

2 CORINTHIANS 8-9

Principles of Giving for the Authentic Christian Life

- CURRENT STUDY...in 2nd Corinthians
- LAST WEEK:
 - It is unwise to link up into partnerships with unbelievers
 - While we may not see why it's a problem...
 - especially if we really like each other
 - OR we're really compatible
 - OR we have a lot of the same interests and goals
 - The truth is...an Authentic Christian and an unbeliever are as different as...
 - night and day
 - good and evil
 - Jesus and the devil
 - We are called to live in this world...but out of step with it
 - work and play and serve around unbelievers...but be distinct from them
 - Also...talked about the value of correcting one another...
 - while painful to both the corrector and the one being corrected
 - the goal is repentance
 - repentance will bring all sorts of good into that persons life
- TODAY:
 - Generosity

PRAY

- Background:
 - When Paul met with the apostles, they had asked Paul specifically “to remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10)
 - For years...Paul had been collecting financial gifts to give to the believers in Jerusalem.
 - Christians were ostracized in the Jewish community
 - This would have made it very hard to live and make a living
 - Paul mentions it in a number of his letters.
 - Asked them to set aside funds every Sunday for this purpose.
 - We have evidence that Paul was given funds from every region with which he was associated.
- This is the background of the collection he is going to talk about in the next two chapters...
- I believe for us...it can be instructive on some principles of giving.

2 Corinthians 8

¹ Now, brothers *and sisters*, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave voluntarily,*

- Three of the distinctives of their giving:
 - 1) according to their ability
 - 2) beyond their ability
 - 3) voluntarily
- THE MACEDONIANS GAVE WHAT THEY WERE ABLE TO GIVE.
- SOMETIMES THEIR GIVING WAS A STRETCH FOR THEIR FINANCIAL MEANS.
- THEY GAVE BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO GIVE.

⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected,

- favor (χάρις) = same word in :1 “gracious gift of God”
- THEY SAW GIVING AS A GIFT FOR THEMSELVES.

but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

- They had their priorities straight.

- It is easy to make giving about...
 - ...the person we're giving to.
 - ...or ourselves.
- Giving is a reflection of who is our Lord.
- **THEIR GIVING TO OTHERS WAS A CONSEQUENCE OF HAVING GIVEN THEIR LIVES TO THE LORD.**

⁶ So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

- Paul had encouraged them to give
- Titus was following up

⁷ But just as you excel in everything, in faith, speaking, knowledge, and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you also excel in this gracious work. ⁸ I am not saying *this* as a command, but as proving, through the earnestness of others, the sincerity of your love as well.

- Paul is using this as a teaching moment...
 - Just as you excel as so many things as a church body...
 - you trust God
 - you're articulate
 - you have extensive knowledge
 - you're earnest/diligent
 - you love well
 - Excel at generosity, too
- Notice: He is clear that there is no command here.
 - This an area of freedom.
 - You don't have to give to any specific thing.
- **GIVING IS NOT A HAVE-TO BUT A GET-TO.**
- **GIVING IS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE.**

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.

- Jesus is our example to follow in all things.
- Jesus gave up everything...
 - ...came down to live as a pauper...

- o ...so that many could become truly rich.
- **GIVING OF OURSELVES IS A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF THE CHRIST-IMITATING LIFE.**

¹⁰ I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.

- advantage (συμφέρω) = profitable
- Giving might seem unprofitable.
 - o cash is leaving my wallet
 - o funds are leaving my account
- **GIVING IS PROFITABLE TO THE GIVER.**
- The Corinthians had a strong desire to help the Jerusalem believers...BUT the desire was not enough.

¹¹ But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the willingness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability. ¹² For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to what *a person* has, not according to what he does not have.

- **DESIRING TO GIVE AND ACTUALLY GIVING ARE NOT THE SAME THING.**
 - o Desiring to give...but not giving...is not effective.
- Desiring to give...followed by giving...is actually effective.
- **BUT NOTICE...THE DESIRE TO GIVE SHOULD NOT LEAD TO GIVING BEYOND OUR MEANS.**
 - o **It might** sound holy...
 - to give away your rent money...but don't
 - to use your credit card to support a missionary...but don't

¹³ For *this is* not for the relief of others *and* for your hardship, but by way of equality—¹⁴ at this present time your abundance *will serve as assistance* for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as *assistance* for your need, so that there may be equality; ¹⁵ as it is written: “the one who *had gathered* much did not have too much, and the one who *had gathered* little did not have too little.”

- Exodus 16
 - o God gave the Israelites manna
 - o Some gathered a lot of manna...but it was the right amount for their need
 - o Some gathered a little...but it also was the right amount for their need

- IDEA OF THE ILLUSTRATION:
 - The purpose of giving is not...
 - to create an imbalance
 - to make others have more than they need...
 - ...by creating need for you
 - God gave some an abundance...at this time...
 - So that...they could help those in need
 - At another time...they will have an abundance...to serve your need
- So from that perspective...God is helping to create balance...
 - AND He's set it up this way so that we can show care for one another
- **AT DIFFERENT TIMES WE HAVE EITHER NEED OR ABUNDANCE, AND GIVING IS THE WAY FOR US TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN THEIR MOMENT OF NEED.**

¹⁶ But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness in your behalf in the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.

