old Testament, God established His nation, and what the devil did is then he established his nations. Literally, in the Old Testament, the devil tries to run the world through the Gentile nations that he is in control of. This is why back in places in Isaiah and Ezekiel, you actually find where God addresses the devil through the leaders of those nations. He does it through the Assyrian. He does it through Pharaoh. He does it through Tyre, king of Persia.

Those were all real men who lived at that period of time, but in those passages, He is addressing the devil through those men because in the Old Testament, God or the devil used nations to rule the world, and of course, that ended with the resurrection.

You want to notice how it changes. Since the resurrection changed everything, God is now no longer going to run the world and try to reach the world through a nation. Now He does it through a church. We have the Church Age. So what does the devil do? He switches then from running the world through a nation and starts to run the world through a church. That is how it works. The resurrection really impacted the world to a great degree. The resurrection ended, at least temporarily, the kingdom of heaven. For now, we see the establishment of the kingdom of God, the church, the body of Christ, you and me. God now ceases to call out and work through a literal nation, Israel, and now He calls out and works through a spiritual body and then puts people into that spiritual body that He does that work. So the resurrection changed everything on the planet, and most people do not see it because most people are not very observant.

The resurrection set the pattern for even for you and for me in the New Testament church. Matthew chapter 28 in your Bible is the great resurrection chapter. I always love the account in Matthew because it really just kind of puts everything in a context. Matthew 28:1 says:

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

This is the resurrection chapter, and this is where the two Marys come and they meet with the Lord. They do not know He is resurrected. They are coming to tend the grave or the tomb and do whatever they are going to do. But they get a surprise because of the fact that He has resurrected, and He meets them, and this sets up a great study throughout the whole Bible of how that it all works because He resurrects on the first day of the week. That is our Sunday if you do not know that. You notice the Bible never calls Sunday in the Bible. It never refers to Monday as Monday or Tuesday as Tuesday or Wednesday as Wednesday. It never uses that. The reason for that is because the names of the week are basically named after the pagan gods. Saturday is named after Saturn, and Sunday is named after the sun god Baal, and that was the day that Baal worshiped. That was their high day. So the Bible is very clear never to use those pagan terminology when it refers to Sunday. It is always called the first day of the week.

We learned that the first day of the week sets the pattern for the New Testament church. The Jews did everything on the Sabbath. That is Saturday. The New Testament church does everything on Sunday, which is the first day of the week. You would be amazed how many of God's people think that the Sabbath is Sunday. It is just because they have no clue about the Bible. They know nothing about it at all. Hopefully, if nothing else, you learn out of this today, you will go out knowing what day it is. That probably would be beneficial to you.

I want you to see the pattern. Not only did He come out of the tomb and arise on the first day of the week, and you will find that in Matthew 28 and Mark 16:2-9, but this is also when He first appeared to people. You will find that in John 20:19. Also, based on the resurrection, the first day of the week, that is when the Holy Spirit of God came on Pentecost in Acts 2:1. Not only that,

but you find that because of the resurrection, the church now, different from Israel, the church now commemorates His resurrection by meeting on the first day of the week.

I have always thought it absolutely, of course, it is par for the course for the Laodicean church. I know Baptist churches that, and you need to understand if you are a visitor here or maybe a couple of times you have only been here, you probably would pick this up the first time. This is not your traditional Baptist church. The reason for that is because I am not your traditional Baptist preacher. A lot of things that go on today, I think, are absolutely stupid. I really do not say much because I have my own job here with you, and we are our own thing, and I do not think it is my calling to go out and change the world and their mindset, the Christian world, of what they believe. I could really care less. I am only concerned that you know the truth.

I watch Baptist churches, and I know that we are far down the line now, and everybody has lost their moorings, and we are lost as a frog in a hailstorm. We cannot find our way. But it never ceases to amaze me how Baptist churches actually lose sight of why things are the way they are. Many, many Baptist churches will have, and you probably have seen this, they will have a service on Saturday night for the people that do not want to come on Sunday morning. If you do not want to come on Sunday morning, here is how I can help you: do not come at all. We will never get to the point, and when you start talking like this, people do not like it because I cannot help it. I cannot help it. I am more biblical than you are. The Bible says the reason why they met on the first day of the week was simply because that is when He came out of the tomb, and it stands for something. So having one on Saturday night because people are too lazy to get up on Sunday morning so you can still get there in your church and pretend that you care so much about it.

I want to get people saved as much as anybody, but there is an interesting thing in the Bible. Jesus Christ never violated His own principles to win anybody to Christ. The principle is you meet on the first day of the week. It is just that simple. That is what you do. I think what happens, and I know this is true, what happens is when you start to allow that, people then will take that, and they will lose sight of the importance of the first day of the week. The reason we meet on the first day of the week and the reason these things are done on the first day of the week is because it is connected back to the resurrection. Without that, we would all be wasting our time. But you see big-time churches today, they do not care about doctrine. They do not care about truth. They care about two things: nickels and noses.

If you do not want to come on Sunday morning, and I know as well as I am saying this, some of you are thinking in your mind right now, "Well, there are people who work on Saturday night." You know what? We have people who work on Saturday night too. I mean, I do not know any church that doesn't. Sometimes that happens, and that is the way it is. But violating a biblical principle because you have people that work on Saturday night never sounded like a good idea to me. Because where do you draw the line with that in time? Of course, you know where it goes. Human nature will always take it and just do all the destructive things that it can do, and in time, you have a problem.

So He arose the first day of the week. He appeared to the Marys the first day of the week. I thought that was always instructive that there were no men there. Ladies, the next time you want to get something on your husband, when he throws it up in your face that it would not be for you in the garden, we would not be in this mess. Just remind him that when the Lord came out with the greatest event in the Bible, it was only the women that believed it enough to show up. All the men were chicken. Even my buddy John was not there. So throw that in his face. If that does not work, see me for marital counseling. We will get it worked out. He appeared to the Marys the first day of the week. The Holy Spirit of God came the first day of the week. The church met the first day of the week. Now we see in 1 Corinthians 16:1-8 that this is when they take up the offering the first day of the week. Everything we do as Christians, everything we do, is tied in and around and back to the resurrection because the resurrection of Christ impacted the world.

III. Individual Giving and the Four Aspects of a Healthy Church

In this passage, there are two different aspects that he talks to them about, and I want to talk to you about here in just a few moments. The first thing I want to look at, or the first aspect, and I am going to kind of reverse them in the order, I want to show you is how it has to do with the individual Christian in his giving to the work of the Lord. He says in 1 Corinthians 16:2:

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

The first aspect of giving has to do with the individuals within a church, giving back to God based on the mercy, the grace, the abundance, and all of the things that God has given to us, going back to the resurrection. When you have been in the ministry for a long time, if you have got any brains at all, you start to see how things fall into patterns, and you start to see what works and what does not work. This is called wisdom. If young guys could get that when they first get into the ministry, things would go a lot better, but it does not work that way and probably should not.

