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Sermon 1.2

ENCOURAGING GENEROUS GIVING

Generously Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

[1] And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. [2] In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. [3] For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.
8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.



KEY OUTCOME

Looking at the examples from Scripture we should all learn to give freely (simply because we want to), generously (extravagantly selflessly), and without expectation of anything in return.



CONTEXT

The area of the world that we currently know as Greece was divided north and south back in the day of Paul. The northern section of the country was known as Macedonia and the southern section of the country was called Achaia (pronounced uh-Kay-yuh). The city of Corinth was located in this southern section of Achaia. The northern section or Macedonian region included the cities and churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea..

These churches were very poor because they "suffered many afflictions." History tells us that this is the former homeland of Alexander the Great so, when the Romans conquered this land, they wanted to make an example of its former leader by devastating his homeland. Therefore, everyone knew that the Macedonians were poor and, by comparison, they knew that they were rich indeed. This is one reason why Paul uses the Macedonian churches as an example to the richer churches of Achaia.

We read in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 that Paul is traveling around collecting for the needs of the believers in Jerusalem due to a famine there. Paul mentions that he will be returning looking for a gift to bring back with him and that he will be traveling through the Macedonian region as well.

SERMON POINTS

1

Giving Should Be Done Freely

Giving should be done freely - simply because a person wants to. Look at the example set in this passage. In verses 2 - 4 it says, "In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people."

There was no persuading, no cajoling, no pleading, no begging, no slick financial plea or fund-raising campaign. They simply gave because they understood that giving generously provides an example to others of how Christ calls us to live.

Insert a personal and relevant story here about a time when you or someone you know really wanted to give to help out—and you gave!

2

Giving Should Be Done Generously

Giving should be done generously - extravagantly selflessly - beyond what myself or others might think is prudent. This example of a church living in the midst of poverty proves that true generosity is not simply something that can only be experienced by those with adequate or abundant means. Generosity is not just for people with money.

Again, look at the example set for us by the churches from Macedonia. Out of sheer joy and without thought of what they were NOT able to do - they proceeded to do what they COULD do. While the amount may have been small, the gift was extraordinary because it was inconceivable to someone like Paul that they were able to give so much.

Look at the widow mentioned in Luke 21:1-4, "As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'" She only had two small coins. She could have given one and kept the other for whatever need it might have helped her with. No one would blame her for keeping back something to live on. But she gave it all - above what others and maybe even herself expected on the day she went to the temple. But her generosity was noted by the Lord Himself.

Give some examples of what people with very limited resources might give.

3

Giving Should Be Done Without Expectation of Payment or Reward in Return

The church in Macedonia was going through a very difficult time. They had been plundered and pillaged by the Romans and, of all people, you would expect them to hang on to something for when life gets really difficult. But they gave. They didn't calculate a tithe or wait on the promise of 100 fold return on their investment. Rather, they gave because they wanted to be a part of this "service to the Lord's people."

Insert a personal and relevant story about giving when you get nothing tangible back in return.



SUMMARY

Four times in this passage, Paul uses the word "grace." He says that it was only out of God's grace that the Macedonian churches were able to give. Because of God's grace, he challenges the Corinthians to give. It is through grace that you have the ability to grow in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, and love. And it is only through God's grace that you can give at all. Since God really does own everything - when we give His resources to help His creation and people we are bringing honor and glory to the most gracious one of all, Jesus Christ. It is for Him that we give - not ourselves.

Since God really does own everything **- when we give** His resources to help His creation and people **we are bringing honor and glory** to the most gracious one of all, **Jesus Christ.**



PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Test your generosity, or as Paul says, test the sincerity of your love by comparing it to the earnestness of both those in this passage and Jesus Himself. Is there something you have been holding back that needs to be given to those in need?