

"Investing in Eternity"

Part 3

2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

Introduction:

Tonight we have come back to our study of 2 Corinthians and as we do we are again stepping into chapter 8 where Paul has brought up the subject of giving to help meet the needs of the saints at Jerusalem. Paul started in chapter 8 by pointing to the example of the churches in Macedonia and how they were willing to give out of a great trial of their own faith which they were going through.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:1-6

These people were in a test in their own lives but they still were willing to give to meet the needs of others. The last time we were together I shared with you some verses which the believers at Macedonia were pictures of.

Matthew 22:15-21

¹⁵ *Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.*

¹⁶ *And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.*

¹⁷ *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?*

¹⁸ *But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?*

¹⁹ *Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.*

²⁰ *And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?*

²¹ *They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

Caesar's image was on the coin so it belonged to him. God's image was on the Macedonians so they saw themselves as belonging to God and they therefore gave of themselves.

Paul then went on and he pointed to the ultimate example of giving and that was Jesus Christ.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:7-9

Jesus became poor so that we could become rich. Jesus gave up the riches of heaven so that we could become spiritually rich and therefore He is the supreme example of investing in eternity.

1 Peter 1:3-4

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

⁴ *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

This now brings us to where we are tonight.

I. **The Purpose of Giving**

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:10

Now Paul gives his advice to them. We must not lose sight of the fact that this is still the inspired Word of God. This cannot be set aside as "Paul's opinion". Here in this verse Paul calls upon the Corinthians to finish what they had started a year ago.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:11

When the Corinthians first set their minds to give to the need at Jerusalem they were determined. But as we read this verse it appears as though what they had pledged to give they were not now able to fulfill. Paul had presented the opportunity for them to give over a year before this but the collection had never been gathered.

Now if they had made a vow to give a certain amount of money and something happened which was keeping them from giving the amount promised, they were possibly troubled because of what the Law said.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

²¹ *When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.*

²² *But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.*

²³ *That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.*

Then there are the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 5:2-6

² *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.*

³ *For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.*

⁴ *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.*

⁵ *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

⁶ *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin;*

I am reminded that the Judaizers had come into the church at Corinth and they desired to place the Corinthians under the Law so the Corinthians would have heard these Old Testament verses.

Now before we go on to the next verse I need to remind all of us that when we make a promise we are to be true to our word.

Matthew 5:33-37

³³ *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:*

³⁴ *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:*

³⁵ *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*

³⁶ *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

³⁷ *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

James 5:12

¹² *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

These verses are very clear that we are to be true to our promises.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:12

Here in this verse Paul relieves them from what they had promised the year before. He encourages them to give what they can with a willing mind. They could not give that which they did not have. They may have promised to give a certain amount but over the year things changed and so they would not be held to their previous promise. They were to give out of what they had because it was not possible to give out of what they did not have.

As long as they gave with a willing mind then it would be accepted by God. Paul's point here is that they were to give what they could afford to give and they were to give it while the need was before them. It was not about how much they gave but it was about the attitude of the heart.

Luke 21:1-4

And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

² *And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.*

³ *And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:*

⁴ *For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

Application:

It is important for us to be reminded that it is not about how much we give but it is about the attitude of the heart.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

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.*

Some people do not give when there is a need because they feel that the little they have is nothing compared to what others can give. Let me remind you that a little in the hand of God can result in great blessings.

John 6:3-11

³ *And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.*

⁴ *And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*

⁵ When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

⁶ And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

⁷ Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

⁹ There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

¹⁰ And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

¹¹ And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

This little lad gave only 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish but when it was given to the Lord it was used to feed over 5000 people. A little in the hands of God can be multiplied into much if it is given with the proper attitude.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:13-14

Paul is not promoting socialism here. He is not asking that the Corinthians give so that the saints in Jerusalem could take life easy. He is not saying that there should be a redistribution of wealth. Let me show you what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

¹¹ For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

¹² Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:14

The "equality" which Paul speaks of here is not the equality of wealth or the redistribution of wealth. What Paul is saying here is that at the time of the writing of this letter there was a need in Jerusalem but the situation could be reversed at any time. Next year it might be that the Corinthians were the people who were deep into poverty and so the saints at Jerusalem would need to help them. The Corinthians had more than they needed

at this time and the saints at Jerusalem had less than they needed. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the Corinthians to give at this time. Next time it may be reversed.

Notice 2 Corinthians 8:15

Here Paul reaches back into the Old Testament to help the Corinthians see something very important. Let me show you the text.

Exodus 16:11-18

¹¹ *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

¹² *I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*

¹³ *And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.*

¹⁴ *And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.*

¹⁵ *And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.*

¹⁶ *This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.*

¹⁷ *And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.*

¹⁸ *And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*

When Israel gathered the manna in the wilderness some gathered more and some gathered less. They would then take it back to the camp and they would divide it up. Every time they divided the manna out to the people each person had just the right amount to satisfy his or her hunger. There was no lack and there was no left overs.

Now we need to grasp the point which Paul is making when he uses this passage. God allowed some to gather more because there were those who could not gather enough for unknown reasons. God allowed those who gathered more to do so in order to share with those who were not able to gather enough.

November 19, 2017

2 Corinthians Study #54

This is exactly the point Paul wanted the Corinthians to grasp. God had allowed them to have more than the saints at Jerusalem so that they would be able to help meet the need of those who had less.

Conclusion:

Let us never forget that if we have abundance it is because God has given it to us so that we can help others. No matter what we have it is from God. He has determined to place in our hands what we have and let us never forget we are only stewards of the finances we have. They belong to God. He gave them and He can take them away if He chooses to. I will leave you with one thought.

A time of need in a believer's life is a time of testing his or her faith. In the same way when God chooses to give us an abundance it is also a test of faith (and maybe more so) to see if we have enough faith to give it away when there is a need.