Any good, healthy church should be four things. I do not like the word "self" because self is always a bad thing because it is always about you. But I am not using the word "self" in a bad connotation. I am using it in a good connotation. Every church should be four things. If it is a good, strong, healthy church, then it ought to have these four aspects to it. When I look at churches or I evaluate churches in my own mind, these are the things that I look for.

1. In other words, the leadership should come from within. Churches get into all kinds of problems because when the pastor dies or retires or leaves or decides to go do something else, he has to look outside his own church to find leadership because he has not trained any. It just goes from one bad

problem to another. Churches ought to be self-governed.

Many churches, like the Southern Baptist Convention, are told what they have to preach on Sunday. They get lessons that come up from Louisville, and those lessons are for the whole year, and you do not have a choice of what you are going to preach. You follow the curriculum that they give you. We do not do that here. No man tells us what to preach. We preach what the Holy Spirit of God leads us to preach. Every church ought to be self-governed.

2. In other words, self-growth. It will come from within. That is why I follow these things. I believe these things. I believe that this is what a church should be. That is why I am never interested in how big a building we got. I am never interested in the location where you have got a great location. When God's Holy Spirit is bringing people to you, whatever location you have got is a good location. But you see, we have lost that aspect today. We do not put ads in the paper. We have a website, but you would have a hard time finding this from the website. The website just either makes you mad or makes you glad. That is what it is designed to do. You heard me say it before, we do not have some humongous sign out front. Because I believe that if any church grows in a true test of any church, it is not the outside thing that draws people to it. It is the lives, the people in your church that does it. When you believe in this work and you believe in God and the Bible changes your life, you know what you will do? You will bring people to church. You will be involved in their life. They will see the difference in your life, and you will bring them where you go, and then they will decide whether they like it or

whether they do not. But every church ought to grow from within.

3. That means that you handle your own problems internally yourself. You preach the Bible. You preach the truth of the Bible. You teach the doctrine of the Bible. You do not preach secondary issues. I do not preach my preferences. I do not preach my convictions. I preach what the Bible says. That will stand for itself. That will take care of the cleaning process because you have people that come into any church that immediately, once they are in a service, they say, "This is not for me." I like that. That is the way it is supposed to be. Let us not have any false impressions going on here. You find people who come to a church service and they say, "Wow, I really like it. This is what I have been looking for all my life." I like that. That is the way it is supposed to be. The church ought to be self-cleaning. When you get out of fellowship with God and you start to get out of the line of fire here as far as the ministry is concerned, and you start to check out, you ought to get upset at some of the sermons that get preached. That is good. That is a healthy thing. You are living your life and doing wrong and not doing right. You ought to get upset and mad when somebody comes to you and says, "Are you doing this?" That is a good thing. That is what a healthy church does. We have to keep each other accountable. That is the way it works. It works from the inside. That is what it is supposed to do. You can always tell people's reaction when they are out of fellowship with God how they respond to truth. That is a good thing.

4. We do not have any bake sales. We do not have any, we do not look out for people to give us money. The bottom line is a church needs to be self-sufficient. It needs to be self-supporting. It needs to be from within. When these things are taking place within a church and the church is growing properly, then you are going to find that the, I guess the two greatest words that, or it is really missing in the church at Corinth, comes into our life and comes into our, everything that we do. I think these are probably two of the greatest words that you are ever going to find as far as your everyday growth and relationship with Christ. It is two simple words. We use them all the time. We hear them all the time. We just never really understand them, I do not think. The first word is faith. The second word is grace. Understanding how they work in our lives is really key.

IV. Faith and Grace: Definitions and Development

I am going to define them for you a moment, and then we are going to look at some comparisons between the church at Corinth and the way it should be. But let us define them. I believe they are absolutely the two key elements at work in our life, not only at the time of salvation but even after you get saved. The Bible says in the book of Philippians that God has begun a good work in you, and He wants to perform that work until the day of Jesus Christ. We know now the day of Jesus Christ is the rapture of the church. So what I am saying is this: that good work that He starts in you is a work of you growing spiritually in these two aspects. Everything in your Christian life, everything you are or everything you are not, will be found and formulated in these two words: faith and grace. There are two. That is just the way it works.

➤ Faith is your ability to believe and trust in God with what He says. That is faith. Faith is your ability that when God tells you something, you have the ability to believe it. In this church right now, there are people who are on different levels of that faith. Some of you can just about take anything that comes your way because you have grown, and the aspect of faith in your life is very strong. So the bumps in the road of life really do not deter you. Other people are maybe in that midway point where you can deal with most things, but some things will throw you

a curve, and you will struggle with it. Other people, you know, you barely just got saved, and you are trying to scratch your way through this thing, but things get to you. Things bother you. Your ability not to trust God in things in your life, the devil uses that against you. God wants to use everything in your life, everything. We get the idea that it is just the good things. But when you really have faith and you understand faith in your life, then you realize that faith is the ability to trust God in the bad things and then be able to see that within the bad things, God has just as much for you as He does when you have the good things. That is tough sometimes, isn't it?

➤ Grace, on the other hand, is the ability to use that faith for the things of God. I think that is what we do not do today. Christianity has two basic fundamental issues.

I will be honest with you, if you have got marital problems, I can pretty much fix that for you if you just do what is right. If you have personal issues in your life, and unless you are an axe murderer, I can usually fix things that are going wrong in your life. But the hardest thing I have ever never found a real clean solution to, I mean, I know what the answer is, but the answer is it is so hard to apply everything in your life with everything else you have got going in the world that we live in. The hardest thing I have ever found is to get someone to understand and a process to get them to get faith and grace working in their life. I am not sure there is a fast track to that. I think that takes a commitment on your part and my part of yours.

The reason why I say that is because I guess the greatest story that we are going to kind of weave in and out of here today is probably one of the greatest men in the Bible. Remember last week when I gave you those systems of seven, I told you there were seven men in the Old Testament that really were an example of what your life and my life should be. If you really want to have the victory in your life, you get these seven men because each one of them deals with a different aspect of the Christian life in type that that is where you start. For you and for me and the understanding of faith and grace, I think the greatest example of that is the life of Abraham.

We talk about faith, and faith is an important thing, and we use it as a word in our sermons or our testimonies or telling somebody how to get saved. But do you realize that in Romans 14, down around verse 22 or 23, it simply says to you and me that in your life and my life, whatever is not of faith is sin? Did you live like that the day you got saved? I did not. Five, six, seven, eight, nine years down the road, did you live that way? I did not. But there had to come a point in your life when you do. I think the process of that is found no better anywhere in the Bible than in a man's life named Abraham. I think Abraham gives us a study of faithless to faithful. I think that he is a great picture of all of that.

