

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 8TH-9TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

GENEROUS MACEDONIANS (2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-6)

One of the major objectives of Paul's third missionary journey was to raise money for the poor Christians in the region of Judea (1 Cor. 16:1-4).

- Paul wanted Gentile churches to help support the Jewish Believers in need (Rom. 15:25-28), and labored to see the churches he helped establish practice regular generosity to meet the needs of the church at large.

THE CORINTHIANS WEREN'T DOING THEIR PART.

Like many Christians, the Corinthians had committed to give a certain amount, but had failed to keep those commitments (v. 10).

- The cause of their lack of generosity was their lack of spiritual maturity and commitment.
- When Christians are not spiritually mature or wholly committed to the Lord, they're not generous.
- Christian generosity is a spiritual issue.

The churches of Macedonia were congregations in the northern part of Greece (v. 1, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, Acts 16-17).

- These were churches that had experienced affliction and extreme poverty, and yet these factors had in no way limited their generosity (vs. 2-3).
- They willingly gave according to their ability and even beyond their ability!

It wasn't that Paul and his ministry team had to beg, coerce, or manipulate these Believers to give—the Macedonian Christians earnestly begged for the privilege of sharing what they had for this ministry (v. 4).

- Why were they so eager to give to this work? Because they had first given themselves fully to the Lord (v. 5). God doesn't just want our money—He wants all of us.

If we have given ourselves first fully to the Lord, we will be willing to give what He's entrusted us with to His work and purposes on earth.

- Everything we have has been given to us by God: we don't really own anything; we've simply been given resources to steward/manage (1 Tim. 6:7-8).
- Of all 36 of Jesus' parables, 17 were about stewardship.

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt. 6:21)

- Regularly giving to the work of God in Christian ministry is a privilege that realigns our priorities and gives us an opportunity to trust God in our finances.
- It's an opportunity to participate in God's work and see Him bless others through us.
- It's a preemptive strike against materialism, greed, and stinginess, which are simply wicked idolatry, selfishness, and a lack of trust in God's provision.

After this amazing example of generosity was set by the churches of Macedonia, Paul urged Titus to complete the task of gathering the remaining financial support pledged from the church in Corinth (v. 6).

- Ironically, Corinth was one of the wealthiest, most prosperous cities in all of Greece, while the Macedonians lived in extreme poverty.
- Affluence can be a dangerous spiritual condition.

"I'LL BE GENEROUS WHEN I CAN AFFORD TO BE!"

This is nothing more than a myth that many tell themselves to procrastinate their generosity.

- Half of the global population lives on less than \$6.86 USD per day, and the U.S. is in the top 7 when it comes to average annual income.
- Yet, American Christians only give around 2.5% of their net income to the work of the Church (Barna, 2022).
- According to the World Giving Index, the most generous nations in the world are Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Myanmar, Ghana, Uganda, Kosovo, and Thailand.
- Why? Because those who are poor often know how it feels to go without and be in need and they're willing to go without in order to see certain needs met for others.

GIVING IS A MATTER OF THE HEART.

If we refuse to do anything about meeting the needs of our local church, the poor and needy, and the work of the gospel (missions), we are revealing that at our core there is a spiritual sickness called selfishness and greed.

- A lack of generosity has nothing to do with our income level or tax bracket: it has everything to do with our trust in God and our priorities.

A TEST OF GENUINE LOVE (2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-15)

A natural byproduct and component of Christian maturity is generosity (v. 7).

- As we excel and grow as a follower of Jesus in our faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, and love, we're also to grow in the act of grace known as giving.
- Giving is an "act of grace"—it's a gracious gift that God gives us where we get to participate in being a blessing to those around us (Acts 20:35).

Paul isn't commanding or demanding that these Christians give (v. 8).

- Rather, Paul is using this subject as a way of testing the genuineness of their love (James 2:16).
- Paul wants them to want to give!
- The Macedonians giving out of their poverty set a challenging standard for giving: only love for God and others would enable the Corinthians to step up and "pass the test."

