

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 9TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

GENEROSITY (2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-6)

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP

Paul had been collecting a special offering for the poor Believers in Jerusalem and used other churches as an example to the Corinthians to encourage them in giving.

- His words indicate that **the opportunity and desire to give is a gift of the grace of God. The opportunity and desire to help is not a burden, but something God has graciously given us.**

HISTORICALLY POOR AND AFFLICTED

Historical writings tell us the Macedonians were in extreme poverty because the Romans drained the wealth from the once prosperous homeland of Alexander the Great.

- Paul tells us that the Christians in Macedonia faced a severe trial (8:2), and in other writings (Acts 17:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:4), **they faced many afflictions in their poverty.**

GIVE WITH A JOYFUL HEART (2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-8)

With everything stacked against them, still **“their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity”** (v. 2).

- The Macedonians didn't make excuses and weren't begrudgingly giving. Instead, they really **desired to give**, and they **saw it as a privilege to take part in what God was doing in their area.**

“I CAN TESTIFY THAT...”

They gave **“according to...and even beyond their ability.”** It wasn't about the amount they gave but the amount they gave was great in proportion to what they had (Luke 21:1-4).

- Taking part in God's work through giving was **not just for those with adequate means**, and no one begged them to give. Instead, **they begged to be a part of the work that was taking place.**

“THEY GAVE THEMSELVES FIRST TO THE LORD”

It is more of a spiritual issue than it is a financial issue.

- If there is a disconnect in us giving financially it may be that there is a disconnect in us fully trusting the Lord. **If we have fully given ourselves to the Lord, then God's grace will naturally flow through us in seeing and meeting needs.**

IS IT THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS?

The Corinthians may have thought about giving and fully intended to do so until doubts and fears crept in.

- **Our well wishes and thoughts are only useful with action to back them up. We cannot see a need and only wish it would get better without doing what is necessary to provide a solution** (James 2:16).

AN ACT OF GRACE (2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-15)

POINTING OUT BLIND SPOTS

Paul had just spoken in his letter to the Corinthians about these things that they are excelling in, so if they were truly excelling in faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, and love then it had been very short-lived.

- It is as if Paul said, **“You believe you are excelling in all of these areas but what about the topic of giving?”**

“I AM NOT SAYING THIS AS A COMMAND”

Paul does not want the Corinthians to give out of obligation or duty.

- He is essentially saying, **“Do not give because I told you to do so. Give joyfully as an expression of love and grace.”** Giving because of a command is not giving at all. **We are not to give begrudgingly out of obligation but out of a cheerful heart.**

“TESTING THE GENUINENESS OF YOUR LOVE”

Giving measures the sincerity of our love.

- We are unable to claim to love someone without giving to help them. **“If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth”** (1 John 3:17-18).

THE GREATEST EXAMPLE

Paul uses the example of the Macedonian Church, then the example of Jesus to encourage the Corinthians to sacrificially give.

- Jesus left his throne to take on flesh and became poor while He was rich. Jesus never put aside or lost his riches. **Giving is not throwing riches away but repositioning wealth** (Matthew 6:19-21).

“BY HIS POVERTY YOU MIGHT BECOME RICH”

Paul answers the question before it was even asked: **Why would Jesus choose to become poor?** He accepted a humble life of poverty, without a home (Matthew 8:20), **for our sakes.**

- He **shared in our poverty so that we can share in His eternal heavenly wealth. We were spiritually bankrupt, and Jesus took our debt upon Him and made us co-heirs to a Kingdom.**

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Paul quotes Exodus 16:18 to illustrate the principle of **receiving what we need from God**, though some receive more and some less, and **then being open-handed with everything.**

- **Wealth and possessions in and of themselves are not evil** (1 Timothy 6:10) **and are a lot like manna, in that they are both from God and should not be hoarded.**

DILIGENCE (2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24)

“PRAISED AMONG ALL THE CHURCHES”

This section of writing is Paul's **“letter of recommendation”** (3:1-3) for Titus being entrusted to gather the collection.

- Titus and an unnamed brother were coming to the Corinthians to encourage them. **Titus and Paul were of the same heart towards the Corinthians**, so much so that **he was making the tough trip by his own choice.**

HONORING THE LORD

Paul took all precautions needed in the collecting and administering of funds to avoid scrutiny and **showed great wisdom in surrounding himself with trusted brothers so that accusations could not be made against him.**

- **He desired to honor the Lord Himself, by operating above reproach through the collecting of funds and by offering relief to the poor.**

TRANSPARENCY BEFORE GOD AND MEN

Paul reminds them of the work that will be accomplished to the glory of Christ because of their generosity, then asks them **to prove their love and affirm Paul's boasting of them by following through with giving.**

- **The Church must be diligent and transparent with finances because we are stewarding what is His to accomplish His work.**

BIBLICAL GENEROSITY

- **Everything we have is a gift of grace.** True generosity is not saying, *“This belongs to me but I'm willing to share,”* instead it is saying, *“Everything I have was given to me and because I freely received, I will freely give.”*
- **God has blessed us all, not so that we can hoard what He has given, but to go and be a blessing to all.**

HOW WE ARE TO GIVE

- **“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you”** (Matthew 6:1-4).