

2 CORINTHIANS, PART II

STUDY NUMBER FOURTEEN – 2 Cor. 8:1-6

TEXT:

- v. 1 Now, brethren, we are making known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
- v. 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their liberality.
- v. 3 For I am testifying the according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,
- v. 4 begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.
- v. 5 And not even as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.
- v. 6 Consequently we urged Titus that even as he made a beginning on a previous occasion, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

America, Why I Love Her

John Wayne

(from CD Patriotic Echoes from the Past #2)

You ask me why I love her? Well, give me time, and I'll explain
Have you seen a Kansas sunset or an Arizona rain?
Have you drifted on a bayou down Louisiana way?
Have you watched the cold fog drifting over San Francisco Bay?

Have you heard a Bobwhite calling in the Carolina pines?
Or heard the bellow of a diesel in the Appalachia mines?
Does the call of Niagara thrill you when you hear her waters roar?
Do you look with awe and wonder at a Massachusetts shore...
Where men who braved a hard new world, first stepped on Plymouth Rock?
And do you think of them when you stroll along a New York City dock?

Have you seen a snowflake drifting in the Rockies...way up high?
Have you seen the sun come blazing down from a bright Nevada sky?
Do you hail to the Columbia as she rushes to the sea...
Or bow your head at Gettysburg...in our struggle to be free?

Have you seen the mighty Tetons?...Have you watched an eagle soar?
Have you seen the Mississippi roll along Missouri's shore?
Have you felt a chill at Michigan, when on a winter's day,
Her waters rage along the shore in a thunderous display?
Does the word "Aloha"...make you warm?
Do you stare in disbelief when you see the surf come roaring in at Waimea Reef?

From Alaska's gold to the Everglades...from the Rio Grande to Maine...
My heart cries out...my pulse runs fast at the might of her domain.
You ask me why I love her?...I've a million reasons why.
My beautiful America...beneath God's wide, wide sky.

The Fighting side of Me
Merle Haggard
(from CD Patriotic Echoes from the Past #2)

I hear people talkin' bad,
About the way they have to live here in this country,
Harpin' on the wars we fight,
An' gripin' 'bout the way things oughta be.
An' I don't mind 'em switchin' sides,
An' standin' up for things they believe in.
When they're runnin' down our country, man,
They're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.

They're walkin' on the fightin' side of me,
Runnin' down a way of life,
Our fightin' men have fought and died to keep.
If you don't love it, leave it:
Let this song that I'm singin' be a warnin'.
If you're runnin' down our country, hoss,
You're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.

I read about some squirrely guy,
Who claims that he just don't believe in fightin'.
An' I wonder just how long,
The rest of us can count on bein' free.
They love our milk an' honey,
But they preach about some other way of livin'.
When they're runnin' down my country, man
They're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.

You're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.
Runnin' down a way of life,
Our fightin' men have fought and died to keep.
If you don't love it, leave it:
Let this song that I'm singin' be a warnin'.
If you're runnin' down our country, hoss
You're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.'

Paul now turns to money in chapters 8&9! Perfect timing!

Paul told the Galatians: 6:6 – “And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.”

I Cor. 16:1, 2

“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”

Crown Financial Ministries Teaching People God’s Financial Principles

Recent surveys tell us that:

- 43% spend more than they earn
- Average family credit card debt in excess of \$9000
- 48% pay only minimum payments each month
- 40% of adults give nothing
- 17% say they tithe; 4% actually do
- \$16 a week or 2.2% of income is the average donation
- 33% “can’t get ahead” due to debt
- Bankruptcies: 1.66M – 5.2% increase last year
- Money is the #1 cause of marital conflict
- \$745 billion owed on credit cards

Could that be why there are more than 2350 verses in the Bible dealing with money and possessions and that Jesus taught more on the subject than almost any other? God knew that money and possessions would be the primary competitor for first place in our lives and that how we handle money would influence our fellowship with Christ since much of our lives revolves around the use of money.

INTRODUCTION:

God made the sun.
 It gives.
God made the moon
 It gives.
God made the stars
 They give.
God made the air
 It gives.
God made the clouds
 They give.
God made the earth

It gives.
God made the sea
It gives.
God made the trees
They give.
God made the flowers
They give.
God made the fowls
They give.
God made the beasts
They give.
God made the plants
They give.
God made man
He – oops!

