

GIVING TO OTHERS Sunday, August 31, 2014

Unifying Topic: A COMMUNITY SHARES ITS RESOURCES

Lesson Text

I. An Example Of A Giving Church (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

II. Following The Example Of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:6-9)

III. Producing Equality Within The Body Of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:10-14)

The Main Thought: Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also (2 Corinthians 8:7, KJV).

Unifying Principle: A small community that possesses much may be part of a larger community that has little and needs the smaller community's assistance. How are members of a community to support one another? Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are part of a larger faith community and that as others have been generous to them, they should repay with equal generosity.

Lesson Aim: To impress that sharing with others in need is a part of believers' commitment to Christ and the Church.

Life Aim: To make a commitment of maintaining a lifestyle of giving as loving servants of the Lord.

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- 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
- 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.
- 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;
- 8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
- 8:6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.
- 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.
- 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.
- 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.
- 8:10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.
- 8:11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.
- 8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.
- 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:
- 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

HISTORY:

Chapter 7:8-16 ¹One of the most difficult things to do in life is to rebuild a shattered relationship. Unfortunately, there are many broken relationships today in homes, churches and ministries, which can only be repaired when people face problems honestly and deal with them biblically and lovingly. This is what Paul is trying to do in 2 Corinthians and especially in Chapters 6 and 7. Paul had written a very severe letter of rebuke to the Corinthians and at times had regretted it (v. 8), but is now not sorry he sent the letter. Now, Paul's heart rejoiced that they had accepted his message and had acted upon it (v.9). When God makes you feel sorry enough to turn to Him and be saved, you don't have anything to feel bad about (v.10-11). When he wrote, it wasn't to accuse the one who was wrong or to take up for the one who was hurt, but for God to show them how much they cared for Paul and his helpers (v. 12). And this greatly encouraged Paul (v.13). In Paul's discussions with Titus, he was convinced that the opposition in Corinth came only from a small group of dissenters and the vast majority of the congregation wanted to do what was right. Now this conviction is confirmed by the report Titus gives to Paul (v.14-16).

LESSON:

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 An Example Of A Giving Church

8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;— Paul now turns to a different subject. He gives the Corinthian church *seven challenges*. **The first challenge is to know of the grace God bestowed upon the Macedonian churches**—the spirit of the Macedonians. The Roman province of Macedonia included all of northern Greece. The known churches of the region were Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. At one time

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/godly-sorrow-produces-repentance/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

the Macedonian province had been known for its natural resources. But down through the centuries the area had been ravaged by war, and Rome had stripped it of its wealth. Because of this the churches of the area were somewhat poor in material wealth. But note a glorious fact: they were extremely wealthy in the grace of God.—so much grace that Paul is able to use them as a dynamic example of God's grace. "*Grace*" means the favor and blessings of God—all the good things of life which God gives—the greatest of which is salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The churches throughout Judea were suffering great poverty and needed help badly. However, in a great trial of affliction four dynamic facts were apparent.

1. *They gave help despite terrible trial and deep poverty to others and they gave liberally.* "*Liberality*" means singleness of mind, sincerely, with an open and free heart. The churches of Macedonia decided to do just that. When they accepted Christ and took their stand for Him, they were heavily persecuted. However, knowing Christ filled these believers with abundance of joy. For out of the depths of their poverty, resulted in a flood of generosity.

8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;— Paul was able to bear witness, meaning he was able to testify of their power; according to their means, and beyond their means to give.

2. *They gave beyond their ability. They gave willingly*—no special appeal had to be made; no pressure had to be executed.

8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. They begged urgently to accept their gifts and share in the honor of supporting their brothers in Christ.

3. *They gave insistently begging for the privilege to share.* Apparently, they were giving so much that Paul felt it was just beyond their means. Why? Because they wanted to share in the fellowship of ministering to the saints.

8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. "*And this they did, not as we hoped*" literally meant not as had expected. Such giving was totally unexpected in light of their own needs. They made a complete dedication of themselves.

4. *They gave themselves to the Lord first.* They used this occasion, the occasion of an offering—the occasion when they were asked to help others—to rededicate their lives and possessions to Christ. This involved:

- The dedication of their lives to Christ: all they were.
- The dedication of their possessions to Christ: all they had.
- The dedication of themselves to the minister, Paul, in order to serve by his side and to allow them all to serve Christ together.

Paul stressed the giving of the Macedonians. Believers must be examples joining hand in hand as a giving church.

2 Corinthians 8:6-9 Following The Example Of Christ

8:6 Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Paul says *two things* can apply to every church.

1. The grace of giving is to be completed in you—the act or evidence of love because of the favor of God. The *second challenge* is to excel in the same spirit of giving as the Macedonians. Sometime earlier the Corinthian church had begun to take up an offering for the poor churches of Judea, but something happened that caused the church to stop the project. Titus, a faithful servant, was the acting evangelist at the time in Corinth when Paul's first epistle went out. So he is urged, the one who initiated the work, to receive from the people and complete it in the same grace.

8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

1. The other graces must abound in you.

Paul named the gifts the Corinthians abound or excel in: faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love. He wanted them to see to it that they abound, excel in this grace of giving. The Corinthians were proud of the other spiritual gifts, but he wanted them to remember that giving is also a grace-gift and abound in it also. It is not as spectacular as the miraculous gifts, but just as important.

