

- The only 15 letter word that can be spelled without repeating a letter is uncopyrightable.
- Pound for pound, hamburgers cost more than new cars.
- An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.
- "I am." is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.
- The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.
- There are an average of 178 sesame seeds on a McDonald's Big Mac bun.
- The Bible has been translated into Klingon.
- Elephants can't jump. Every other mammal can.

Now when the Apostle Paul said to his readers: "we want you to know" he wasn't talking about trivia. He was talking about information. He was referring to a specific experience that they had had. He was not talking generally. He was talking specifically. Paul knew who he was writing too. He was writing to Christians. He was writing to those who had been converted from a pagan religion to faith in the risen Christ. They had swapped their religion for a relationship. At the heart of the Christian faith are not a bunch of rules but a living, resurrected person. Jesus of Nazareth the Christ of God.

Verse 7 is the key verse here. **"But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also."**

What is this act of grace they are to excel at? It is the grace of giving. The word grace means unconditional love. They are to grow in their unconditional giving. Giving, for the Christian is a way of life. It is not an option. We are to give ourselves to God and others.

Paul throughout all his writings used nine different words to refer to giving but the one he used the most was grace.

The giving of yourself is an indication that you possess the divine gift of grace within your heart. Paul says there are indications and evidences of giving motivated by grace.

It shows an understanding of God. (2 Corinthians 8:1-9)

It shows an understanding of Community. (2 Corinthians 8:10 – 9:5)

It shows an understanding of One's self. (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

Giving is proof of love. You cannot love without giving. God is love. Therefore, God is a giver. All good things come from Him. When it comes to giving there is one gift that stands out. There is one gift that rises above all others. There is one gift that is worth more than all other gifts combined. There is one gift that keeps on giving. It is the gift of a king. And it is a gift for every one of us. It is the gift of a Savior. A Redeemer. A Lord. For God so loved the world that he **gave** his only begotten Son.

Jesus left His heavenly throne. He laid aside the glory that was His. He came to us. He **gave** His life on the cross of Calvary that we might be redeemed and reconciled to God. He **gives** us pardon and peace. He **gives** us hope and joy. He **gives** us strength for living and the assurance of eternal life. He **gives** us life. He has **given** us blessings beyond measure.

The **Giving** of ourselves to God and others is the response of gratitude for all that Christ has **given** us. Gratitude takes three forms: A feeling in the heart. An expression in words. And a giving in return. You cannot love without giving.

God has **given** us the privilege, the indescribable honor, of presenting our bodies to the Holy Spirit. To be His dwelling place on earth. If you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, then yours is a holy body. It is a **gift** from God.

Our infinite God gives all of Himself to each of us. He doesn't distribute Himself so that each of us may have a part of Him. No, He gives all of Himself to all of us.

We are never more like God than we are when we are **giving**. We **give** just as Jesus **gives** Himself to us each day. We **give** of ourselves. Our time. Our talents. And our resources. And we do so gladly. Just as Jesus willingly **gave** Himself for us.

A missionary asked a new convert, “Pablo, if you had a hundred sheep, would you give fifty of them to the Lord’s work?” “You know I would gladly give them,” he replied. “Pablo, if you had fifty cows, would you give twenty-five to the Lord’s work?” “Of course, I would be more than happy to do that,” came the confident reply. Once again, the missionary asked, “Pablo, if you had two pigs, would you give one of them to the Lord’s work?” Pablo said, “That’s not fair! You know I have two pigs.”

Are you a giver? Have you ever heard the saying that **WHEN IT COMES TO GIVING SOME PEOPLE WILL STOP AT NOTHING?**

How often have you said, “If I had then I would... Fill in the blank. If I had then I would... If we don’t give from what we have what makes us think we would give if we had more? If we are not faithful over a little how can God trust us with much?

The Corinthian Christians had made a promise about a gift to help the needy saints in Jerusalem. They were suffering from a famine. Paul had taken their promise seriously. In fact, he told the Macedonians what the Corinthians had promised to do, and they wanted to join in too. Paul had boasted about the Corinthian Church. He boasted about how they were stirred up to get in on the action.

Now, though, there is a problem. The Corinthians have not carried out their promise.

What good is a promise if it is not fulfilled? Is having good intentions enough? Does just meaning to do something count? Is it just the thought that counts?

Don’t let the broken promises of this world keep you from believing the promises of God. God will always act according to His promises.

A.W. Tozer wrote, “**We make a lot of promises to others and many promises are made to us. Sadly, too many promises are broken on both ends of the equation. God, however, never breaks a promise.**” God, however, never breaks a promise.