I do not know about you, but I have really one goal in my life, and it is a goal that I want in God's mind. I want God to look at me as His friend. That is all I really want. My goal in life is, and I like people, I am a people person, or I would not be in the ministry, and I enjoy people, and

it bothers me when people do not want me to be their friend because I am a nice guy, and I like to have friends, and I like to be nice to everybody. But on a scale of one to ten, I could care less when it comes to my relationship with God if anybody wants me or likes me or cares about me. There is only one real person that I want to impress to the point where He says, "You know, Bob Alexander, he is My friend," and that is God. The Bible says that Abraham was God's friend. Abraham was God's, in fact, there are only two men in the Bible that it says were God's friends. The other one being Moses. In Isaiah 41:8, it says, "Abraham my friend." I will tell you what, God could take any reward I would have and any inheritance I would have and just give it to whoever He wanted if I could just stand there, and He looked down at me, and He would say in front of everybody, "Yeah, he is My friend." That would mean a lot to me.

I learned that the process of getting there is not always easy. Abraham is that example. You see in Abraham's life how he learned to have faith and then how he learned to have grace. Grace is our ability, how we use that faith. It is our ability through our faith to give God exactly what He wants based on what our understanding of the grace of God was when He gave it to me. That is quite a mouthful that the two grow together. You cannot have one without the other. They are completely different. Grace is one thing, faith is something else, but they are connected together, and you cannot have one without the other. You do not have them both, you do not have either one of them. It is one of those weird things in the Bible. You cannot have faith and not have grace. You cannot have grace and not have faith. A lot of people think they do, but when you line it up against the Bible, it becomes another whole concept. They have got to grow together. That is the key. Faith is believing what God says. That is seeing God, and grace is doing what He says after you see it. That is tough.

The Bible says, and here is how it works, just so I want you to get this whole thing. The Bible says when you got saved, God gave you grace to be saved. You cannot get saved without grace. Grace is the element that runs from Genesis to Revelation. Without grace, there would be no salvation. The Bible says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. What does that mean? It means God in His goodness and His grace provided a salvation for Noah, and Noah found grace in the eyes of God. So grace is the first key, and grace is something that you and I had to have to get saved. But here is the key. Romans 12:3 says that when you and I got saved, God gave us the faith that gets saved. He gave it to us in a measure and gave us all the faith. In other words, what I am saying is when God saved you and when I got saved, God gave me just enough faith to believe His Word for salvation.

If you would have told me the day after, the week after, the hour after I got saved that God was going to move me out of Canton, Ohio, and take me to Kansas City and was going to put all the things in my world that He was going to do, if you would have told me that right after I had just gotten saved, I would have had a heart attack. You know why? Because I did not have the faith at that point to believe God in that aspect of my life. All I had was a measure of faith just to believe what God said about salvation, and that is the way it works. God gives you and me just enough faith to trust that Word in the Romans Road of salvation to get saved. But He has not given you enough faith to deal with the medical issues down the line or problems with your kids yet or problems in your marriage or problems at work or losing your job. He has not given you all that

yet. That is why when a person gets saved, it is like a baby being born. When your baby is born, it would be a good thing, but the week after it is born, you do not tell it to get out and get a job. They do not have the ability to do that any more than you or I had the ability the day we got saved to go out and do great things for God. A lot of God's people think they do, and that gets them in trouble. But this thing of faith and grace has to work its way through in your life and in my life.

God gives me the measure of faith to be saved. Then the Bible says, and that is what it says, "You are saved by grace," Ephesians 2:8-9, "through faith." Then you take that measure of faith once you get saved, and then you develop that. That is what you see in the life of Abraham. That is what I see in so many of your lives. How do some of you come in here five years ago who knew nothing about the Bible and in the short time of three or four or five years come to the point where you grow now immensely, you are handling major responsibility in things with people's lives that five years ago you would never have thought you could do? What is that? You know what that is? It is taking the measure of faith when you got saved and then developing that faith through the process, and God gives you the grace along the way to keep growing and put it all together and to use what God says and given you, and day by day, you have developed your faith. That is what spiritual growth really is. It is simply taking the measure of faith that God gave you the day you got saved, and in five years down the line, you ought to be a whole different person. When you are not, it shows you exactly what has not happened in your life.

Hebrews 5:14 talks about this, and this is where he says in that great chapter, he says, "By this time some of you ought to be teachers." He says, "What is this deal? We have got to go back and teach you the first basic principles of the Word of God." Then he talks about strong meat belonging to them who are full of age. How? "By reason of use." Then he says they did what? "They exercised their senses to discern both good and evil." You know what they did? They took that measure of faith, and they grew it. As you grow in faith, you cannot help but grow in grace if you grow right. This is what has failed in the church at Corinth, and this is why they have got so many issues. As your faith grows, your trust in God, you are able to have more of the grace of God in everything that you do.

V. The Grace of Giving and Church Finances

Here he is talking about the aspect of the grace of giving. You better get it straight. The greatest single characteristic of God is giving. "For God so loved the world, he gave." That is the greatest single characteristic of God. You are going to see how the church of Corinth does not figure into that. There are two different concepts, this idea of faith and grace, but they have to grow at the same time, and they have to grow together.

You do not hear me preach hardly ever about giving and money. I never do. I mean, it is in our discipleship in one of the lessons, and there is time, the time when Bible studies, somebody will bring it up. It is just like, what am I going to do? Skip chapter 16 today? So it comes up in the Bible, and you have got to teach it, and you have got to deal with it. But if you have been in many churches and you have been around for many long times, you know that what happens in most churches, you get 15 minutes Bible and 40 minutes to give more money, and everything is

built around that. You have got guy after guy after guy after guy after guy coming up and saying, "Now we need to do this, and we need to do that."

I just, there was an evangelist, and they are all this way to a certain degree. But there was an evangelist here years ago that now has a big church over here in Kansas. He started out as a young evangelist, and he was the heartthrob of every church because everybody wanted him. He ran the route of all evangelists, and he never learned the principle that God always pays for what He orders. So he got real big for his britches too quick, and like all situations, he got into financial problems. So he is not out of a church because he did not want to align himself to one church because he is hitting all the different denominations. So he was not under a New Testament church who really should have been running his ministry anyhow. He was pretty much independent, wanted to do his own thing, did not want to be accountable to anybody. Ah, now here comes the problem. He gets a financial crunch big time. So what he does, and we have got these, we have got them someplace, we kept them just for fun. We get these letters in the mail if you are on his mailing list how the ministry has had a downsurge, and the economy and all these things and all that stuff, and now it is a thing where he needs money. He is just, the ministry cannot go on. Then he tries to put a guilt trip on you by telling you that if you do not help him out and send him money, there are going to be people that are not going to be able to hear the gospel, and it is going to be your fault. Now he does not say it that way, but that is what he is trying to say. My idea is, so what? He is the true light of every man coming to the world. He does not need you anyhow. Feel real good about not sending you any money.