(Blessings Out of Buffetings by Alan Redpath)

Let me tell you a story. In the country of Palestine there are two seas, both fed by the same river, the river Jordan. If you went alongside one of those seas, you would find children playing by the banks, trees growing alongside, and life apparent everywhere. But you would find people avoid traveling anywhere near the other sea; they take another route and go in another direction. There is no sign of life or vegetation—there is nothing at all but barrenness.

What is the difference between the two? There is no difference in the source of supply, for the same river supplies both. But the difference is this: that for every drop of water that goes into Galilee (that, of course, is the first sea) another drop goes out. What it receives, it gives. It takes in, it gives out. And all around it is life, blossoming fruit, abundance. But the other sea jealously hoards its resources and refuses to let out a single drop. It keeps everything it takes in. And its name is Dead.

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(How to Get Along with Difficult People by Florence Littauer)

The voice of Tammy Talk, the telehost, thrills, “Thank you, thank you, thank you for tuning in today! Many of you listeners have been with us since we worshipped in the original ‘little brown church in the vale’ before we built, with your generous contributions, The Big Brown Church on the Move. You may remember when Past-Pastor Paul Perfect was called to the pulpit and pondered over the pitiful plight of the church plant. You may be one of the thousands who responded to his plea for plentiful provision for God’s people. You may be among those who received the snake-skin-covered Bible with your own initials in rhinestones at absolutely no charge when you sent in 10,000 dollars to the building fund. Or you might be the one who bought a brick at 500 dollars apiece, or a thousand dollars if you wanted your name etched on the brick before it was plastered in place personally by the parishioner who paid for it. So many of you listeners have been faithful to your pledges, so keep those cards and letters coming. Our

new financial opportunity for this month will allow you to put a deposit on your own time-share room, with a view of Mount Rushmore, in the Helen Brown Rice Retirement Residence, named for the daughter of our founder Little Brown. The first hundred people rushing in their riches will receive a string of priceless pearl prayer beads as a generous gift reminding them to pray for the rest of the payments. Be among the first to secure your spot in the sanctity of this senior citizen city of tomorrow.”

p. 14

(Bob Pierce: This One Thing I Do by Franklin Graham and Jeanette Lockerbie)

“Well, as we left the church John said, ‘Let’s talk a bit. You know how anxious I am that these pilots of mine come to know the Lord. I know you’ve preached the gospel each night, and they’re heard. But there’s one—and he’s very dear to me—who because of his tight schedule didn’t get to hear you even once. Now I have a request to make. I hate to ask you, but would you be willing to give up your comfortable seat on a regular plane? You see, once a week I send my DC-3 cargo plane to Hong Kong. It goes tomorrow and this man is piloting it. Would you be willing to sit alongside him in the cockpit and talk to him about Jesus on that eight-hour trip to Hong Kong?’

“There was no way he could know I had no ‘comfortable seat,’ and I didn’t tell him. ‘Well,; I answered, ‘since you put it that way, John.’ I’ll never know why the Lord had me keep my mouth shut. It’s probably the only time that, when I needed money, I didn’t make the whole world know it!

p. 64

(Traits of a Healthy Family by Dolores Curran)

Robert Frost said, “Americans are like a rich father who wishes he knew how to give his sons the hardships that made him rich.” We’re like that father: We know our family life might be better off with less, but we enjoy good food, nice things, and the security and confidence that money brings.

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(II Corinthians by J. Vernon McGee)

However, he changes the subject abruptly. He now talks about the collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem. He brings us back to earth with a thump! The subject changes from Christian living to Christian giving, which is as vital a part as living.

This section, which includes chapters 8 and 9, divides this way:

1. Example of Christian Giving, chapter 8:1-6
2. Exhortation to Christian Giving, chapter 8:7-15
3. Explanation of Christian Giving, chapter 8:16-9:5
4. Encouragement to Christian Giving, chapter 9:6-15

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The Lesson of the Squirrel

Our dog Dusty learned this principle the hard way. She loved to chase the squirrels that came into our yard. If one appeared, she took after it in a flash, chasing it up the maple tree and barking at it furiously. Although she chased them for 6 years, she never caught one. But all that changed one winter day. A squirrel warmed by the sun was out in the yard, and Dusty went after it. With snow on the ground, the squirrel couldn't scamper as fast as usual-and Dusty caught it! She finally had what she always wanted, but soon wished she didn't. The terrified squirrel wrapped itself around Dusty's nose, kicked her throat furiously with its hind feet, and bit her under the chin. Dusty couldn't let go fast enough. She came out of the fracas with a deep gash and several nasty scratches. I've noticed now that even though she still chases squirrels, she makes sure they get away.

