

"Giving Generously"

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II Corinthians 8:1-15

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Paul is talking to the church at Corinth. They have had all kinds of problems at Corinth and they wrote to Paul about these problems. Then Paul wrote them back. We know that Titus has been here. They had started something a year ago. During this time the churches that were in Judea were suffering terribly. They were in need of financial help. Paul and some of the other churches had gathered money and sent to the Jewish brothers that were in Jerusalem, to help them. That's the Christian thing to do. The people at Corinth were Gentile people and the people that needed help were Jewish people. Paul wanted them to know that we are all saved by the same grace and going to the same heaven. We are all worshiping the same God. If these folks had a need, then we need to help them.

We, Christians, overlook a lot of the needs that people have today; because we have been wronged so many times. You read about people giving their money to certain ministries and charities and a lot of times, we are deceived on what is being done with it. A lot of times we may see a great need that is out there but we think that it is beyond our reach. However, I don't think that it is beyond our reach. I think that there are ways that we can help people.

Paul wants the people at Corinth to know that they can make a difference in people's lives. They started this project to help the churches that were in Judea. They started a year ago but because of the division, the quarrels, and problems that they were having; they had put this project on hold and forgot about it. When problems arise in a church that is not dealt with correctly, we get our eyes off the goal. We get our eyes off where the real need is at. That is what the church here at Corinth had done. Paul is going to say some things here in II Corinthians, chapter eight; to encourage them that they need to pick up where they left off with their missionary project so that they can gather some financial help for the brothers and the sisters that were in Judea that were in need.

Why would Paul make this appeal? There is significance in giving that we don't ever look at. Sometimes we give because we think that we have to give. When they pass the plate around, we think that if we don't throw some money in there that the people sitting

beside us will think, "Well they didn't put any money in the offering." Sometimes we give out of our abundance and sometimes we may not have anything to give. Then on the flip side of that, some folks may have all kinds of money to give and they put it in there for the wrong reasons. Giving is a tremendous opportunity for us as individuals and for us as a church. It's a tremendous avenue for you and me to get to the place in our Christian life that we understand that material things really don't mean anything. When I give bountifully, then God is going to bless me. He does not bless me because I give, nor does He bless me for how much I give; but He blesses me because of the attitude that I have in giving.

I was in a church one time and there was a deacon sitting there close to where I was at and I was teaching a lesson on money. I made a statement, "It's not going to do any good if they pass the plate around and I throw in a hundred dollars when I could have just as easily thrown in a thousand dollars. Even though a hundred dollars is a lot of money, I could have thrown in a thousand dollars just as easy and I wouldn't have missed it a bit. We think that a hundred dollars is a lot and it is to me, but to a guy that's worth three million dollars or five million dollars; a hundred dollars is nothing." When I made this statement, "If you could have thrown in a thousand just as easy as you threw in a hundred, you might as well have kept your hundred." Do you know what he said? He said, "You're not going to get any Amen's on that around here preacher."

Our attitude about giving determines a lot about whom that we really are. We can't be stingy people. All we need in this life is all we need. We don't need more than we need. If I have my needs and you have your needs, then what do we need more for? If I have something to eat and my family has something to eat, they have a roof over their heads, we have clothes on our backs, and we have transportation; why do I need more? We don't! That's what this lesson is about.

In the first verse, Paul is going to use the churches in Macedonia. Macedonia was part of Greece and that area. Paul had already established churches around that area. The people at Corinth knew about these churches so Paul is going to use them as an example

that the church at Corinth could pattern them-selves after in their giving to the saints that are needy. When you read about the churches in the area of Macedonia, you will find out that they were very poor people.

In verse two, Paul uses the words, "trial of affliction," and "deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." When you read about poverty in the Greek, you will find out that it means these churches had nothing and had no prospect of getting anything. This is how poor that these churches in Macedonia were. Something happened here. Even though these churches were poor and the people in these churches were poor; the war had striped them of a lot of their wealth. What the war didn't take away; the Roman government taxed. The taxation was breaking them. Even though their wealth was gone and even though they didn't have any bank accounts; they had the love of God in their lives. When we have the love of God in our lives, that makes the difference.