What happened was the fact that we got two or three of these letters. When that does not work, and these guys are shameless, they are shameless. So what happened the next time was the fact, and my wife can bear this out. What happened the next time was we got another letter after we got about three or four letters, and this one is from his wife. Now his wife was saying how depressed he was. "Please help my husband. He has given up everything for the ministry, and he is so depressed. We need your help. If you do not help us, I am not sure what is going to happen. I have never seen him so despondent. He has such a burden to reach souls. He has such a desire to see people saved. God is, God is God, and we need your help. So please, please send something." I sent him a Bible. I thought that would help him out a little bit. I do not think he appreciated it. "Please help me. Do this. Do that. Do this." I was expecting three weeks later to get a letter from his dog. Big paw print on the end. "My master does not play with me anymore. He just sits around and mopes around. I have not had any dog treats for about three or four weeks now. Please do something. Spot." Put a sign on it. That is not my style.

If this church ever falls into financial disarray, unless something intervenes in that thing, you will never know it until I get up that morning and say, "We are closing the doors." Or maybe the ones that are giving will get a letter saying, "We have got to downsize, and we are going to move over here," and the ones that are not giving will not get any letter. When you show up, you can have it and do whatever you want to do with it. I think it is an absolute embarrassment to God for any pastor to get up and beg for money from his people to keep the church going. We say something to you and understand it. If this thing is not worth investing your life and your money in, then let us just shut the door and be done with it. This idea of freeloading and doing whatever you want

to do with your money, but when it comes to the work of God, you just cannot do it. If you have got all the other things you have got to get going. Hey, that may be your deal, but I am telling you right now, I will never get up and say, "Look, guys, we cannot pay this bill, we cannot pay that bill." I will just shut the doors. I could care less. You see, I am not doing this for income. I am not doing this for money. I am not doing this. That is why I never say anything about it. Hey, if it is your church, then it is your responsibility to pay the bills, and if you do not want to do it, then just shut it down. That is simple for me.

I know these guys, boy, they just try every angle. They have stewardship banquets. They have a big banquet and bring people there, and the whole purpose is to bring some guy in, and it will motivate you, and then have you fill out a card of what you are going to give for all year, or they will give you pledge cards. Always coming around that month, the deacons are going to show up, and they are going to start saying, "You pledged so much so we can make our budget." Hey, you know what? I do not even know what our budget is. I do not even know we have a budget. I do not really care. That is not my job. It is the job of you if this is your church, then that is what you do. I am not going to get up and beg about that thing. That is stupid. I would not drag God through the mud. If God is not the Lord of your life to do the things in your life that you give back to Him, we probably should not even have this place. That is where I am at with it. My position is simple. This church is not investing your life in and your family in and your kids in and your money in, then let us shut it down.

What you say, and I have known churches that get, they make out the money. They probably spend six thousand dollars on offering envelopes. They are printed with gold trays surrounded. Everything on there suggests that we get our, we get our, we get our offering envelopes at Costco. They are just a white envelope that you would send. In fact, if you are smart, you could just steal three or four of them. You would not have to buy them. You could just use them at home. I believe the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 8:3:

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

If God's people love God, then there are certain characteristics that go along with loving God. You do not say you love somebody and tell somebody you love them and really love them and not give them something. Try that with your wife sometime or your husband or your kids. I told you last week, Paul told us this when we studied last week, he says when you get the grace and the faith and you grow in your life, then you become steadfast, you become unmovable, and you abound in the work of the Lord. I told you last week, in any ministry, in any church, forget this church, any church, not everybody is going to pull their fair share of the load. I am just telling you, I will tell you this, I never look at the giving records. I could care, I could know who cares less or who does not give, but I will tell you something. I am going to tell you right now, I would bet you anything on this planet that the ones that invest their lives in this ministry are the same ones who invest their money in this ministry almost to a degree. You say, "Why are you basing on that?" Matthew 6:21:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

See how that thing works? That is not my job. That is why I never preach on it. I do not care. We will close this sucker down faster than we opened it up. It does not matter to me. I have always been able to get a job. Those things do not motivate me. I just look at it like I look at the Bible: it is or it is not. I do not get in the middle and try. Either the Bible is the absolute Word of God, and it is proof that God is who He is, or He is the biggest phony and faker the world has ever seen. That is why I stand on it, black or white. It is either God's Word or it is not. I will tell you something else, either His promises are His Word or they are not, and either God pays for what He orders or He does not. It is as simple as that. As long as God pays for it, God's people are on board, hey, I am good to go. The moment God says we are not in it anymore, I am good to be out. It is just that simple. That is how it works.

You see, the church at Corinth was a bunch of people who wanted to pretend that they were spiritual. They were going through all the emotions of it, but they really were not. Based on the models in the Bible, when I look at the church at Corinth and I see what Paul says to them and see how he talks about them and tells them, "Hey, look, the first day of the week is when you take up the collection, not only for the saints in Jerusalem, we will talk about that in a little bit, but for the church and for its structure, this is what you do," and growing in faith is also going in grace. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

What a great verse. Do we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, or is that just a punch line that we use as Christians? Is that just a verse we put on a card because that is what we are supposed to do, or do we really know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Thursday night was a great Bible study. We were a packed house, but a good night to have a packed house for what we talked about. Faith in living, grace in giving. Based on that whole concept and the models in the Bible, I look at that aspect in three things. I think there is a tithe, I think there is an offering, and I think there is sacrificial giving. I think that that is illustrated nowhere better than the life of one of our seven men back here, Abraham.

VI. Abraham: A Model of Faith, Grace, and Giving

When you look at his life, I see my own life, and not only do I see my own life, I see many of you because the models in the Bible are exactly what we are to follow. Christians are all different colors, shapes, and sizes, and the whole nine yards, but there are three basic areas of a Christian's life that are the key that if you watch these three simple areas, it says everything there is to say about them. I am not a mind reader. I cannot see your heart. Many times people say, "You do not judge me, you cannot see my heart." No, you are right, I cannot. I do not judge you in that sense because I cannot see your heart. But I do know this: there are three basic characteristics of a good, godly Christian in the Bible that is operating by faith and operating by grace, and may I say, you do not have them. When you look at Abraham, you find these things not only in his life, and here comes the important part because nobody has them when you get saved. You get a measure of faith, but you are supposed to grow that faith, and as you grow that faith, you grow that grace, and giving is not just about money. The grace of God is about giving everything to

God: your time, your family, your wife, your husband. A guy said, "I would sure like to give my wife to God, He just will not take her either." I understand. Got to lighten these things up a little bit.

