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**FRIENDS MISSION**

## The Cycle of Gratitude: How God Funds His Work and Brings Joy to His People!

Christianity burst across the world in the first century. This movement was immeasurably powerful, and its light penetrated the darkest corners of the Roman Empire and beyond. Christian emissaries were sent to the ends of the earth and among those who followed Jesus, everyone had enough.

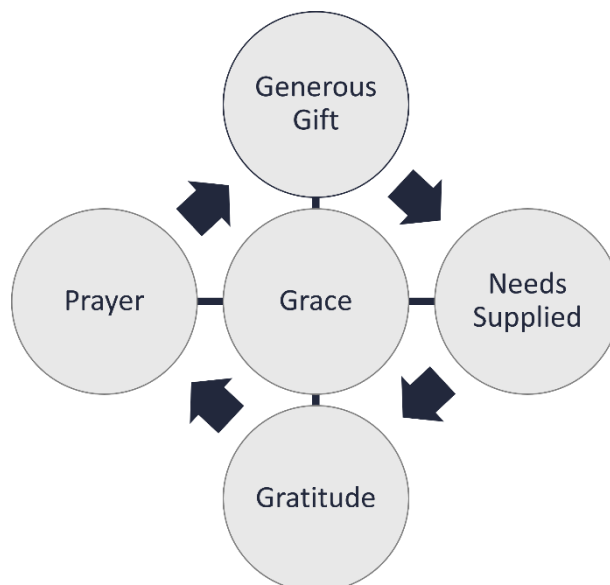
How was this extraordinary undertaking funded? Not taxes. Not apportionments. Not even fees. It was funded because God's people responded to God's grace with gratitude and generosity.

A movement happens when God's people finance it.

Paul describes the process like this in 2 Corinthians 9:12-15.

"This **service that you perform** (*financial support*) is not only **supplying the needs of the Lord's people** but is also overflowing in many **expressions of thanks to God**. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your **generosity** in sharing with them and with everyone else. **And in their prayers for you** their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing **grace** God has given you. **Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!**"

God's grace, as in all things, is at the center of God's work. His grace cultivates gratitude which generates generosity which then resources God's people, which in turn engenders more gratitude and generosity. If we were to draw a picture of it, it would look like this:



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Read the Corinthians passage again, you'll notice a disposition of joy. Paul is aware that generosity is not the default disposition of the typical human. Yet, Paul knows that the most carefree place a human can live is in absolute trust – that God is good and will take care of them. This dependence demonstrates itself through thankful obedience through which God's grace shines. Grace experienced grows into joy.

In other words, generosity glorifies God, expands his Kingdom, deepens our own joy, and serves as a channel of God's provision for others (which is also fun). That's why Paul could say, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

When this kind of financial openness reigns, it eradicates much of the disfunction that often surrounds the exchange of money. Instead, it promotes:

- Faith over fear
- Relationships over transactions
- Impartiality over favoritism
- Partnership over paternalism
- Cooperation over competition
- Together over separate
- Generosity over stock-piling
- Multiplication over addition
- Blessing over deal-making

So, how does a leader unleash generosity in those they serve? They equip by:

- **Modeling** gratitude and financial generosity characterized by abandonment and joy.
- **Challenging** them to cultivate a disposition of gratitude by identifying and publicly acknowledging God's grace.
- **Providing** specific needs their generosity can meet. This moves them to experience the power of their generosity in the work.
- **Teaching** on generosity without apology. A leader who does this understands they are inviting people to experience the fullness of life through practicing radical generosity. (Just a note, sometimes people need a starting point. Of course, "something more than you are now giving" is an appropriate response. However, pointing them towards 10% is a good target – and it has biblical precedents.)
- **Encouraging** them to pray, "How do you want me to live out generosity?" God will lead his people if they will turn generosity into a spiritual exercise. If they listen and follow, God will lead them, provide plenty for his people and create inspiring spiritual momentum.

The vision of God's Kingdom is one that provides his people with their most beautiful life. We experience this life when money becomes a tool for advancing the Gospel and in service to others rather than a way to leverage our own power, security or comfort. It is a life of trust and abandonment to God's care and provision, illustrated to the world through the generosity of God's people.

It's the kind of life that can launch a movement.