In verse one, Paul says, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia." The word "wit" means to think or I want you to know something. He says here that I want you to know about the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. He is saying to them, I want you to think about this and use them for an example. You can pattern your giving after these churches in Macedonia. He continues to tell them, I want you to know how the grace of God has been bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. The word "grace" means the unmerited favor of God; blessings; the hand of God; protection; we know it means all those things. Paul is saying to the church at Corinth, "You look at the churches of Macedonia and you see the hand of God, the presence of God, the blessing of God that's upon these churches that are up there."

When we can look and see the glory of God, the presence of God, and the grace of God in a service; we are seeing God. When we have God, we have all that we need.

As individuals, do you know what we don't need? We don't big bank accounts. If you have money, you probably won't Amen that; but you don't need them.

There is nothing wrong with having a little money laid back for something that flies apart, breaks down, and tears up. I understand that. So many times we worry about sixty-two years old or sixty-five when we are going to retire and I know that we need to make plans for those things, but we lose sight of the goal that our neighbors' children and people around the world are starving to death while the only thing that we are worried about is getting a bigger bank account. There is something wrong there folks.

When we have a little money and God has blessed us with everything that we have; anything we have tonight is because of the Almighty God. You can say, "I've worked for it and it's mine." There is a little virus that you can catch and you have to magnify it a million times to see it. It can get in this fellow tonight and tomorrow someone else will be taking care of your 401k. We need to understand that.

Paul tells them to look at the grace of God that has been poured out upon the churches of Macedonia. The reason these churches were being blessed so much, is that they were churches that were giving. They were giving to the relief effort of the churches that were suffering so bad down in Judea. We have responsibilities and along with responsibilities come great opportunities.

He says here, "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." He is saying that they went through great trials. When you read the book of I Thessalonians and part of II Thessalonians, there's some verses in here: In I Thessalonians chapter one verse six, I Thessalonians chapter two verse fourteen, II Thessalonians chapter one verse four; they talk about the sufferings and afflictions that these people had gone through. Afflictions and persecutions and problems are not always bad. I know that we look at them and think that they are bad. This church had gone through some tremendous trials and tremendous afflictions. He talks about the abundance of their joy and the deep poverty; like these things go together. They went through deep poverty, but their lives were filled

with joy. Their lives were filled with joy because they knew that they had all they needed to go to heaven.

They knew that they had been saved, they've experienced the Lord Jesus Christ, He was in their heart, He was real unto them, He was not something that they just dreamed up; they had been genuinely saved and had been born again and He was living inside of them. It's great to know that although we may not have two dollars to rub together that we can know that we are saved and that we are on our way to heaven. If we never see another hundred dollar bill, we are still yet saved. We are not going to have to worry about money in heaven. It's going to be a great place. These folks had abundant joy even though they went through suffering, and even though they went through great trials of afflictions; their lives were filled with abundant joy. They knew who they were serving. They loved the Lord. The Lord was in their lives. They knew the Lord was in their lives. They were living in the Will of God. There isn't anything like that. When you are living in the will of God, it's just great.

These things added to their giving. Their abundant joy that they had--they knew that they were saved and that they were living in the Will of God--motivated them to be able to give.

When I know that I am saved, living in the Will of God, and on my way to heaven, when I know beyond any shadow of a doubt that if Jesus should call me right now—"I know that I'm saved. What I have in my billfold don't mean a whole lot. When God speaks unto us, we will give. We will help those that are in need.

Have you ever been in church or maybe sitting at home reading your Bible, maybe going down the road just traveling along and the Lord speaks to you and says take some money and give it to so and so? Has that ever happened to you? There's nothing like that. A lot of times we dismiss that off. What we don't understand is that if God wants me to give to bless somebody else, that same God that is using me to bless that person will also bless me in return. The key to receiving is to **give**.

We just can't fathom that. If I give something, that's the recipe for getting something. We dip water out of the bucket, pour it out; the water is gone, but giving in the service of God is different than that. When we give bountifully, and we give not grudgingly—Jesus made the statement "He loves a cheerful giver." It is more blessed to give than to receive. We have that all turned around. We would rather receive than to give. The blessing comes in giving.