God says, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you," and He meant exactly that. So, whatever you are going through, you can lean heavily upon the promises of God. They never fail. They will never fail because GOD NEVER FAILS!

We live in an era of unkept promises. Nations sign important treaties and then break them at will. Peace accords are written and then are thrown away when it is expedient. We intend to keep a promise but then fulfilling that promise gets hard, so we walk away.

We who are God's people are to be known for keeping our promises. A promise from God is a statement we can depend on with absolute confidence.

Here are 11 promises for the Christian to claim.

- **God's presence -- "I will never leave you." (Heb. 13:5)**
- **God's protection -- "I am your shield" (Gen. 15:1)**
- **God's power -- "I will strengthen you." (Isa. 41:10)**
- **God's provision -- "I will help you" (Isa. 41:10)**
- **God's purposes -- "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil" (Jer. 20:11)**
- **God's rest -- "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28)**
- **God's cleansing -- "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)**
- **God's goodness -- "No good thing will He withhold from them that work uprightly".**

Faith is trusting in the promises of God. Faith, as Paul saw it, was a living, breathing thing. It was something that leads to surrender and obedience to the will of God.

Oswald Chambers once wrote, "**Faith is unutterable trust in God, trust that never dreams that He will not stand by us.**"

Faith does not waver. Faith stands on the promises of God. Have you heard the song standing on the promises of God? The first verse is:

**Standing on the promises of Christ my King.
Through eternal ages let His praises ring.
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing.
Standing on the promises of God.**

Giving has nothing to do with what we have. It has everything to do with who owns our lives. It's not about surrendering possessions. It's not about our time, talent, and treasure. It's about the giving of ourselves. Once we have given ourselves to God everything else will fall into place. It's about Christlikeness.

Amy Carmichael wrote,

**"Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, O Flame of God."**

Did you notice what the FIRST thing the Macedonian Christians gave was? It was themselves. **"and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."**

We are challenged to give ourselves away. To "give up" ourselves. We don't belong to ourselves. We belong to God. As Luther says in his explanation of the third article: **"He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."**

Once the matter of ownership is settled the other issues become a lot easier. One time a skeptic said to a preacher, "I can't stand this Christianity business. All I ever hear from you Christians is give, give, give." The preacher thought a minute and said, "That's about the best description of Christianity, I have ever heard!" It is about giving. God giving Himself to us and our giving ourselves to others.

New Testament commentator William Barclay wrote, "**Love never calculates; love never thinks how little it can decently give; love's one desire is to give to the uttermost limits; and, when it has given all it has to give, it still thinks the gift is too little. We have not even begun to be Christian true believer if we think of giving to Christ, and to His church in terms of as little as we respectably can.**" How much of yourself have you given to the Lord? That's the core issue. Not only in giving but in serving, and loving, and forgiving, and everything else. The core issue is who is in charge? Who owns you? This is the same church who had struggled with giving themselves to God before. Paul had said, "**You are not your own. You are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**"

The Macedonian Christians, the example Paul uses for the Corinthian Christians, had discovered a freedom and a grace unknown to them. That is until they gave themselves away. Only by understanding God's grace can we come to understand His empowerment and provision in spite of circumstances.

These poor Christians literally pleaded to be included in the giving program. When we experience the grace of God in our lives, we will not use circumstances as an excuse to refrain from acts of love, We will use our circumstances as an excuse to serve! The Macedonians are examples of grace-full living; they show us what a person is like who knows God very intimately.

They Gave Out Of Their Poverty. (Vv. 1-2a).

They Gave With A Liberality. (V. 2b).

They Gave Beyond Their Ability. (Vv. 3-4).

They Gave Very Unselfishly. (Vv. 5-6).

So, what motivated them to give themselves away? What made them examples of what Christians are to be like? They too had an example they were imitating ... **THEIR GIVING WAS INSPIRED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.** Jesus Christ is the preeminent example for us. That is true whether it is serving, suffering, or sacrifice. Jesus was motivated by love and was sacrificial in all things. We now, as followers, share in Christ and His character. We were totally bankrupt but now we are spiritually alive and heirs with Jesus! That means we are freed from ourselves to be like the living and loving God.

**All to Jesus I surrender,
All to him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust him,
In his presence daily live.**

**I surrender all,
I surrender all,
All to thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.**

**All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at his feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
Take me, Jesus, take me now.**

**All to Jesus I surrender;
Make me, Savior, wholly thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that thou art mine.**

**All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to thee,
Fill me with thy love and power,
Let thy blessing fall on me.**

**All to Jesus I surrender;
Now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory, to his name!**

“I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 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 by his poverty might become rich.”