



Two Blank Checks

Your Claim on Him and His Claim on You

by Chris Tiegreen

Long ago, I wrote out a blank check. I dated it, signed it, and directed it to a certain party, but I left the amount and description lines completely empty.

I remember the night well. I had a choice between managing my own account and handing it completely over to the most trustworthy Manager in the universe. I was told there was no in-between option, so I gave my account up to greater hands than my own.

It was only right. I would have squandered it all pretty quickly. In fact, I had already done a pretty thorough job of that. I needed a bailout. I did what any bankrupt person would do.

There have been times, in my more unstable moments, when I've tried to get my hands on that check, but it won't happen. Its Holder is merciful and has promised not to abuse my vulnerability, but He won't give it back to me. It was a sacred transaction. You can't undo those.

Even so, I've acted as if the account is mine to manage. I've gotten in the way of the Manager's transactions and spending decisions. I've resisted the fiscal responsibility He's tried to maintain, and I've often wasted the allowances He has given me. Though I signed everything over to Him, I've tried to implement my own management philosophy whenever I think I'm capable—and whenever self-interest seems to dictate.

That's one of the most foolish things a person can do. Why? Because self-interest always translates into self-sabotage when the King of the universe is managing your account.

Let me explain. I've learned over the years that I wasn't the only one who signed a blank check that night. The King of the universe also signed a blank check over to me. He gave me His name to use on that check whenever I needed something. The only condition was that the practical application of His blank check to me would depend on the practical application of my blank check to Him. The more I keep my hands off my account, the more He frees up from His account for me to use.

That's essentially what Jesus said to His disciples when He declared this outrageous exchange: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (John 15:7). In other words, the more of our lives we lay down for Him, the more of His life He lays down for us.

That doesn't mean that we can have a partial salvation. In saving us, He laid down everything—His whole life. But the outworking of His life in us only practically shows up as we depend on that exchange. When we surrender totally to Him, He fills in the blank of our lives with Himself, His power, and His purposes. When we only surrender partially to Him, there's less of a gap for Him to fill in. In practice, we receive only as much of Him as we leave room for.

Picture it like a bottle that can be filled with either oil or water. The more water that's in it, the less room there is for oil, and the more oil, the less water. Some of each in the bottle results in an unmixed "mixture"; the two elements compete against each other, and there's little use for the combination. The higher the percentage of one element, the less the other element interferes.

That's why God is so emphatically and consistently opposed in Scripture to pride and self-sufficiency and so attracted to humility and weakness. That's also why so much of His power flowed through Jesus—the One who "emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:7 NASB)—as a human being, and why humble people like David, Daniel, Esther, and John the Baptist were used so mightily. There was no human competition against God in the life of Jesus, and very little in the lives of those other great servants. Instead, there was a lot of room for the oil of the Spirit to dominate. When they gave God the blank check of their lives, it remained blank for Him to use.

That's the kind of life in which God's answers to prayer flow freely. When the blank check we give Him is truly His to enjoy, the blank check He gives us is truly ours to enjoy. He entrusts His kingdom fruit to those who have trusted Him enough to surrender their lives to His lordship.

When you claim His promise to give "whatever you ask" in His name, remember also that He claims your promise to give whatever He asks. The two blank checks work together to create a very substantial and influential account.