

2/1/98

Giving Is God's Work

2Cor. 8:1-7

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!

Bright and yellow, hard and cold.

Molten, graven, hammered and rolled,

Heavy to get and light to hold;

Hoarded, barter'd, bought and sold,

Stolden, borrow'd, squander'd, and
poured.

Spurned by the young, but hugged

by the old

To the very verge of the church
yard mould;

Price of many a crime untold;

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold! **#3527**

Money is essential for life, but it sure can change people and cause many more problems, than it solves!

Paul now deals with the offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and he will deal with very specific details on giving, such as the method, manner, motives, as well as the blessing of giving.

* Paul had already mentioned about the collection for the poor saint, when they gathered on the first day of the week. 1Cor. 16:1-2

Paul's concern and involvement for the poor saints was a part of his life being one in Christ.

1. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem was three years after his conversion where Barnabas took a chance on him. Acts 9:27, Gal. 1:18

2. Paul's second visit to Jerusalem was when the saints at Antioch sent relief to the saints at Jerusalem because of the famine. Acts 11:27-30

3. Paul's third visit to Jerusalem was fourteen years after, at the first church council. Acts 15, Gal. 2:1

4. James, Peter and John had given Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship to the heathen, asking them to remember the poor. Gal. 2:9-10

Paul now in his third missionary journey was taking a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

1. He a few months later, in writing to the Romans would tell them how the Gentiles felt, that as they had been partakers of the spiritual benefit from the Jews they felt they had a responsibility to minister unto their material need. Rom. 15:25-27

2. Paul will ask for prayer that the gift might be received by the Jewish Christians. Rom. 15:31b

3. Paul told Felix, "After many years I come to bring alms to my nation, and offerings." Acts 24:17

* Apparently the Corinthians had pledged an offering the year before, but had procrastinated. 2Cor. 9:1-2

Some have tried to make chapter 8-9 a section of an entirely different letter that is lost, because of the abrupt change, but as we stated in our introduction, there is no basis for such conclusion.

1. Chapter 1-7 deals with Paul's defense of his ministry to the Corinthians.
2. Chapter 8-9 deals with Paul's desire to gather the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

We want to look at the giving of the Macedonians, which is characterized by three things: 2Cor. 8:1-7

- I. The giving was prompted by God. vs. 1-2
- II. The giving was performed by man. vs. 3-5
- III. The giving was practical for spiritual service. vs. 6-7

I. The giving was prompted by God. vs. 1-2

- A. The apostle Paul pointed out the example of the Macedonians to the Corinthians. vs. 1
* "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia."
1. Paul is making the transition in his letter.
 - a. Paul used the word moreover "de", a transitional word and it would be better translated "Now". vs. 1a

- b. Paul has just finished the first division of the letter dealing with his ministry. 2Cor. 1-7
 - c. Paul now moves to the second division of the letter dealing with the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. 2Cor. 8-9
2. Paul addressed the Christians about money, not non-believers. vs. 1b
 - a. The word brethren "adelphos", means a brother, whether born of the same two parents or only of the same father or mother.
 - b. The relationship is in reference to the same spiritual birth by the same Holy Spirit, based on the provision of Christ. 2Cor. 5:21
 3. The apostle attributed the act of giving financially by the Thessalonians to be sourced in the grace of God. vs. 1c
 - a. The word grace "karis", as you know is the unmerited favor of God bestowed on the sinner for salvation.
 - 1) The word grace "karis", is directly tied to the gift for the poor saints. vs. 4, 6, 7,
 - 2) The word grace "charis" appears ten times in chapter eight and nine.
 - b. The word bestowed "didomai", means to give, grant, put or deliver.

- 1) The grace imparted to them by God was responsible for the sufficiency for their financial giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem.
 - 2) This grace of God was said to be sufficient for the churches of Macedonia, plural, Thessalonica, Berea and Philippi.
- B.** The apostle Paul pointed out the paradox of the Macedonians by their condition. vs. 2
 * “that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.”
1. Paul described them as having suffered tremendously.
 - a. The word affliction “thlipsis”, means a pressing together causing pressure.
 - 1) The word is used for the physical sufferings and persecutions of the Thessalonians.
 - 2) The phrase great trial “polus dokime”, describes the numerous and the magnitude of their severe testing they had surpassed.
 - 3) The word for trial is used to describe the testing of metals to purify them!
 - b. Paul was referring to the suffering effects on the region by the ravaging