The first thing I see about Abraham is, as I said earlier, he goes from faithless to absolute faithful. He cannot trust God for anything. I told you before how vital it is in the Bible where God changes a person's name. The first time you start to pick him up around Genesis 12, his name is Abram. Abraham is a very rich guy. He has got a lot of things, but he has not come to the conclusion yet that God is behind the scenes, and what he has got is because God is preparing him for something, and everything he has got, God has given him. He did not see that yet. So he goes as Abram, which means "high father." But you do know how the story goes. He gets called out in Genesis 12, and that calling out is a picture of you and me being called out from the world, being saved. When he got called out in Genesis 12, he meets, he goes out, God takes him out there under the starry night in Genesis 15, and what does God do? He shows him the stars like we looked at last night, and He says to him, "Abraham, someday your seed is going to be like those stars." That is the point where Abraham got saved, and when he believed God, the Bible says it was counted to him for righteousness. When you believe God, when somebody showed you the Romans Road, and you trusted Christ as your personal Savior, that is when you got God's righteousness imputed to you. He did not have a Bible back then. God took him out and showed him the stars, and when God showed him the stars, the Bible says he believed God. At that point, you know what Abraham had? He had the same measure of faith to believe God about those stars that you had and I had today. We believe God about the Romans Road and Christ dying for me on the cross. But that is all he had, and he struggles, does he not? Boy, he struggles. Boy, I struggled. I did not know there were so many dumb things to do after a person got saved. The first five years of my life, I could write a book, and we all do the same thing, do we not?

He got called out in Genesis 12. He believed God in Genesis 15. But boy, he struggles. Yeah, he believed God was going to do this great thing, but when he had to leave, he took a lot with him after God told him not to. Then he goes down into Egypt down there, and he gets messing around down there, and the king looks at his wife and he said, "Whoa, she is a good-looking woman. I think, is that your wife? Because if she is, I am going to have you killed tonight, and I will just take her for my wife." Abraham knows that, so he says, "No, she is not my wife, she is my sister." What he should have said was, "Yeah, she is my wife, and you think about killing me, God will spatter you out on the road someplace and run over you for a hundred years." Oh, okay, yes, sir. He could do it. You know why? He had enough faith to believe God about the stars. He did not have enough faith to leave the land of Chaldea without Lot. When he got down into a hard place, he did not have enough faith to trust God to get him out. We have all been there, have we not? Sure, we have.

His life is a picture of his attitude in three things, and this is what I look for in a Christian. This is the giveaway. This is the absolute dead, I should not even give you these, but it does not matter because you cannot fake them. But they are the killer, and when somebody is telling me all this and telling me that and telling me this and telling me that and "Look at me this and look at that, boy, I am doing this and doing that," I just sit there and smile, you know, like I am dumb, stupid,

happy. "Well, that is great, praise the Lord." I appreciate what you say, but our bottom line is talk is cheap. I have people lie to me all the time, every day of the week, all week long, all day long. They tell me one thing when they know that is not the truth, up one side and down the other, and they are dumb enough to think that I do not know what is going on already. I just play dumb. You know what my best job is? Is the pastor dumb? Was not at your church years ago, you had a pastor named Darlin' Dumb. That is a good name, Bob. Amen. Darlin' Dumb.

These three things are always at work, and they have to do with attitude. We get these big shine, now, everybody says it, "Attitude is everything," and that is true. But when you look at Abraham's life, and he is a model of the struggle of grace and faith in our lives, we see three areas in his life are dead giveaways.

5. His attitudinal relationship with God. It was most important.
6. His attitude and relationship with other people.
7. His attitudinal relationship to giving to God through grace.

Those are the three killers. You say, "I read my Bible, I witness, I do this, I do that." Hey, fine. How do you match up to these three? Because at the end of the day, this is all that matters. These are the three things.

He is called out in Genesis 12, but look what happens in Genesis 14:18. He is hearing this story now where he meets a man by the name of Melchizedek. Melchizedek represents the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. I do not have time to get into that, but he represents Christ in the Old Testament. He meets up with Abram, and lo and behold, the first time you find it in the Bible, because see, he got saved back there in Genesis 15, and even though he has got a lot of struggles and he makes a lot of mistakes and he is doing a lot of dumb things, he is on the path of growth of faith and grace. The first thing it says he does when he meets Melchizedek, the Bible says he gives him tithes of all that he has. Wow. First time tithes shows up in the Bible. Just two chapters later, as he continues to grow, guess what happens? God changes his name. Now he is no longer Abram, "high father." Now, because of the process of growth, I can almost say in some of your lives, this sounds stupid to some of you, but some of you that have come in here from day one, and I have watched you grow, and I have been involved in your life and helping you, I can honestly say I can almost, almost say the time when I saw God change your name. I really can. I would never tell you that, but I want to tell you, I know what that concept means. I see that turning point in people's lives, and that is what it represents in the Bible because he went from "high father" to "the father of many nations," Abraham. At that point, God never calls him Abram again, and it is because, you know why? Because Abraham, even though he is still got a lot of issues, he is on track now, and he is never going back, and he is going to only go forward.

So we see him in this scenario here where now he starts out Abram, but now in Genesis 17, he is now called Abraham. He is growing. He is growing. Then we come to Genesis 18, and I do not have time to show you the whole chronology of time here, but some time passes by the time he gets to Genesis 18. He gave his tithe back there in Genesis 14 after he got saved back there in Genesis 12 and got called out. So some time passes, and now here we have in Genesis 18 an incredible chapter because here is where the Lord Himself shows up, and we see by this story

that he has, he has done some things with that measure of faith. He got that measure of faith back in Genesis 12, and God put the whole thing together through a process, and now we come to Genesis 18. We have seen where he, even though he is still making a few bad choices, boy, he is really, really, really, really coming along, and we see the development of those three areas: his relationship, his attitude and relationship with God, his attitude and relationship with other people, and we see in his relationship to the grace of giving back to God based on what God has given to him. This is what the church of Corinth could never get straightened out.

Look at Genesis 18:1. If you do not want to turn to it, I will just read it for you. Here is what it says:

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

There are a number of things, but this is, I want you to see his attitude. Look at Genesis 18:5. He says, "Let me get you a morsel of bread." Wow. If that is a morsel of bread, I hate to see him do a feast. I mean, in comparison, you know what he has learned? He has learned a thing now in his growth: he cannot outgive God. He has learned that. He has learned a great lesson that most of God's people in the church of Corinth could never learn. They never learned the fact that you will never outgive the Lord, and everything you have, you have got because God gave it to you, and now he is understanding that concept. So he says, "I will fetch a morsel of bread," and wow.

The other thing I want you to see is his attitude about it. He is the poster child for 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, where it says:

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Notice he is running to do these things. He is running. He is hastening. He is running into Sarah. He is running down and saying, "Get a calf." You know what he is picking up? He just, it tells you, "He fetched the calf tender and good." If that had been you or me, we would have got some three-legged calf that nobody wanted. We would have got one that said, "We need to put him down in the morning." No, not just yet. We are going to hate you here just a minute. You know what he has come to? He has not got all of his life together yet. He has got a lot of issues he has got to work on, but I will tell you where he is going. He is growing in grace, and he is growing in faith, and he is growing in faith because he is learning to trust God, and he is growing in grace because now he is understanding that everything he has got, he got from God anyhow, and he is not to the place where he is realizing those things, and he ran. He enjoyed giving to God. Why? Because he sees what God has given to him, and he understands. It says down there in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart." That does not mean whatever you decide. That means as you grow in grace, you get God's heart, and when you get God's heart, you get God's purpose, and when you get God's heart, you get God's purpose, you get the faith to see it and the grace to give it, and then you give based on God's purpose for your life, not your own. That is what it is talking about.