These folks, because they were saved, living in the will of God and because they knew what God had done for them; they were able to give freely. Without any restraints, they were not giving sparingly; they were giving.

The Bible says in verse three: "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." They went way beyond what Paul was thinking they should give. They went way beyond what Paul thought would have been right for them to give. This church, even though they were poor;--Paul says, "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." That means that they wanted to give.

Verse four says this: "Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They were saying, "We want to give to the relief effort." That's what that verse means. They were praying. They were beseeching. They were begging Paul to come and get their money because they wanted to give to the relief effort. How long has it been since you had to beg someone to come and get your money. That doesn't happen, does it? It doesn't happen because we look at things with all the wrong ideas and wrong thinking about things.

They wanted to give this money to the churches that were in Judea because they wanted to be a part in ministering and a part in fellowship with them. Giving, ministering, and fellowship all go together. We think that the giving is for the wealthy, or those with a lot of money, but giving is for all of us. From the pastor to the deacons, to the lay people, it

doesn't matter who you are; if you are a Christian then you have an obligation to give. Paul is not going to tell them how much to give, nor is Paul going to tell them that they have to give, but there is something about giving when you know where you stand at with God then you don't have any problems giving.

The Bible says: "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They have given themselves to the Lord and they know that they are saved. It goes a little deeper than that. He is saying here that they have not only given themselves to the Lord, but they have given all that they have to the Lord.

A lot of times we want to give the Lord this little part of us. We forget about everything that we have and everything that we possess. Everything belongs to the Lord. Not only did they dedicate all that they had to the Lord, but it says, "and unto us by the will of God." They had dedicated all they had to the Lord and they were going to use these things by "submitting to us by the will of God." We can dedicate all that we have to the Lord and we can dedicate what we have to people that we know that's working in the ministry.

I'll probably never go to Africa, but I know fine Christian people that are working in Africa that I can support with my money; they can take it to Africa and do great things with it. I can't go there, but we can submit ourselves unto them by the will of God. We can pray, we can seek the face of God and when we are sending our money to these people they need to make sure that they are using it for the glory of God. God gave it to us and we need to be good stewards of it.

Not only have these churches in Macedonia given themselves to the Lord, but they have said; Lord here it is and you show us where you want it at and we will give it. They have also dedicated themselves unto Paul. They trusted him. Isn't it great that we can trust people? I'm not saying that we need to put faith in people; we need to have faith in God. People will surely let us down, but not every preacher is a crook. Not everybody that is

on TV is a crook and not every ministry today that is asking for your money is crooked. A lot of them are crooked but not all of them. We have an obligation to promote the gospel. I'm glad that we do that here at Campbell Chapel.

Paul is saying, "Look at the churches in Macedonia. Look at how they give and dedicate everything that they have to the Lord." Paul says that they dedicated themselves to him by the will of God. That's great that we have done that here. I know that a lot of things that God has blessed Campbell Chapel with is because the people here are generous with their giving. If we were stingy, God wouldn't have blessed us to be able to do what we have done here. I'm not talking about what individuals have done here. I am talking about what God has done here in the last several years here at Campbell Chapel. It's because that people are living right. It's because people want to do things to further the gospel. It's because people loves the Lord. It's because people have a vision. Both the young and the old have a vision like that.

Everything that we have belongs to God. The clothes on our backs, the money we have in our pockets, the automobiles that we drive; everything that we have belongs to God.

I wouldn't be anything, I wouldn't be saved and I would not be on my way to heaven if it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not going to ask me to do anything with what He has blessed me with that's going to put me into a bind. I'm not going to go hungry if I live by the will of God. If I give everything I've got to feed the poor; if God asks me to take it all and give it to the poor; I know that God will take care of me.

Some on TV will tell you if you; give God a dollar, He'll give you back ten. That's a lie! That's not in the Bible. Others have said give God a dollar and He'll give you back four. That's also a lie! You're not going to find that. I will tell you this; you cannot out-give God. When you honor God with your substance, God will honor you.