- of civil war between Caesar and Pompey, between Brutus and Cassius and the trumvirs, and finally between Augustus and Antonius.
2. Paul despite their horrible condition indicated their incredible joy.
 - a. The word joy “chara”, means gladness or joyfulness.
 - 1) Their joy was not over their great sufferings of the past.
 - 2) Their joy was due to their new birth, joy being a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22
 - b. Their joy is described as abundance “perisseia”, meaning more than the necessary amount.
 - 1) The paradox is of great suffering and abundant joy, which is beyond human potential or ability.
 - 3) The apostle attributed this joy of the Thessalonians to the grace of God bestowed to them.
 3. Paul described them as being in deep poverty, yet abounding in the riches of their liberality.
 - a. The Thessalonians were dirt poor.
 - 1) The Thessalonians in years past were prosperous by their silver and gold mines, but the Romans confiscated them.

- 2) The word poverty “ptokia”, is used to describe extreme poverty of a person, appearing three times in the New Testament.
 - a) For the Thessalonians. 2Cor. 8:2
 - b) For the Incarnation of Christ. 2Cor. 8:9
 - c) For the suffering church of Smyrna. Rev. 2:9
- 2) The extent of their poverty is indicated by the word deep “bathos”, describes the Thessalonians at the very bottom of poverty!
- 3) The Thessalonians actually made a petition for a surcease of their burdens of taxation in the reign of Tiberius and were granted the favor as a depleted area.
(Wesleyan Bible Commen, 5:298)
- b. The Thessalonians in spite of their deep poverty demonstrated incredible generosity in their giving for the poor saints at Jerusalem.
 - 1) The reference to their riches of liberality “ploutos haplotetos”, means simplicity and sincerity in the little they possessed.
 - 2) The idea being they gave with singleness of heart and mind.

- 3) The paradox of the Thessalonians was that in spite of being very poor they gave eagerly and whole-hearted.
- 4) They did not use their poor condition as an excuse for not giving to the poor at Jerusalem.

Illustration

The Russell Sage Foundation several years ago published the results of a survey. In the United States, families with a net income of less than \$3,000 a year gave more than 60% of all the money donated to charity; families whose income was less than \$5,000 donated 82% of the total; families with an income between \$10,000 and \$20,000 a year gave only 1.9% of their income!

According to and Internal Revenue Service analysis, Americans who itemize their deductions give less than 3% of their adjusted gross incomes to church and charity.

Application

1. Any giving that is not prompted by God through the grace of God is a work of human philanthropy to be seen of men, they have their reward.
 - a. The giving will help man, but it would not be recognized by God.
 - b. The giving is based on their ability to give and with the motive of making a name for themselves.

* Jesus said, “But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” Matt. 6:3-4

2. In the 39 years that I have been a Christian, 36 years a Pastor, 32 years to this church, I have know people who have had very little and yet always gave to others out of their deep poverty, the little they had with great joy. Acts 20:35

* “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, `It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

a. The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself. Prov. 11:25

b. He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor. Prov. 22:9

* Our giving should not be confined to money, but our time, help, etc.

3. God sees and acknowledges what it costs me to give.

a. A person who make 500 dollars a month, knows it costs him much, giving what you determine, with all your heart!

b. A person making 10,000 dollars a month gives their surplus and God honors if it is

with all their heart, but there is a big difference!

* The widow who gave two mites, pennies, “So Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.” Mk. 12:23-44

The giving was prompted by God!

II. The giving was performed by man. vs. 3-5

A. The apostle Paul pointed out the selfless manner the Macedonians gave. vs. 3

* “For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing.”

1. Paul gave testimony that they gave according to their ability. vs. 3a

a. The word ability “*dunamis*”, means inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth.

b. The same word is appears “For Your is the kingdom and the **power** and the glory forever, Amen” Matt. 6:13

2. Paul gave testimony that they gave beyond their ability. vs. 3b
 - a. They had less than they needed.
 - b. They gave more than they should of or could have given.
 3. Paul gave testimony they gave of their free will, without Paul asking. vs. 3c
 - a. The phrase freely willing “authairetos”, means voluntary, they initiated.
 - b. They were led by God, but not compelled against their will.
 - c. They were prompted, but not forced to surrender their will.
- B.** The apostle Paul pointed out that the mindset of the Macedonians in their giving was one of servants. vs. 4
- * “imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”
1. Paul gave testimony to their loving-hearts, pressing them to except their gift.
 - a. Their passionate desire is described by the word imploring.
 - 1) The word imploring “deomai”, means to supplicate and beg.
 - 2) This prompting was also to the other companions with Paul, “us”.
 - b. The intensity of their passion is described “with much urgency”.