You can see the point. If we insist on getting what we want-wealth, fame, love, or whatever-it could hurt us. If it's illegitimate, it surely will. Let's learn the lesson of the squirrel.

No greater joy and peace we know
Than when we choose a heavenly goal;
But when we covet worldly gain,
We choose a path that brings us pain.

-D.J.D.

The most disappointed people in the world are those who get what's coming to them.

Chapters 8 and 9 form kind of a parenthesis in the Second Corinthians letter and present the greatest Scriptural instruction on grace giving.

I have divided the passage into two parts:

1. THE REPORT – verses 1-5
2. THE REQUEST – verse 6

- v. 1 Now, brethren, we are making known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

The apostle Paul calls the Corinthians "brethren," which is a title of relationship.

"WE ARE MAKING KNOWN TO YOU THE GRACE OF GOD"

Under the law and living in legalism, they were giving the tithe, or 10%. Now he wants to make report of the grace of God, not the law of God.

(Caring Enough to Not Forgive by David Augsburger)

"I was an orphaned refugee kid when World War II ended," Friedrich explains. "The childless couple who gave me a home until I left as a teenager were incredibly strict. Apparently I was in rags when they found me; I remember their giving me clean,

unpatched, warm used clothes. They burned my old ones in the kitchen stove as I watched. All but the shoes. At the last moment, father rescued them, and placed them on the mantel. They stayed there, I heard, until he died. They were only the battered uppers, laced with twine. The soles had long since worn away, and the bottoms were stuffed with cardboard each morning to protect the bare feet inside.

"I soon learned how useful they would be to him. When I disappoint him in some way, he would walk to the mantel and pick up the shoes. When I resisted the strict control or complained about anything other kids were able to do and I was not allowed, he would look at the shoes. By the time I was a teenager, he didn't need to haul them down to remind me how much he and my mother had done for me, a glance was enough.

"When at 16 I finally protested being intimidated with worn out shoes, father looked at me as if I had struck him. 'I should thin,' he said stiffly, 'that you'd be grateful we never tried to make you feel grateful.'

"I'd given anything as a boy to feel free of obligations, to give them my thanks as a gift, but it wasn't possible. I owed them everything except my life, and they had saved that, so by the time I was able to put my predicament into words, I no longer felt grateful at all."

pp. 12-13

When our giving is on the basis of grace, there is deep sacrificial gratitude involved in that which we give.

Plummer in translating this first verse, says,

God's grace has been and still is operating there, producing in the converts a marvelous degree of Christian generosity.

"NOW, BRETHREN, WE ARE MAKING KNOWN TO YOU THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN IN THE CHURCHES OF MACEDONIA,"

These churches that Paul is speaking about here are churches that are 250 miles north from Corinth in the province of Macedonia.

They are the churches of:

Philippi
Thessalonica
Berea

The record of the founding of the Philippian church is in Acts 16 when Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke set sail from Troas because of Paul's vision in the night from a man of Macedonia appealing to him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Leaving Philippi and going on to Thessalonica was the next part of the second missionary journey, and then from there to Berea because of the intense persecution in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

The Jews who had stirred up the trouble in Thessalonica arrived at Berea, and so Paul left Silas and Timothy there to continue the ministry while he fled by himself southward to Athens and ultimately to Corinth.

- v. 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their liberality.

The thing that is so impressive about this grace gift that has been given is that if ever any churches had an excuse for not being generous and giving to help meet this need in Jerusalem, it would have been the churches of Macedonia.

Plummer points out,

The Romans had been very hard on these Macedonians; they had taken possession of the gold and silver mines which were rich sources of revenue, and had taxed the right of smelting copper and iron; they had also reserved to themselves the importation of salt and the felling of timber for building ships. The Macedonians said that their nation was like a lacerated and disjointed animal. On the top of this had come persecution in the case of Christian converts. But God had enabled these impoverished people to do great things for their fellow-Christians; no doubt, with the grace of God, the Corinthians would do the like.

“THAT IN A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION”

This phrase could be translated literally as follows:

“That in much testing of affliction”

The Macedonians were being refined by the tests that were coming into their lives. God often does that with His children to measure their progress.

2 Cor. 2:9

For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

Genesis 22:1, 2

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Mark 4:35-41

And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

James 1:2, 3

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

1 Thess. 3:3, 4

So that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

Annie Johnson Flint in a little poetic piece called "But God..." speaks to this issue:

I know not, but God knows;
 Oh, blessed rest from fear!
All my unfolding days
 To Him are plain and clear.
Each anxious, puzzled "Why?"
 From doubt or dread that grows
Finds answer in this thought:
 I know not, but He knows.