Why do we give? Because we're followers of Jesus, and He set the example by giving up everything so that we might become rich (v. 9).

- Jesus left His throne in glory in an act of self-sacrifice and exchanged all the wealth of His deity for the poverty of the incarnation.
- God so loved the world that He...gave! (Jn. 3:16)

- Love that isn't willing to sacrifice and give isn't really love.

Apparently, the Corinthian church had been planning since the previous year to give, but had never really finished the task (vs. 10-11).

- We can have an "eager desire" and great intentions to someday give to the work of the Lord, but unless we actually pull the trigger and do it, we'll just keep kicking the can down the road!
- Today is a good day to give.

God is more concerned about the quality, eagerness, and motivation of our giving than He is our amount (v. 12, Lk. 21:1-4)

- If we have a surplus available for someone else's need, it's right for us to love them well and give generously to meet their needs (vs. 13-14).
- We never know when we might find ourselves in a place of need.

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT (2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24)

One reason some Christians aren't financially generous is a lack of trust and accountability present in some churches or ministries.

- Some Christians want to give to the work of the Lord, but they're not sure if the money they give is going to the work of the Lord (or going someplace else).
- It's right to have safeguards and accountability.

Titus was a trustworthy brother who was going to handle the financial gifts and make sure the funds were administered appropriately for the glory of the Lord (vs. 16-19).

- Paul says this as a precaution to safeguard himself and his ministry against those who might accuse him of mishandling the money (v. 20).
- We have to be so incredibly careful with how we handle God's money (v. 21).

While Paul is specifically speaking of being cautious, trustworthy, and wise about handling ministry funds, how we handle our personal finances is a spiritual issue as well.

- If we see the money we've been entrusted with as "God's money," are we giving careful thought to do what is right with God's money? Or are we being irresponsible and reckless in our spending, debt, and our management (or lack thereof)?

It wasn't just Titus handling the money on his own, there were other Christian brothers with him who were messengers of the churches (vs. 22-23).

- All of the safeguards, the accountability, and the diligent care to handle this money were for the glory of Christ.
- It gives God glory when Christians handle money well—it brings reproach when we don't.

WHY DO WE GIVE?

- Because as followers of Jesus, we're to follow His example and He gave everything (v. 9).
- Because giving to the work of God is a wonderful privilege that gives us the opportunity to see God bless others through us (v. 4).
- Because our treasure is in heaven and we're using the earthly resources we've been given to invest in eternity (Mt. 6:21).

HOW AND WHERE DO WE GIVE?

- We give to the needs of our local church (Acts 2:44-45, Gal. 6:6, 1 Tim. 5:17-18).
- We give to the needs of the poor (Luke 3:11).
- We give to the work of spreading the gospel through missions (1 Cor. 9:14).
- We are to give joyfully and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).
- We are to give generously (Luke 6:38).
- We are to give as an act of worship (Prov. 3:9-10).

WHEN DO WE GIVE?

- If you're waiting to give until you reach a certain income level or tax bracket, you're probably never going to give.
- A lack of generosity has nothing to do with our income level or tax bracket: it has everything to do with our love and trust in God and our priorities.
- Right now is a really good time to give—God cares less about quantity, and more about quality.

TO WHOM DO WE GIVE?

- We first give ourselves fully to the Lord (v. 5).
- If we have given ourselves first fully to the Lord, we will then be willing to give what He's entrusted us with to His work and purposes on earth.
- Giving is simply a matter of the heart and an indication of whether or not we actually trust God and believe His Word.

WHY WOULD WE NOT GIVE?

- Mismanagement of God's money
- Greed, idolatry, and materialism
- Selfishness or a lack of love
- A stubborn, unbelieving, argumentative heart
- Lack of spiritual maturity
- Lack of trust in God's provision
- Do you trust Him? Does He have all of you?