- 1) The word urgency “paraklesis” means a calling near.
- 2) Being insistent without letting up.
- c. Their deep concern was that Paul and his friends except the expression of their love, the gift.
 - 1) The gift and God’s grace are seen as one throughout the text.
 - 2) The gift was without any obligation or expectation of being repaid!
2. Paul gave testimony about the same intense passion to indicate their act of giving meant they were being one with the Jews, a privilege.
 - a. The word is “koinonia”, means joint-partnership, commonness or shared oneness, even a collection or contribution.
 - 1) The word appears four times in this form, to indicate no oneness between light and darkness. 2Cor. 6:14
 - 2) For the offering of the Corinthians. 2Cor. 9:13
 - 3) For the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with the Corinthians. 2Cor 13:14
 - b. The plead was in demonstration of their oneness in Christ.
 - 1) Jew and Gentile one in Christ.
 - 2) Jew and Gentile, the family if God.

- * This is the theme of Ephesians!
3. Paul gave testimony about their servant-hearts, seeing this act of giving as an opportunity to help the poor brethren.
 - a. The word ministering “diakonia”, is a noun, referring to those who execute the commands of others.
 - 1) The word in its root has the idea of an errand boy or waiter on tables.
 - 2) The word appears 34 times in this form in the New Testament, the more numerous in this book, thirteen times.
 - b. The Thessalonians saw themselves as the servants of God to wait on tables.
 - 1) To be of service to the Jewish Christians impoverished at Jerusalem.
 - 2) The word saints “hagios”, means holy, the title given to Christian by God.
- C. The apostle Paul pointed out the mature giving of the Macedonians as sobering. vs. 5
 * “And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.”
1. Paul declared they gave in a manner that surpassed his and the others expectations. vs. 5a

- a. The word hope “elipzo” means to expect.
 - * It appears five times in the letter.
 - b. Not only in what he has pointed out already.
 - 1) Due to their joy in spite of their conditions.
 - 2) Due to the riches of their liberality in spite of their deep poverty.
 - 3) Due to the fact that they offered without Paul asking them.
2. Paul declared they gave themselves first to the Lord. vs. 5b
 - a. This surpassed their expectations.
 - 1) They were taken back, due to the fact that they were so young in the Lord, but so mature.
 - 2) Yet, they were so mature.
 - b. The motive in giving was their devotion to the Lord Jesus.
 - 1) The word first “proton”, means chief or first in rank.
 - 2) This was their priority, so the giving was a worshipful act to God, this is the only thing God honors.
 - 3) Their hearts and lives were completely surrendered to God.
 - 4) Their lives were a constant dying to self after the example of their Lord.

3. Paul declared after this they gave themselves to Paul and the other by the will of God. vs. 5c
 - a. The giving of themselves to Paul for the collection was that they were prompted by God in their devotion and worship of God.
 - 1) A joint venture in the work of God is only excepted by God if it comes forth from one's personal relationship with God and not mere good work.
 - 2) Their giving of themselves was in contrast to the Corinthians who had withdrawn from Paul procrastinating in the offering!
 - b. The giving of themselves was by the will of God.
 - 1) The word will "thelema", means his desired purpose and pleasure.
 - 2) The will of God is found and revealed clearly in the word of God, not in our emotions or circumstances.
 - 3) God was directing their participation in this work of love.

Illustration

R.G. LeTourneau told Forbes Magazine said, "I like to do two things. One is to design machines, turn on the power, and see them work.

The other is to turn on the power of the Gospel and see it work in people's lives."

He did pretty well in the first department. At his death he held over 200 patents. One of his monster earth-moving machines, weighing 200,000 pounds, can cut a thirty-five foot swath through a jungle, knocking down trees five feet in diameter and chewing them up.

He did well in the second department, too. Besides giving up to ninety percent of his income to Christian work, he would fly anywhere to speak for Jesus Christ. He is the only man to have been president of both the Christian Businessmen's Committee International and the Gideons International.

Application

1. Man views giving different than God, God is not interested in how little we have, He is interested in our giving according to what we have.

* "For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have. For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality." 2Cor. 8:12-14

2. Man always looks at the amount of his giving, but God looks at the attitude of my heart when I give, if it is grudgingly or hilariously.