Now look at Genesis 18:8: "And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." He did not eat with them. You know what you have a picture of here? You see, he gave the tithe back here in Genesis 14, and now he is growing to the place where he knows the tithe is not enough. So he sets up the example of an offering. He gives over and above what he just gave them, and he is not partaking of himself. He is not eating it himself because he is giving it to the Lord. That is what an offering is. An offering is something you give over and above the tithe that you give over and above that, and that is what he is at. He is growing. He is getting to the point in his life where he is getting there.

VII. Contrast: Abraham vs. Lot

By contrast, I want you to just take a second. You have got to see this. Remember, come back over to Genesis 19, just one page over, and just look at a great contrast. See the contrast of Lot here for a moment. Look at Genesis 19:1-3:

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

You see how my contrast is a morsel of bread versus a great feast? See the attitude different. Abraham says, "Let me do your morsel of bread," and he puts on a feast. Lot says, "Let me make you a big feast," and gives you the god-awfullest stuff you ever had to eat in your life. That is the difference. When I used to preach this message years and years ago, and I do not ever really preach it to you guys, but when I used to preach this message, I would build this thing along those two, those three areas that we talked about of attitude, and at every junction, I would stop, and I would just get real quiet. I would ask the people, "Are you a Lot or are you an Abraham?" You have got to see how quiet it gets. You see, we deceive ourselves. Lot had deceived himself. You see, Abraham had it all, but he knew and never forgot where he got it all, and he got it from God. Lot, on the other hand, wanted it all, did not care how he got it, and he just wanted to keep it. There you are.

I will show you something here. I love things like this. If you look at Genesis 19:1 and compare with Genesis 18:1, you will find that the Lord and two angels showed up with Abraham, but when those two angels go down to Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord does not go. You know why He does not go? Because the Lord is not going to have any fellowship when you are living in Egypt and Sodom. Now you better mark that down. I do not know how many colored pens we have got back there, but I would find every color there is and mark it every color you have got. The Lord did not go, and I guarantee you if you would have asked Lot how his relationship was with God, he would have told you it was the greatest thing in the world because that is what people say today. Lot never even knew that the Lord did not come down to be with him. Lot never understood that the Lord would not fellowship with him because there was rotten attitude in everything that he is doing and where he is living.

Now, for you and for me, I know none of you are homosexuals, at least I hope you are not, but I am going to tell you, Sodom and Gomorrah and Egypt in the Bible is a picture of the world. Pharaoh is a type of the worldly system, a type of the devil, and God would not, here is a child of God living down in Sodom who is at the values of Sodom. I am not talking about being a homosexual. The values of Sodom are completely against in every attitude that God had, and when he is living down in Sodom, when he is living out in the world, God will not go and fellowship with him. And yet if you just said, "How are you and God doing?" "Oh, God is so great. You ought to see me, the verse God gave me this morning." God would not even go down.

I will show you something else. You do not have to turn to this, but you need to mark this down. Jeremiah 44:26. When God changes your name, when I look at some of you and see your faces today, and I know that God changed your name, I know you have your struggles, and I am not saying you are perfect. I get thrown in my face all the time of how some of you who are doing the work of God are not perfect. God, I am glad that person does not follow me around, but I think we ought to follow them around. Nobody is perfect, but I will tell you what some of you have going for you that some of you others do not have going for you that I am not making any distinction of who you are or who you are not. I am just saying you have this in any church. Some of you with all your struggles and all your problems, and you have issues, and you are working through them, and you are going to have to work through them, and you have got some, you have got some things you have got to work on, some more serious than others. But there are

some of you in here, no matter where you are at in your life, I can guarantee you one thing: you are not going back to the world, no matter how bad it gets. You are not going back to that slop pit that God brought you out of, nor are you going to hang around with God's people or any other body else's people and make them the intimate friends of your life that are connected with that because that is exactly what Lot did. He vexed himself with a filthy conversation of this world, and that is what it means when God changes your name.

God told the nation of Israel back in Jeremiah 44:26, He said, "Do not go back to Egypt. I brought you out of Egypt. Do not go back because if you do go back, you are going back by yourself. I am not going with you." Yes, I will still be living inside you. You are not going to lose your salvation, but you and I will have blank zero fellowship. Now Israel never went back, but what the devil makes sure that he did, that give Israel as much problem, he gave them the mixed multitude who always wanted to go back. See how it works?

Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.

You go back to Egypt, you go by yourself. You can delude yourself like Lot did and think you and God are just fine, but when you have got one foot in the world and one foot with God, brother, you are deluding, you are in a delusion. When you are fooling around with things that you know are wrong in your life, and you do not want to fix them, and you want to keep on doing what you are doing, and you want to pretend that you have got this great thing, let me say something to you: when the angels went down to Lot down there in Sodom, the Lord would not go, and He would not go because God is not going back to those places. Yet I guarantee you if you had talked to Lot, and he would have told you, "Why, it is a great relationship with God." Are you an Abraham or are you a Lot?

Now you see how it all works. Faith and grace. You take that measure of faith that you get when you get saved like Abraham did, and you grow it, and through that growth process, God develops your faith, you get grace, and you become steadfast, unmovable. Somewhere in the process, God changes your name, and you are always abounding in the work of the Lord. Along with that faith and that grace comes not only the grace of you giving yourself to whatever God wants you to do, it gives you giving back to God based on what He has given to you. You see, we get the idea that your giving and my giving has to do with God needs it, like if you do not give your money, that angels are not going to eat next week. You are an idiot. Like everything else in the Bible, it is for our benefit of growing in grace, and that was the way God has chosen to further the work of this institution called the church. As you get faith to trust God, you also get the grace in giving to God and by yourselves other people in ministry. Faith in living, grace in giving.

VIII. Sacrificial Giving and True Riches

Some time passes, and Abraham now somewhere in here has become the friend of God through a process, just like every one of you and me started the day we got saved. Some of us make it, some of us do not. Most do not. Very few do. But now in Genesis 22, it all comes together, does

it not? Faith and faith and grace come full circle. Not only does he not have enough faith, not only does he have enough faith when God says, "I want you to give Me your son." Now keep in mind, he has waited for this son for many, many years. He went through the mistake of Hagar, impatient with God early on, but now God finally gave him that boy when he was 99 years old, and Abraham is not going to have another child. Now just when he got his heart's desire and he had what he wants, God says, "I want you to offer him up as a sacrifice to Me." Now there is your grace and faith in full operation. You see, he had enough faith to know that if God asked that, that was okay, but he had enough grace to give Him what was the desire of his heart and the love of his life, both of them in together.