That's what Paul wanted these people of this church at Corinth to understand. Even though that they may have had problems and even though that had all kinds of

difficulties; let's get on it. You started a year ago with you missionary projects. You started a year ago collecting money for the needy that's down here in Judea. He says, "Let's get back with the program. Let's get things together and give them to the needy." That's good for you and me today. Isn't it?

The Bible goes on to say, "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." In verse six, "Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also." He wants them to continue and pick up the project that they started.

Verse seven is a good verse. "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." The word "abound" means that you have plenty. It's overflowing. He says: "You're overflowing in faith, utterance, and knowledge in all diligence and in love." He is saying; "You have all kinds of gifts here at the church of Corinth."

As you have read in I Corinthians; we learned about the gifts that they had. Paul said that they had all kinds of spiritual gifts and that they are trusting in God and they have faith in God. They had the ability to share the gospel. They understood the Bible. They had the energy and zeal to carry on the gospel. He said that they even had a love for him and his helpers.

The same zeal, the same abundance that they had in faith and diligence and utterance and in knowledge; all these things they had in abundance and they needed to have the same kind of abundance in giving. The gift of giving is just as important as all the other gifts that they had. Those gifts were overflowing in the church, but the gift of giving was not overflowing. Paul is telling them that this gift needs to abound also. "...see that you abound in this grace also." That's what he is talking about here. In other words, let the gift of giving be overflowing. The emphasis that they put on speaking in tongues and prophesy and all the other things; the same priority that they put on all these things they

also needed to put on the gift of giving. If we would do that, we could really do some great things in Lawrence County, Ohio.

I was listening to fellow the other night that I don't usually listen to because I don't watch his program. However he was on a program that I was watching and he was talking about a ministry that they were starting in New York. They were going into the ghettos of New York looking to see what people had need of; such as homes, food, clothing, shelter, medicine. They were meeting the physical needs of the people but along with that they were sharing the gospel. What's that got to do about anything?

The people of New York that is in the ghettos needs to hear about Jesus Christ. They need to be saved just as much as the people in Lawrence County need to be saved.

There is a program doing some research about the children that are dying in Africa and all around the world of starvation. Every few seconds (six to eight) someone dies in the world because of not having enough food or water. That doesn't count all of the other deaths because of disease and accidents. Every six to eight seconds someone dies because they don't have something to eat and they don't have something to drink.

A person that is laying over here that doesn't have anything to eat or drink and that may be laying freezing to death; we can get out and tell them that Jesus loves them, but they probably are not going to listen to us. However, we can show them that Jesus does love them by giving them clothes if they are cold, feeding them if they are hungry, we can give them something to drink if they are thirsty then we can tell them that Jesus loves them. Then they will understand that.

It's very hard to get someone saved that's about to starve to death. I know that we don't look at the obligation that we have sometimes. We look past it. We turn the TV on and see the little children with pot bellies because they haven't had anything to eat or anything to drink. We think, "What can we do about that?" We see they poverty that is in the world and we think, "What can we do about that?" There are organizations that we can

support. There are ministers, like the church at Macedonia, which had respect and had confidence in Paul. There are people that are going to these countries that we can support and I think that it is our obligation. It's our obligation to help. Do we need to give it all away? No. I am not saying that. I am saying this; that the gospel would go a lot quicker and get a lot further if you and I as a church and as people that are saved wouldn't be so stingy with what we have.

All you need is what you need. Anything beyond your needs, you don't need. I appreciate the giving of this church and all the projects that we give to. I thank God for that. I thank God that we are not stingy here at this church. There are a lot of folks that are hurting that need help. We should be seeking the face of God about these matters.

Consider these things.

Verse nine says; "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." That is the example of our giving. That is the example that we should give. How much should you give?

If you want to look at an example; look at Jesus Christ. He was rich, He is God, He sat upon a throne that was in heaven, but He became poor. He was incarnate. That means He became flesh. That's what being made poor means. The reason that He did that is because He knew that you and I were poor spiritually. Because He was made poor, you and I are rich. We are blessed. We are blessed because of what Jesus Christ has done. If you want a pattern to follow; pattern your life after Jesus Christ because He gave all.