- Titus had the same desire Paul had to see this collection happen.

¹⁸ We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel has spread* through all the churches; ¹⁹ and not only *that*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show our readiness*, ²⁰ taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

- A well-respected guy traveled with Titus
 - unknown
- There might have been some who wanted to question where the funds were going...
 - Were Paul and his friends lining their pockets?
- While Paul and Titus' consciences were clear...
 - Including someone else that people trusted...was wise

²¹ for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of *other* people. ²² We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

- There was also a third trustworthy guy in the group.

- Also wise
- To hopefully leave little doubt in people's minds

23 As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. 24 Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

- So show them love...as they come to you.

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

1 For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; 2 for I know your willingness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I have sent the brothers, in order that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you will be prepared;

- Paul felt like his comments might be unnecessary...
 - ...since the Corinthians had already been planning/saving for this collection
- I'm glad he continued writing...we wouldn't have this example to learn from
- He could have just shown up and asked for a gift from them...
 - ...but he wanted give them time to think it through and prepare.
- **HAVING A PREDETERMINED PLAN FOR GIVING CAN BE WISE.**
 - i.e. automatic giving, saving up for a future opportunity, end-of-the-year tax planning

4 otherwise, if *any* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame by this confidence. 5 So I considered it necessary to urge the brothers that they go on ahead to you and arrange in advance your previously promised generous gift, that the same would be ready as a generous gift, and not as *one grudgingly given due to greediness.*

- Planning and preparing might take away the desire to give.
 - Maybe you've saved up to give a larger gift...
 - ...looking at the money and thinking of all the things you could do with it.
- If you can't give it out of generosity...but only out of obligation...
 - ...think twice about it
- **DON'T LET PREPLANNING TURN GIVING FROM A GET-TO TO A HAVE-TO.**

⁶ Now I say this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows generously will also reap generously.

- The picture is a farmer with a bag of seed...
 - spreading generously will have better results...
 - ...than spreading sparingly
- **TIGHTFISTED GIVING IS OF LITTLE BENEFIT TO BOTH THE GIVER AND RECEIVER. GENEROUS GIVING WILL HAVE GREATER IMPACT ON BOTH.**
- This is not a comment on the amount given.
 - No comment on how large the bag of seed is
 - It is not equating the dollar amount of your gift...
 - ...with the value of your sacrifice
 - that's not the way the kingdom of God works

Luke 21:1-4

¹ Now He looked up and saw the wealthy putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² And He saw a poor widow putting in two lepta coins. ³ And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴ for they all contributed to the offering from their surplus; but she, from her poverty, put in all that she had to live on."

- Two lepta = \$0.14
- In practical terms...almost no practical impact
 - In kingdom terms...a massive impact
- This doesn't cancel out any of the other principles:
 - giving what you're able to give
 - give because you want to give
 - don't give beyond your means
- Encouragement:
 - be generous
 - live with an open hand

⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- **SOMEONE WHO IS HESITANT TO GIVE OR GIVES OUT OF GUILT SHOULD NOT GIVE.**
 - i.e. plate passing/eyes watching OR "I guess I probably should."
 - ...these are not reasons to give
- **GOD LOVES IT WHEN SOMEONE IS EXCITED ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE.**

- o cheerful (*ἰλαρός*) = hilarious giver
- o someone who...
 - wants to give/help out
 - is happy about it
 - is excited about the opportunity they have to help/meet needs
- o i.e. electrical work

⁸ And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written: “He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.”

- Psalm 112 (Mike read)
 - o about the people who fear Yahweh & loves His Word
 - o good things come from their well-lived life
 - o The part that is quoted here

Psalm 112:9a

⁹ He has given freely to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.

- o scattered abroad = freely (*patzar*) = scatter freely...i.e. seed
- IDEA: Gives us more than we need...
 - o for the express purpose of giving us the opportunity to freely give to others
 - o i.e. family that gave their kids an allowance in 2-parts (keep/give away)
- **GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN US THE RESOURCES TO BE ABLE TO GENEROUSLY GIVE TO OTHERS.**
- “His righteousness endures forever” ...usually about God
 - o This is talking about the giver
- **GENEROUS GIVING IS AN ACT THAT ECHOES IN ETERNITY.**

¹⁰ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

- It is important to be clear on the source of our giving.
- This is further reinforcing the point we just had:
 - o **GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN US THE RESOURCES TO BE ABLE TO GENEROUSLY GIVE TO OTHERS.**

¹² For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, ¹⁴ while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

- GIVING IS EFFECTIVE IN BOTH MEETING AN IMMEDIATE NEED AND ALSO IN INSPIRING THE RECEIVER TO PRAISE GOD AS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE.

Do you have plan for your giving? How is that working for you?

What have you seen as the benefits to yourself of giving to others?

What are some ways that Paul's description of giving has made you think differently about giving?

"I do not believe one can set up a rule for one's giving. There ought to be a great readiness of impulse and a great carefulness of calculation. But I believe that giving ought to be a habit, a regular part of one's life, one which one dares not omit. It is a form of saying 'Thank You' to God. It is a form of putting oneself in a state of continual reminding that one does not own these things but is simply, for a time, their trustee." – Unknown Source