* "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*" 2Cor. 9:7

3. Man must be very clear about what the Scriptures teach about financial giving, it is simple this, let no one pressure you to give, make you feel guilty if you don't give or manipulate you, but only as God directs you that it might fulfill God's will and benefit your life.

* "But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." 2Cor. 9:6

The giving was performed by man!

III. The giving was practical for spiritual service. vs. 6-7

A. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians Titus would go to Corinth for the collection. vs. 6

* "So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well."

1. Paul and the others urged Titus to be the instrument to collect the gift.

a. Paul had told the Corinthians about preparing the collection in his first letter. 1Cor. 16:1-2

b. Paul and other would accompany the gift to Jerusalem. 1Cor. 16:3-4

2. Paul declared that Titus had begun the collection and that he might complete it in his future visit to Corinth.

a. Titus most likely collected some of the offering when he was sent by Paul to see how the Corinthians had responded to his First letter.

b. Now he would be going back to Corinth.

3. Paul described that the gift of the Corinthians to the poor saints should be from and through the same grace as the gift of the Thessalonians, indicated by the phrase, "this grace in you as well".

a. The implication was that the grace of God being sufficient for the Thessalonians was also sufficient for the Corinthians.

b. The implication was that the appreciation of God's grace imparted to them was also affectively at work in them.

1) They had expressed their repentance to Paul.

2) They were not willing to follow through with their original commitment.

B. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians their giving should be in proportion and a reflection of God's spiritual blessings on them. vs. 7

* "But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence,

and in your love for us--*see* that you abound in this grace also.”

1. Paul reminded the Corinthians of the abundance of God’s grace in their spiritual lives. vs. 7a-f
 - a. In faith in Christ to work in and through them.
 - b. In speech or utterance perhaps in prophecy.
 - c. In knowledge of Divine revelation and understanding.
 - d. In diligence, earnestness to deal with their present situation and correct it.
 - e. In their love for Paul and the others.
2. Paul exhorted that they should abound in the measure of their giving, as they had been blessed spiritually by God’s grace. vs. 7g
 - a. As God had graciously imparted to the Corinthians abundantly and freely in spiritual matters, so they were to graciously, abundantly and freely impart to the poor saints.
 - 1) The word “But” marks the contrasts between the two.
 - 2) They needed to be ready for the sure coming of Titus to fulfill their commitment of the previous year. 2Cor. 9:2

- b. As the various gifts imparted to the Corinthians were spiritual so they should see their gift to the poor saints.
 - 1) The Corinthians had been bestowed with riches both in the spiritual and financial.
 - 2) The Corinthians had not recognized or invested their spiritual wealth correctly, but had been carnal.
 - 3) The Corinthians now having receive the correction of Paul would be able to assess their wealth and distinguish the true riches and be gracious!

Illustration

The average American misplaces more money each year than the per-member contributions to a majority of U.S. church denominations, says President Arthur R. McKay of McCormick Theological Seminary. Cost lost averages \$75 per person annually, according to McKay, or more than the per-member giving of 15 of the 23 largest communions.

(Note: The average church is supported by 30%)

Application

1. We consider the collecting God’s offering a privilege that is not to be abused, so we receive it as the Scripture tells us once a week when we gather on Sunday.

- a. There are those who simply place an offering box and the people deposit their giving in it.
 - b. Constant begging is not of God, but man!
* “On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” 1Cor. 16:2
2. We do not believe the Bible teaches selective spirituality, we are to be obedient and maturing in every area and in all things, the boasting of my spiritual growth in Christ to the exclusion of my tangible gift of love is hypocrisy and deception.
* Paul said, “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” Rom. 15:27
3. We took one special offering for the poor saints in Chili when the earthquake occurred back in the 80’s, but other than that we have never taken any other special offering, but have just met it from the general offering as evidence of our stewardship.
- a. That is not to say that there is anything wrong if it is done, just so it is not abused or misrepresented!
 - b. We just attempt to live within our means and not do what God does not provide for, so that money is never the focus of our ministry

- or to give anyone the idea that God can not provide for His church!
- c. We teach and live out our philosophy of ministry, “Where God guides, He provides”!
- d. I comment you for your gracious giving, the history of our church affirms and confirms the grace of God in and through His people to do His work! (The building, gym, etc.
* “And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.” 2Cor. 9:8

The giving was practical for spiritual service!

Conclusion

The Macedonians’ giving was characterized by these three things:

- I.** The giving was prompted by God!
- II.** The giving was performed by man!
- III.** The giving was practical for spiritual service!