It brings up a great point. Most of you never get here. Bless your heart. I feel sorry for you. Most will never get here. Most of God's people never get here because they never get that far down the grace route. But God will always test you with the things that you love. Most of God's people do not even know what I am talking about. You know why? Because you never get to that point in your life. You never get to that point in your life. Abraham did. Abraham now stands at the place in his life where he gave the tithe, then we saw the example of an offering, and now we are going to get a definition of sacrificial giving. It already goes back to 2 Samuel 24:24 where David wins a great battle, and he wants to buy this threshing floor and make an altar to God. Of course, the, he has just won a great battle, and the guy who owns the threshing floor says, "Well, you are the king. You have had a great battle. When God is on your side, you just take it." David says, "No, how much do you want for it? I am going to pay you for it." He says, "You are the king. No, you take it." David says, "Listen, I am going to make a sacrifice to the Lord, and for it to be a true sacrifice, listen to me, it has to cost me something." And he paid him and bought it. You know where that piece of ground is at today? That piece of ground today is where the Mosque of Omar on the Dome in Iraq over there, the Muslims have got it, but there is coming a time God is going to get it back.

You see, some of God's people are so worried about the economy. We have got our measly 401 whatever we have got thing, and in the last month, lost seventeen thousand dollars. I do not even look at it anymore. I think it is a joke. I mean, it is one of those things where you know you have got to prepare something down the line if you are smart, but at the end of the day, I mean, my faith is not an F thing. You know what? Some people, if they would have got that letter, they would have ruined their whole day. I looked at it, we laughed, I threw it away, and took the dog for a walk. He did for me in the neighbor's yard exactly what I thought about the whole process. Love that dog. But some of God's people are so worried about the economy. See, they have no faith. Now I am telling you right now, the economy is in a mess, and nobody is going to fix it. Somebody says, "Well, everybody has got their opinion." You know what? Get your money out of this and put it into gold. Buy silver. May I give you some good advice? My advice to you is to put your investment in the true riches of Luke 16:11. They are so worried about the economy, they have no faith, but they have got no grace either. They are so worried about the economy, but they have not got one worry about the lost person that lives across the street from them. See how it works? You want to make an investment? Try Psalms 119:127:

Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

Some people cannot figure out why they cannot get ahead in life. I will tell you why, because the Bible says in Luke 16:11:

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will ye commit to your trust the true riches?

I always loved it. Luke 16:11. I know that is just an accident that nobody, God was not behind that. You know what He says? He says, "You have not been faithful over the money God gave you. How am I going to commit to you the true riches?" There is your problem. There is your problem. You see the investments that we make in life.

Abraham had learned some things, and here is what he has learned. This is a great lesson now in your life and my life, and I know I say this all the time, people rub me about it, you are kidding me about it, but it is just part of my charm, just bear with me. I always say this is the greatest verse in the Bible, and then the next 13 hours is the greatest verse in the Bible. Do you not figure out to me they are all great verses in the Bible? I cannot just decide on that day which one of the other. You are so stupid you cannot see that. I mean, come on, give me a break. For your life and my life, for your life and my life as Christians, I am going to give you the two greatest verses in all of the Bible for your life, bar none, joking aside, right on the money, the true greatest verses in the Bible. This is what Abraham learned. The first one will fit into your life and my life and just about everything that it does. It is Romans 8:28. It is probably the greatest single verse in the Bible for you and for me. It simply says:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

If you can ever wrap your head around that verse, get that verse that it works for you, God will change your name, and you will be something else. Most of God's people cannot. We get into bad situations because we make some bad, stupid choices that does not, and because we get a lot of pressure from a lot of people how bad we are, how stupid we are, and maybe we were stupid. It does not ever change the fact that God will take the very dumb things that you and I have done and turn them around to the very victory God wants to give you if you can get that verse right there. That does not mean the process will not be painful. It does not mean you will not have to deal with some things. It simply will mean what it says, that He will, He will take all things, all things, and work them to your good who are called, here it comes, "according to his purpose." See that thing, "purpose"? That is the same word "purpose" over there. That is "purpose in your heart." You know what that word means in the Greek? It means purpose. It means the same thing in the Greek. It does not in Swahili, and I speak Swahili.

He learned some things. We have already seen that he fulfills Abraham, just in our Old Testament study. We know now he fulfills the three requirements of 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, does he not? He gives cheerfully. He gives as he purposes in his heart, loving God, and he gives God, he gets everything right, everything right.

Now let me show you the second verse. You see, the first verse is unconditional, but the second verse is conditional, and it is found over there in 2 Corinthians 9:8. Here is what he says:

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

When we can claim that, and we can see that, that is the second greatest promise in the Bible, but it is conditional. Let us put it in its entirety here, going back to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8:

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Now there it is. The first thing he says there is, "God is able." Somebody says, "Well, you do not understand, right now we are just not able to give." No, you do not understand, God is able. He never asked you if you were able. He asked you if you were willing. God is able. You want all grace to abound towards you? That sounds like a good deal to me. God is able. God is able to do everything. Why? Because God is able. What is He able to do in this case? "To make all grace abound toward you." He likes that word "abound." He talked about last week abounding in the work of the Lord. Now he talks about abounding in grace. Now that is a, that is a, that is a financial institution to get involved in, "that ye always having all sufficiency." He is not done yet, "in all things." You see, God will not do what Obama did. Obama went to GM, he got into a mess, he went into the bailouts, and now we are seeing how that worked, are we not? We are seeing the companies that he put money in went bankrupt, took 500 million dollars of our money, took vacations with it, and saying, "Oops," and nothing will ever be done. You see, he is not smart enough to figure out that when you get into a financial mess, you usually got into a financial mess because you have not done what is right with it. Throwing money on top of it to make it okay never fixes the problem. So God will not bail us out when we get into problems without us getting the right process in our life to get back. It is just that simple. God is able, yes, He is, "to make all grace abound toward you," certainly He can, "that you always have all sufficiency," absolutely, "in all things," yes, He does. "My God shall supply all your need according to Christ Jesus." But that verse is conditional, 2 Corinthians 9:8 on 2 Corinthians 9:6 and 2 Corinthians 9:7. That verse says you can have all the grace and the sufficiency and all things and never lack for anything, but it is conditional on your giving back to God through your growth in faith and your growth in grace, i.e., going back to the life of Abraham, growing in faith and growing in grace.