I cannot, but God can;
 Oh, balm for all my care!
The burden that I drop
 His hand will lift and bear,
Though eagle pinions tire,--

I walk where once I ran,--
This is my strength, to know
I cannot, but God can.

I see not, but God sees;
Oh, all-sufficient light!
My dark and hidden way
To Him is always bright.
My strained and peering eyes
May close in restful ease,
And I in peace may sleep;
I see not, but He sees.

Make no mistake about it! This testing was severe and long.

“THAT IN A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION, THEIR ABUNDANCE OF JOY
AND THEIR DEEP POVERTY”

There are three characteristics that are true of these Macedonian Christians. While they are in this great ordeal of affliction:

1. IN A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION
2. THERE IS ABUNDANCE OF JOY.
3. THERE IS DEEP POVERTY

Pure joy was the earmark of the early church, no matter how hard or difficult the circumstances were.

The Philippians probably learned this from Paul and Silas as they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God in the prison at midnight after being beaten publicly in the city square that afternoon.

While Paul is in a Roman prison, he writes to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice, in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

Acts 5:41

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

They were characterized not only with an abundance of joy, but also their deep poverty.

They were hurting both physically and financially.

1 Thess. 1:6

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

1 Thess. 2:14

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews.

(The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians by Charles R. Erdman)

In addition to their “affliction,” Paul makes mention of “their deep poverty.” This also was an experience with which the members of the early church were only too well acquainted. It is true, however, that Macedonia felt in a peculiar measure the oppression of Roman rule, and that as a colony it was continually complaining of its commercial difficulties and its financial straits. What Paul tells his Corinthian readers is that the test of affliction and the pitiful poverty issued in a rich stream of liberality. This last word originally meant simplicity or simple-mindedness of purpose which is directed toward the relief of others, with no selfish thought and no ulterior motive in mind; hence the word came to denote, as it does here, generosity or liberality. If “sincerity” is the word which embodies the message of the first seven chapters of this letter, liberality is the term which states the theme of the eight and ninth chapters.

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Luke 21:1-4

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

The story is told of a Christian businessman who was touring Korea, and he took a picture of a Korean father guiding a plow which his son pulled. Later he found out that the father had given his ox to the church.

God gives the grace of a giving heart and also the gift is a grace.

“THAT IN A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION, THEIR ABUNDANCE OF JOY AND THEIR DEEP POVERTY OVERFLOWED INTO THE WEALTH OF THEIR LIBERALITY.”

There are two real enigmas in this verse:

1. GREAT AFFLICTION & ABUNDANT JOY
2. DEEP POVERTY & LIBERALITY

Plummer translates this last phrase:

“as issued in a rich stream of simple-minded generosity”

(II Corinthians by J. Vernon McGee)

The story is told of a Scottish church that was attempting to raise money for a new building. One member of the church was a rich Scot who was known to be worth fifty thousands pounds. He was a typical Scot and was pretty stingy, like most of us are. A deacon came to see him and asked, “Brother, how much money are you going to give for the new church?” The Scot replied, “Oh, I guess I’ll be able to put in the widow’s mite.” The deacon called out in the next meeting, “Brethren, we have all the money we need. This brother is going to give fifty thousand pounds.” The man was amazed. “I didn’t say I would give fifty thousand pounds; I said I would give the widow’s mite.” The deacon replied, “Well, she gave her all, and I thought that is what you meant to give!” It is interesting that God notes what you give but also what you keep for yourself.

In another church they were taking up an offering for a building program. The man calling on one of the members said to him, “How much are you going to give, brother?” “Well,” he said, “I guess I could give ten dollars and not feel it.” The man replied, “Then why don’t you make it twenty dollars and feel it?” You see, the blessing only comes when you feel it, my friend. This is the meaning of “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

p. 99

(The Quest for Character by Charles R. Swindoll)

When the early Church met, magnetic charm brought joy. When they prayed, there was power. When they gave, there was generosity. When they embraced, there was love. When they spoke, there was authenticity. When they left, there were tears. Nineteen centuries later, the Church continues. Our family is much bigger and more influential. But is it better?

p. 148

(Failure: The Back Door to Success by Erwin W. Lutzer)

Listen to a conversation in a barber shop or at a lunch counter. You will soon learn that the most popular basis of comparison is money. You would think that the chief end of man is to earn money and enjoy it forever!

