

Generosity is a Discipline

Sunday, October 19, 2025

Start with Application Testimony

- **Last week's exhortation:** Reevaluate the disputes you currently have, or have had, with others in the church. Reconsider the way you have been thinking about and approaching those conflicts.

INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
 - **Current Topic:** Church Relationship – The holy work of being the Body of Christ.
 - Over the course of this series we have continued to focus on the practical, challenging, real-life application of what the scriptures teach us about being the church. We are called to genuine community, mutual care, and committed relationship. There is no way to do this and continue to prioritize yourself. Over the next two lessons we're going to see this challenge one of the most sensitive and possessive areas of our lives – our money and resources.
 - In today's lesson we're going to pick up in 2 Corinthians 8 where the issue at hand is money Paul was raising to provide for the needs of the church community in Jerusalem. They were undergoing famine (Acts 11:27-30) in addition to persecution by the Jewish establishment, which resulted in overall poverty and hardship.

- **Helpful background info:** Corinth was the seat of the wealthy province of Achaia, while Macedonia was poorer and included the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea

READ

2 Corinthians 8 CSB

¹ We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia: ² During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ I can testify that, according to their ability and even beyond their ability, of their own accord, ⁴ they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, ⁵ and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by God's will. ⁶ So we urged Titus that just as he had begun, so he should also complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this act of grace. ⁸ I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I am giving advice because it is profitable for you, who began last year not only to do something but also to want to do it. ¹¹ Now also finish the task, so that just as there was an eager desire, there may also be a completion, according to what you have. ¹² For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ It is not that there should be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your surplus is

available for their need, so that their abundance may in turn meet your need, in order that there may be equality. ¹⁵ As it is written: **The person who had much did not have too much, and the person who had little did not have too little.** ¹⁶ Thanks be to God, who put the same concern for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he welcomed our appeal and, being very diligent, went out to you by his own choice. ¹⁸ We have sent with him the brother who is praised among all the churches for his gospel ministry. ¹⁹ And not only that, but he was also appointed by the churches to accompany us with this gracious gift that we are administering for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. ²⁰ We are taking this precaution so that no one will criticize us about this large sum that we are administering. ²¹ Indeed, we are giving careful thought to do what is right, not only before the Lord but also before people. ²² We have also sent with them our brother. We have often tested him in many circumstances and found him to be diligent—and now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and coworker for you; as for our brothers, they are the messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Therefore, show them proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you.

EXAMINE

#1 | Our love and devotion must translate into material care

1. 2 Corinthians 8:3–5 “...according to their ability and even beyond their ability... they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints... they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by God’s will.”

- a. The churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) were a perfect example of true devotion to God and love for His people.
 - i. *They didn't give from their leftovers or surplus, they gave as a matter of priority and eagerness.*
 - ii. *They didn't just say they cared - they showed they cared by their action and generosity. (1 John 3:17-18)*
- b. If we withhold our money and resources from one another when there is need, it indicates that we may be living in fear and selfishness, and lack faith in God to provide. (Luke 12:29-34)
 - i. *We must always be on guard against these things, and faithful generosity is one of our greatest weapons against them.*

#2 | We must cultivate the discipline of giving, not hoarding, our resources

- 1. 2 Corinthians 8:7,10-11 *"Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this act of grace... because it is profitable for you, who began last year not only to do something but also to want to do it. Now also finish the task, so that just as there was an eager desire, there may also be a completion, according to what you have."*
 - a. God is not asking us to give more than we have. He is asking us to be generous with what He has provided to us.
 - i. *If we find we have nothing to give it may be because we haven't wisely stewarded the resources that God has given us - we've spent them selfishly or foolishly.*

- b. Living generously requires discipline and diligence – you can't be ready to give if you haven't planned generosity into your budget.
- i. *Generosity requires a total mind-shift in the way you think about your needs, your resources, and your spending. (Proverbs 21:5)*

#3 | The church must receive and distribute these gifts responsibly and ethically

- 1. 2 Corinthians 8:18–21 “We have sent with him the brother who is praised among all the churches... [and] also appointed by the churches... We are taking this precaution so that no one will criticize us about this large sum that we are administering. Indeed, we are giving careful thought to do what is right, not only before the Lord but also before people.”
 - a. The reason to give regularly to the local church is so that there is available provision for:
 - i. *The needs of the people in the congregation as they arise (Acts 4:34–35).*
 - ii. *Those who give up their time working a job, in order to teach and shepherd the church (1 Cor. 9:13–14; 1 Tim. 5:17–18).*
 - b. Since these funds are being given as an act of obedience to God and love for one another, the church has a high mandate to handle these funds wisely and ethically.
 - i. *We must never permit wasteful spending, insecure handling, or unethical uses of these funds. The way we handle them reflects directly on the honor of Jesus and the truth of the Gospel.*

REFLECT

Let's take a moment to pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our attention and lead our conversation, helping us see and understand what He wants us to apply in our lives.

APPLY

Process the passage together with these questions:

- How can we, like the Macedonians, learn to view giving as a joyful privilege rather than a reluctant duty?
- Since Jesus said our hearts follow our treasure, how can financial giving help redirect our hearts toward God?
- What are some practical ways you can build the discipline of generosity into your life right now, no matter your resources?

Where we want to “land the plane”

- The truer measure of our devotion to God is not what we say, but what we are willing to share. Following the example of Christ who became poor for our sake, our generosity should be an eager and disciplined response to His grace. This requires a shift from giving out of occasional surplus to planning generosity as a priority in our finances. As we faithfully and generously give, we demonstrate the grace of Christ who gave of Himself for our sake.

Exhortation for the Week

- Revisit and challenge, not just the way you steward your money, but the way you think it and its purpose in your life.

FOOTNOTES

1. **On the topic of giving in 2 Corinthians 8–9.** This was no abstract topic; it concerned the collection for the poor in Jerusalem which Paul had been organizing for several years (cf. Gal. 2:10; Rom. 15:25–28). The Corinthians, hearing about “the collection,” asked Paul what part they might have in it (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1). Paul instructed them concerning these arrangements (1 Cor. 16:2–3). Good intentions had not been translated into fruition, however, so Paul asked Titus to look into the matter (2 Cor. 8:6). What factors interrupted the Corinthians’ good intentions? No one knows. But one likely possibility was the presence of the false apostles who received support from the church and may have diverted to themselves some of the monies intended for that collection (cf. 2:17; 11:20). As a result, Paul’s refusal to accept support was a sore point with the Corinthians (cf. 11:7–12; 12:13–18). Titus had found the Corinthians in need of an encouraging word which Paul delivered in chapters 8–9 of this letter. This—in conjunction with Titus’ work and that of unnamed assistants (8:23; cf. Acts 20:1–4), climaxed by Paul’s visit (Acts 20:3)—brought the collection in Corinth to a successful conclusion (cf. Rom. 15:26; Acts 24:17). *David K. Lowery, “2 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 572–573.*