You see, some of God's people just never get it, and I do not preach on it. Maybe I should. Maybe I am guilty of it for not saying more about it, but you know what? I figured that you stick around long enough, you will pick it up or you will not. But maybe it is my problem. Maybe I should not. But God's people never get, they never understand why they get out of the mess they are in. They have never figured out that 90 percent of your income with God's blessings will go a lot farther than 100 percent of your income without God's blessing, and they never understand the consequences. They think it is no big deal. Hey, my friend, Malachi 3:8 says:

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

I will not even give you the next verse that talks about, that talks about God putting a curse on you because you are stealing from Him. I want you to sleep tonight. You know the answer of most of God's people's financial issues is not getting a financial advisor, though many people need to, if they have to. But I am going to tell you something, in reality, it is just not, it is just starting to do what is right with what God already gives you, and that is why God will not fix it. Financial irresponsibility. Then he says, "that you may abound to every good work."

IX. The Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem

The last two or three weeks, I probably have gotten more compliments on those two sermons than in a long time. We talked about the resurrection. We talked about the glory of God, the resurrection body, all those things, and it is a great hoop-roop time. But I want to tell you something, to me, I cannot speak for you, when I said today is just as exciting when I said last two weeks because that is just as true. It is just as true. But we have a habit of picking the things that we like because they do not really smack us, but when it smacks us, we do not like it. Well, how do you like this one? This is just as exciting as the last one. I mean, it is just that simple.

Very quickly, the second issue here that is concerning the collection of the saints in 1 Corinthians 16:1. Here is what has happened down in Jerusalem. The Christians down there are going through a really tough time, and I think this is very significant that we learned this. They are going through a very, very bad time, and the churches, the churches are taking up money to send down to them because they are going through such a tough time. All the other churches are doing it. He has got to tell the church of Corinth, "You need to get on board with this."

Here is what is happening. The reason why they are having such a bad time, if you do not know this already, when all this thing changed over into the New Testament, the Christians at Jerusalem had a really tough time buying into dumping the Old Testament, getting into the New Testament, and they are struggling back and forth. Where the church of Antioch and the church at Corinth and Paul was going out and doing missionary trips, you do not see any missionary trips going out from Jerusalem. They are staying all collectively together. They meet with Paul, and James seems to be the head down there, and they meet with Paul. Paul explains with them, and they give Paul the right hand of fellowship, and they say, "You are doing what you need to do. You go do it. We will go back to Jerusalem." But they simply never do anything. This is why they have got the trouble they have got. This is why they have got the troubles they have got because they were not doing anything. This is why they have got, so what does he do? He gets all the other churches to help him out because God is good, and God gives. He gets all the other churches to help him out and send it down there, hoping that they will get their head together and simply say, "Wow, they are helping us. We need to do what they are doing." That is the whole purpose behind this. That is what he is trying to do. So God sends them a disaster, and hopefully, in the relief that they get through the New Testament church, they will, they will get it together. But you know what the tragedy is? They did not. They did not, just like a lot of God's people did.

So you know what happens next? Oh, this is a wonderful history lesson. You see, they could not buy into the gospel, so they would not get into doing what God wants them to do. God sent them people down there. God sent money down there. Even after they had not done what is right, God still, because that is what God does. Finally, God says, "You want to stay down there?" And do you not remember that in the tribulation period, Jerusalem is called what? Sodom and Egypt. He says, "You want to stay down there in that mess? Okay." You know what He does next? In 70 AD, because they would not go out on their own, He sends Titus down, the Roman emperor. In 70 AD, Titus slaughters about 600,000 of them, crucifies them upside down on the road going out of town, and you know what the Jews do? They scatter out of there, and they start doing what is right. I.e., learn the message today. Do not, I mean, it is okay if you do not, but do not then scratch your head and say, "I wonder why we cannot ever get anywhere. I wonder why we keep having all these problems." I mean, hello, put it together. Two and two, you are getting six. Two and two is four. Hit verse, the promise, the second greatest promise was that you will have all sufficiency and all grace.

This church has an obligation, like when Charlie's church went south through the tornado, we responded. We have our missionaries that we take care of, the Bush family. We have had other missionaries come through. That is our responsibility. We take care of our own people when they legitimately have issues. Operation Homeless is nothing more than us taking of the abundance that we have and doing it to somebody else. 30 measly peanut butter sandwiches that means the world to somebody who does not eat. Yet I guarantee you in churches across this city, hopefully not in this church, there are people that say, "I am not doing that." And what you look in your pantry, and you have got 600 pounds of food, and you are wearing 200 of it this morning.

You see, my ability to trust God in what He says is my faith. My ability through that faith to have the grace to give back to God with what He requires, that is grace. It starts with the day you get saved, and God gives you that measure of faith, and just like Abraham, you struggle, but you start a process, and at some point, God changes your name, and you start doing what the Bible says, and you start growing in faith, growing in grace, and God brings you along right with it to the point that God changes your name, and someday you walk through that process where you pass the tithe, you pass the offering, and you realize that your purpose in life, God gave you that job that you have got. He has given you everything that He has given you because that is really the bottom line at the end of the day. It all belonged to Him anyhow, and the sooner you figure that out, the sooner I figure that out, the better off we are going to be.

X. Conclusion and Application

You see, this was the church at Corinth's problem. This is most churches' problems. Pastors, I think, respond to it wrongly. They beg. They baby. Man, just shut the place down. God is always looking. You know what? Some of God's people lost their job because and did not do right with God. What makes you think in time you will not lose your church? Once you look back and you see what God did with Lot, God did with the nation of Israel, we are not any different. We have an obligation as God's people to get into this thing and do what God has called us to do, and you abuse it. Do not take it. I am not talking to you now. I am talking to God's people in general. You

do not do what is right with it. It is a reason why God's people are in dead churches today, getting nothing from the Bible that they have got to find things to get excited about, and maybe it comes down to the wallpaper on the wall because God takes from you. You do not take care of what God does for you. You find yourself in those situations. Never find yourself in a position in your life, ladies and gentlemen, where you are not growing in faith, growing in grace. It is the only thing that will keep you where God wants you to be. Just as Abraham struggled through that relationship, through the growth process, we will too. But at the end of the day, you will wind up being God's friend, and that will be worth the trip.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Lord, I thank You for this message today, and Lord, it was right in the scheme of things where we are just going, and maybe it is something we needed to hear. Lord, I pray that Your people will do with it as Your Spirit tells them to do. They know where I am at with it. Most, I already did. I love this place, but you know what? I do not love any place that does not love God, and I do not want to be any place that does not do what God wants it to do. Just that simple. Lord, I pray, Father, that You will take today and You will bless the people's lives. Give us tonight as we go into that mission, and Jimmy preaches, and Woody gives his testimony, and Danny leads the singing, and Bubba plays, that the Word of God will go forth. Lord, as our people go out and pass out the tracts and pass out the sandwiches and pass out the coats and the socks and tell people how much we love them and by our demonstration of giving out of our liberality back to them, and Lord, we just pray that You will just continue to bless this church, raise up men and women that are Christ-like in every aspect of their lives, and Lord, we will be thankful. We will praise You in Jesus' name for His sake we ask it. Amen.