

Main Text: 2 Cor. 8: 1-9

Theme Verse: Matthew 6: 33-34 ***But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.***

Series Goal: To discover what the New Testament teaches regarding the stewardship of all that God has given, and how to tap into the blessing of NT generosity.

Introduction: A one stop shop for learning about New Testament Generosity: 2 Cor. 8.

8 We want you to know, brothers, about the **grace** of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of **grace**.

⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this **act of grace** also.

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

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 by his poverty might become rich.

What can we learn from the churches of Macedonia regarding New Testament Generosity?

There are five incredible lessons from the churches of Macedonia that will enlighten us.

Giving of our resources is a natural overflow of our relationship with God.

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

- It is interesting to me that we do not find any specific instruction regarding “tithing” in any of Paul’s letters.
- So let’s just ask the obvious answer...why?
- Why is it that we do not find specific instruction?
- One might look at that and conclude that it must not be important or relevant.
- One might conclude that tithing is not a NT principle and therefore we shouldn’t.
- AND FOR THOSE who are looking for an excuse to not support the church with their money...they will likely come to those superficial conclusions. **(Don’t mistake your google search for my theological degrees.)**
- BUT WHAT IS THE ANSWER...perhaps the reason the early church didn’t get much instruction was because this was at least one area of their faith that was just too obvious.
- We don’t have to teach fish to swim or babies to cry! Those things come naturally.
- Paul did not have to teach them because THEY GOT IT! God gave himself for them, they gave themselves to God, and then they gave themselves to God’s mission.
- So now we get to the Corinthian church and what does Paul do to encourage them with financial giving? Does he limit it to teachings on 10%? No! He points to the church of Macedonia. He says, “See what they did? Do it that way!”

Giving of our resources is just as much a part of our spiritual journey as anything else.

⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

- The Corinthian church had some major issues. But they got some things right too.

1Cor. 1:4-7

⁴ I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. ⁵ Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. ⁶ This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. ⁷ Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Paul teaches them that their spiritual gifts is not the end all.
- Paul teaches clearly that they must add financial gifts to the repertoire.
- Paul teaches that we should **excel** in this grace.
- Excel here means: *to go beyond the expected measure... (10th?)*

Giving of our resources may not be a command but it IS A PROOF.

⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

2 Cor. 9:7

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

- Do I see Paul commanding the people to give money or a particular percentage of money?
- Do I see Paul asking for an check? Does he have a speaking fee?
- It may not be a command BUT IT IS A PROOF!
- Money gives evidence to what we find important!
- Money gives evidence to what we prioritize.
- If a person does not give what they can give, then they are leaving something out.

Giving of our resources is not seasonal or circumstantial.

² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

- **Poverty is not an excuse.**
- **Hardship is not an excuse.**
- **Lack is not an excuse.**

We all have something to give and God is able to multiply it, but it can't multiply while it remains in our hands.

Giving of our resources is all about Grace.

¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of **grace**.

⁷ —see that you excel in this act of **grace** also.

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 by his poverty might become rich.

- When you see the word GRACE I want you to think EMPOWERMENT.
- 4 times the act of giving finances is referred to as an act of Grace.
- God empowers us so that we can empower others.