

"GENEROUS: Part 1"

Sunday, January 17, 2016
GENEROUS | 2 Corinthians 8
By: Allen Coleman

I. INTRODUCTION

1. 2008 Financial Crisis

- (1) Considered by many economists to be the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930's
- (2) Bailouts; housing crisis
- (3) 10.1% unemployment by 10/09; Avg. work week 33 hrs; CA = 12.4% (2010).

2. We Reap What We Sow

[**2 CO. 9:6** - For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?]

- (1) We can enjoy the harvest and eat it...or sow some of it back in and enjoy a greater harvest later.

[**LK. 6:38** - Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."]

- (i) The righteous rich are marked by generosity
- (ii) The unrighteous rich are marked by greed (Wall St.)
- (2) The early church was marked by generosity

[**ACTS 2:46** - And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and **generous** hearts...]

- (3) Generous = (Gk.) Simplicity

3. The Context (v1-4)

- (1) Corinth (**v1a**):
 - (i) Young with hipsters
 - (ii) Newer Christians, and so they had lots of sin and folly.
 - (iii) They were not yet disciplined with their time and treasure, so they were a lot like our church.
- (2) Paul is going to teach them some things by showing them the example of another church in an area called Macedonia (**v1b**).
 - (i) A church that is so exemplary in its generosity, that it is mentioned four times in the New Testament as a model church, the kind of church that we ought to aspire to be.

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- (3) First, two things generosity is not:
- (i) "Severe affliction" - Culture = when convenient | Generosity is **not** convenient Both churches were struggling under an economic recession that's not totally unlike the one we are experiencing. But the Macedonians were suffering far more painfully than those who lived in Corinth. The economic downturn hit them harder. During the 2008 crisis, Marin County was a little bit insulated as compared to the rest of the country | e.g. FL |
 - (ii) Charitable giving and Volunteerism was at an all time low in 2009 **(v2)**
 - (iii) "Beyond their means" - Culture = out of surplus | Generosity is **not** out of surplus | The tendency is to hold on tighter when there is no surplus (e.g. drought) **(v3)**

[LK. 21:1-4 - *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she **out of her poverty** put in all she had to live on."*]

- (4) Over the next two weeks, we're going to look at 10 principles found in two chapters on what it means to be generous.
- (5) I am starting my 8th year and have **never** gone out of my way to teach on this subject before.

II. CONTENT: PRINCIPLES 1-6

1. *Generosity Is An Act Of Worship* **(v5-6)**

- (1) "gave themselves first to the Lord" (v5)
 - (i) Worship

[MT. 6:21 - *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*]

- (ii) Bank account and calendar tell me what you worship
- (2) "we want you to know...about the grace of God" (v1)
 - (i) everything we have is as the result of God's grace

[1 CO. 4:7 - *For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*]

- (ii) You will either boast as an owner or be generous as a steward.
- (iii) Generosity is primarily about our relationship with Jesus, not others.

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[PR. 19:17] - *Whoever is generous...lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.*

2. Generosity Requires Hard Work (v7)

- (1) "see that you excel in this act of grace"
- (2) excel = present;active
 - (i) you ever excel at something? Chances are it required hard work
- (3) Some have the gift of generosity, but all are asked to work at generosity.
- (4) God uses faithful means, to produce fruitful ends:
 - (i) "Allen, I'm not patient" - ok, get in community
 - (ii) "Allen, I'm not generous" - ok, take out your checkbook/calendar"

3. Generosity Shows The Gospel (v8-9)

- (1) "Jesus Christ...was rich...he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."
 - (i) Jesus left the wealth of eternity and entered into the poverty of our sin, so that you might leave poverty of sin for the wealth of eternity.
- (2) When we fail to be generous with others, we are giving the impression to others that God is not generous.
 - (i) Why are you giving this to me? Because God has given to me what I don't deserve. It's what He's like.
- (3) As you hear this sermon, some of you will hear that all Allen and Anthem want from me is money.
 - (i) What we want for you is to reveal the grace of God. To show others that you think differently about money and people because of Jesus.

4. Generosity Is Given Proportionally (v10-12)

- (1) "...it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have..."
 - (i) Why don't we like talking about this? What's the immediate rub with the subject of generosity. It will cost me something.
 - (ii) There are some who are regularly generous, but do so out of their surplus. And a hallmark of generosity is sacrifice. It costs you something
- (2) Others, by comparison, don't give as much...but you do so sacrificially.

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- (3) "out of what he has" - the idea here is each person gives their time and treasure differently, at different seasons, in different ways.
 - (i) As income/time adjusts, so does generosity (we adjust down, but do we up?)

5. Generosity Eliminates Disparity (v13-15)

- (1) "...that there may be fairness..."
 - (i) Corinth context - if you had an economic pain point, what would they do?
 - (ii) They didn't have banks or social services.
 - (iii) So you're struggling, can't go to the bank. You can't go to the government or the social service sector.
 - (iv) You would go to a wealthy person known as a benefactor. Someone who was affluent and rich. And you would sort of have to grovel and beg and ask them to help you – very humiliating, a bit denigrating. It's an inferior/superior relationship.
 - (v) You would then, if they agreed to give you money, become their beneficiary. So, they are the benefactor; you are the beneficiary. They are the giver; you are the taker. They are the superior; you are the inferior.
 - (vi) You would have to do them favors, speak well of them, show up at public gatherings and praise them. A lot of smug, self-righteousness and pretentiousness in this.
 - (vii) And what Paul is saying is, "Don't treat your afflicted Macedonian brothers and sisters in Christ that way either. Don't think, 'We are the benefactors. They are the beneficiaries. Our economic downturn is not as bad as theirs. Therefore, we will help the lowly Macedonians, providing they send us letters and banners and PR campaign, and make sure that the local news outlet has a feature story.'"
- (2) He takes them from their arrogant position and puts them in a humble position.
 - (i) From their superior position, puts them in an inferior position. And says, "Don't look down on the Macedonians. Don't look down on those who are poor, those who are struggling, those who are economically distressed, because you're no better than they are.
 - (ii) Everything belongs to" – who? – "God."

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(iii) God is the benefactor, and that we all are beneficiaries. This allows us to see that everything we have is a gift. Paul's language, again, is that of grace. Your home belongs to God. Your clothes belong to God. Your food belongs to God. Your vehicle belongs to God. Everything you have, all of your collective wealth, possessions, credit, finances, job belongs to God.

ACTS 2:45 - *And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.*]

- (3) Eliminates disparity in the church. This is not socialism, where people don't learn to take care of themselves...this is not communism, where the goal is for everyone to have identical lifestyles.
- (4) Rather, this is Gospel-centered community where no one has a need that isn't met
- (5) When you get a bonus, what's the first thing you think?
 - (i) How I can treat myself?
 - (ii) How can I help eliminate disparity in the church? In my family?

6. *Generosity Is Administered By Imperfect Stewards (v16-24)*

- (1) "...this generous gift that is being **administered** by us, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man..."
- (2) This brings up to big objections to generosity:
 - (i) Those helping to dispense generosity - mismanage? (we have a team, we have had an audit, we do the best we can, but will make mistakes)
 - (ii) Those receiving generosity - enabling others?
 - (iii) Amble biblical support to remind you that generosity is primarily about your heart, not their stewardship. Enabling ourselves?
- (3) Generosity is not just about:
 - (i) the church as a collective whole, but the church and its respective parts.
 - (ii) money, but time, as well.

III. CONCLUSION

- 1. *Anthem has the most generous people I've ever met, but Anthem has not been a generous church.*
 - (1) Don't listen to this in view of the past, but in light of your future.