

"Investing in Eternity"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Corinthians we have come to a new topic. Starting in 8:1 and going through 9:15 Paul is going to discuss the topic of giving. Paul's concern was not for himself but for the saints who were at Jerusalem. They were deep into poverty and Paul believed the other churches needed to do all they could to help those poor saints.

Now we looked at this subject before because Paul addressed it in 1 Corinthians 16.

1 Corinthians 16:1-3

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

² *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

³ *And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*

Let me refresh your mind on how bad the poverty really was in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:44-46

⁴⁴ *And all that believed were together, and had all things common;*

⁴⁵ *And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

⁴⁶ *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

Here we see that they sold their possessions and shared with all who had needs. They also went from house to house for their love feasts and this was for the purpose of providing food for those who had very little. It seemed to become worse as time passed.

Acts 4:32-35

³² *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

³³ *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

³⁴ *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,*

³⁵ *And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

It seemed to grow worse because as we follow the text we see here that they were now selling their lands and their houses to meet the needs of those who were poor. Then there was another problem.

Acts 11:25-30

²⁵ *Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:*

²⁶ *And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

²⁷ *And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.*

²⁸ *And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

²⁹ *Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:*

³⁰ *Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

This famine happened about 9 years before 1 Corinthians was written and it must have lasted for quite some time because as Paul writes 2 Corinthians he is still addressing the needs in Jerusalem. Paul had witnessed the poverty first hand in Jerusalem so his heart was burdened for these people. Not only that but this was also the Mother Church. This was the first church. But there may have been something else which burdened the heart of Paul deeply.

Every time Paul made a journey to Jerusalem he saw widows and orphans who struggled to make it through life and they were people of the body of Christ. Now let me give you something to consider as to why Paul's heart was so heavy for these people. The widows he saw may have been widows because of how he treated the church before he was saved and the orphans he saw may have been orphans because of the same reason.

Acts 9:1-2

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

² And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

The men whom Paul sentenced to death due to their faith left behind wives and children and it is very possible that Paul knew the widows and the orphans and for that reason his heart was heavy to help these people financially. Let me show you what is recorded in Galatians 2.

Galatians 2:9-10

⁹ And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

¹⁰ Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Paul never asked for money for himself but he was very diligent in gathering funding for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

Now the subject of the church at Corinth giving to the saints at Jerusalem had been kind of set aside while this matter of sin in the church was being addressed but now that the sin was confessed and fellowship restored Paul gets right back to the subject again.

I. The Example

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:1

Here in this verse Paul points to the example of the churches in Macedonia. Now we only know of 3 of these churches. They were Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. In this verse Paul tells us that the giving by the churches at Macedonia was the grace of God. I believe to understand what Paul is saying here we need to look at the next 2 verses.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:2

The churches in Macedonia were in the midst of a great test of their faith. They also were in a season of poverty and in a time of great pressure. It was out of their poverty they saw the need to give. They gave with joyful hearts and as they gave God poured out His grace.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:3

They gave out of their ability and even beyond their ability. This was all the result of the grace of God.

These churches were very aware of the blessings they had because of the grace of God. So out of an overflowing heart they gave their finances and kept little or nothing for themselves. These people saw giving as a PRIVILEGE. It was not a duty which needed to be fulfilled but to them it was a PRIVILEGE to give. This was done out of the gratitude of their heart. They knew what God had saved them from and they knew of His loving kindness and so they deeply desired to help out financially. This was the proper motive for giving. There are many people who give with all the wrong motives. Let me give you a list of some wrong motives.

1. Some give to get a tax break.
2. Some give to get a reputation of giving.

I need to point out that Ananias and Sapphira died because of this motive.

3. Some give because they feel obligated.
4. Some give because they believe it is their responsibility to give 10%.

Let me just say that the church is never commanded to give 10% or what the Bible refers to as a tithe. Tithing was practiced under the Law and we are not under Law but we are under grace.

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁶ But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

5. Some give in an attempt to win God's favor.
6. Some give because it is easier than getting involved.
7. Some give to get something in return.

The list could go on but the point is God is very concerned about our motives and these are wrong motives. We should be motivated by the grace of God.

Let me now get back to the example of the churches at Macedonia. They were in the midst of poverty and a great trial themselves and they never allowed that to stop them from giving. It reminds me of what Solomon wrote.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

² *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

³ *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*

⁴ *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*

⁵ *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

⁶ *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

Solomon tells us that the farmer who watches the wind and the clouds will never sow or reap and the idea here is that if we as believers and as the church look at the economy or if we watch the books and live by the numbers we will never enjoy the privilege of giving. Our giving cannot be based upon what IS happening around us or what we think MIGHT happen around us. Our giving must be out of God's grace and when that happens God will see that we have what we need.

Proverbs 11:25

²⁵ *The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

Proverbs 19:17

¹⁷ *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:4

This verse is amazing. They begged Paul for the opportunity to give to the saints at Jerusalem. They wanted so much to be a part of this ministry.

This reminds me of the man who sat at breakfast with me and wrote out a check for \$120,000 to pay off the loan for this building. He wanted to help so much in God's work.

The believers in Macedonia longed to be a part of this outreach ministry so they pleaded with Paul to take the finances which they would gather together.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:5

They went beyond what Paul had hoped for. He was thankful that they were going to give their finances but they went beyond that and they gave of themselves to the Lord and then gave of their finances. They were living out the words which Paul had recorded in 2 Corinthians 5.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

¹⁴ For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

¹⁵ And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

These people were living sacrificial lives for the glory of God.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

What an example this is and was. Many people will give their finances but refrain from giving themselves to the Lord for service. They feel as though when they open their wallet and give that they have fulfilled their responsibility. But the Truth is that God wants all of us and not just our finances.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:6

Paul now presents to the Corinthians the opportunity set before them. He does not command them to give and he does not pressure them to give. He does not say when he comes to Corinth there will be a contest between the Corinthians and the Macedonians. Paul is very careful with his words. He references again the grace of God. He is letting them know that if they are moved by the grace of God they too have the privilege of helping in the ministry to the saints at Jerusalem.

Conclusion:

There is no command for us to give when there are needs but there is an opportunity for us to use our finances to count for eternity. Giving to the Lord is a privilege. When we give

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with the proper motive (moved by the grace of God) then what we give to God will result in eternal rewards.