8:8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

The *third challenge* is to prove the sincerity of your love. Paul does not command the Corinthians to give. If giving is forced or coerced, it benefits nothing; it does not please God. God is pleased with gifts that are willingly and cheerfully given. Giving must be based upon *two things*:

1. Giving must be based upon love for those who are lost and needy. And that love is based upon the love for the Lord Jesus who commanded us to go into all the world to reach and help the people of the world. We're all His creations.
2. Giving must be based upon the example of those who give sacrificially. In the case of the Corinthians, they had the dynamic example of the Macedonians. The Corinthians should have been stirred to follow the example of such sacrificial giving. In our case, we thereby prove the sincerity of our love by freely giving because He freely gave! Christ is our example!

8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. The *fourth challenge* is to know the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. By now we should know the grace of our Lord; we should be aware of His grace. His grace was given to us.

1. Though He was rich...
 - He dwelt in the glory and majesty, dominion and power of the Godhead (Jude 24-25).
 - He possessed every good and perfect thing that can be possessed (Jam.1:17).
 - He had all worship and adoration of heavenly beings (Rev.4:6; 5:11).
2. He became poor.
 - God became an humble man.
 - Our Lord took on flesh and blood.
 - Our Holy God took the place of the lowest.
 - The Beloved became the rejected.
 - The Perfect One became the Sacrifice for sin.
 - His Life became the Substitute for death.
3. That through His poverty we might be rich.
 - We can receive the adoption of sons—become sons and daughters of God.
 - We can live eternally with Him in the new heaven and earth.

His ownership brought poverty to Him—His Godhead became a man—His purpose was for our sakes—He gave to us what He possessed from the beginning—richness of eternal life, eternal joy—And His eternal love brought sons and daughters! Knowing His grace brought all of this causes me to rejoice!

2 Corinthians 8:10-14 Producing Equality Within The Body Of Christ

8:10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. The *fifth challenge* is to remember your own past. Paul gives his advice knowing that the Corinthians had undertaken a mission project of meeting the needs of the poor churches in Judea, but had backed off when divisiveness had reared its ugly head in the church. Paul is saying that it is expedient; it's beneficial for them personally and for their ministry to recommit themselves to the mission. The body of Christ is thereby stirred to go forward and God is stirred to bless the church. Whatever you commit to do that's in God's Will, He is well able to continue with you.

8:11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. Paul is saying now go forth with it. He's reviving their pride in being leaders; examples in this benevolent mission of what they started. He saw that before there was a readiness; an eagerness to show forth and perform and complete this task.

8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. The *sixth challenge* is to give readily and willingly. Four points between verses 11 and 12 give clear directions on missions to any church that is willing to listen. Paul no longer gives advice, but now charges the church to give itself to missions by first having a willing mind to undertake the project.

1. Give yourselves to missions. After a mission need has been met, there is always another need to meet—a need just as critical. Literally thousands die prematurely and without Christ every day—die because no one cared enough to help them. The call of missions is the constant call of Christ.

2. Finish the mission. The task begins when you reach out, but it also has to be completed.
3. Give readily and willingly—lay hold first with "a willing mind."
4. God is going to judge us for what we give—what we gave and what we kept back. If you have it (*according to what you do have*), give it. Will He approve? Will it be accepted? Yes, that that you do have and is able to give, not what you don't have. God is far more interested in the love in your heart than in the amount of your gift. *"...I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: But she of her penny hath cast in all the living that she had" Lk.21:3-4.*

8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:— Paul is not implying that other men be relieved and the Corinthians carry the load and hardship.

8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: – But, the need be equally met or shared. The seventh challenge is to meet the needs of one another equally. It eliminates the principle of hoarding and keeping back of goods beyond our needs. Are we hoarding back clothes we can't wear? Are we hoarding back food we can share? Are we hoarding back money for a rainy day that right now someone is in need of? God wants the needs of the starving and lost masses met. The only way they can be met is by giving out of their abundance, they might supply others' lack, so there can be equality.

SUMMARY:

Paul writing from Macedonia hoped that news of the generosity of these churches would encourage the Corinthian believers and motivate them to solve their problems and unite their fellowship. Paul uses the Macedonian churches as an example. They were in poverty and yet they gave. Despite affliction and deep poverty, they gave liberally; gave willingly; beyond their ability, insistently for the privilege to share, and they gave themselves first to the Lord and then unto Paul as God willed (vv.1-5).

Titus was sent to complete this grace in them. As the Corinthians abounded in many other things, Paul encourages them to abound in this grace also. He did not command them to give, but by the example of others Paul seeks to test their love. We are to remember the example of Jesus, through whose poverty we became rich (vv.6-9).

It is to their advantage to complete what they started a year before, so that there is not only a desire to do it, but the completion of it as well. There must first be a willing mind; then according to what one has, not to what he does not have. Paul does not desire that they burden themselves to ease others. But that their abundance might supply others' lack, so there can be equality (vv.10-14).

APPLICATION:

Everyone needs help from time to time, therefore, within the body of Christ, God places needs before us to fulfill.