A wife who compares herself with her friends is tempted to become dissatisfied with her husband’s income. She feels cheated because she cannot buy the clothes or furniture her wealthy friends enjoy. She is in bondage to the social status of her neighbors.

If money is a basis of judging success or failure, it is obvious that Jesus Christ was a failure! Consider this: when He had to pay taxes, He asked Peter to find a coin in a fish's mouth. Why? He didn't have a coin of His own!

Christ was born under the shelter of a stable's roof. Most of us would be appalled if our children could not be born in a modern hospital! When He died, the soldiers cast lots for His garment. That was all He owned of this world's goods. He died naked, in the presence of gawking bystanders.

Was Christ a failure? Yes, if money is the standard by which He is judged. The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man did not have a place He could call home.

p. 21

(How to Discipline Your Children by Walter Henrichsen)

It is at this point that the unbeliever is often wiser than the children of light. The unbeliever thinks he is giving his life in exchange for that which is the most significant when he gives it for riches. But when the believers gives his life for riches, he knows he is giving it for that which is least significant, and in the process he is showing the world and his family a faulty value system.

With piercing rhetoric Jesus drives home the application for believers: Use your riches to your advantage. Use your riches for that which is eternal rather than for that which is temporal, and for people instead of for that which someday will perish. As Christians you are not in the land of the living moving toward the land of the dying. Rather, you are in the land of the dying moving toward the land of the living. Therefore, live like it. Make sure your value system is a reflection of this fact.

p. 41

Investing our time for our children is different than investing our time in our children. Many parents spend the bulks of their energies acquiring things and justifying it with, "I am doing it for my family." Our families don't need material things half as badly as they need our companionship. If this sounds radical and somewhat hard, it is because we have allowed ourselves to drift into conformity with our society's way of thinking.

p. 43

The Bible teaches that two and only two things last forever: people and the Word of God. To the degree that we give ourselves to these two eternal investments, we will be fulfilling God's purpose for our lives—and we will be reproducing the same in the lives of our progeny.

p. 48

"THAT IN A GREAT ORDEAL OF AFFLICTION, THEIR ABUNDANCE OF JOY AND THEIR DEEP POVERTY OVERFLOWED INTO THE WEALTH OF THEIR LIBERALITY."

Proverbs 11:24, 25

One man gives freely, yet gains even more;
Another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.
A generous man will prosper;
He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

The word translated “liberality” here in this verse is a very interesting word. It can also mean “simplicity or sincerity,” “uprightness,” “single-mindedness.”

It is the same word used in 2 Corinthians 11:3

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

James 1:8

Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Matt. 6:24

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.

Matt. 6:33

“But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

2 Cor. 5:9

Therefore also we have as our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

In no other Christian grace is the struggle more obvious between the old nature and the new nature than in the realm of giving.

Our Daily Bread for October 24 says,

Many Christians struggle to overcome the sin of greed. When they fully yield themselves to the Lord, however, they begin to support the Lord’s work spontaneously and gladly.

Some years ago I read an interesting account of a miserly Christian who finally gained the victory over his grasping, self-centered old nature and became a generous man. Being elderly and nearly deaf, he would always sit as close to the pulpit as possible whenever he went to church. He’s cup his hand behind his ear in order to catch every word of the preacher. One morning when the sermon was on “Cheerful Giving,” the man

was somewhat moved and murmured to himself, "I'll give \$10." But at the close of the appeal he was deeply convicted and exclaimed under his breath, "No, I'll make it \$50!" When the deacons started taking the collection, however, his high resolve began to weaken. As he debated with himself, he didn't realize that his whispers were so loud that many people could hear him. The collection plate finally reached him, and those sitting nearby could see the agony of his struggle with greed. Suddenly he gained the victory, and putting his well-filled billfold into the offering plate, he muttered, "Now squirm, old nature!" A new-found joy immediately flooded his soul. He had given till it felt good, and that experience became a turning point in his Christian life, for he had conquered his covetousness.

Penny-pinching reluctance in supporting the Lord's work is offensive to Him, for "God loves a cheerful giver!"

Speak to us, Lord, till shamed by Thy great giving;
Our hands unclasp to set our treasures free;
Our wills, our love, our dear ones, our possessions,
All gladly yielded, gracious Lord, to Thee.
■ Anon.

Giving is the thermometer of our love!

Matt. 6:21

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

It is only when the issue is settled that all belongs to Him, that we are finally freed to give freely in the face of need.

(The Quest for Character by Charles R. Swindoll)

Lord of reality
make me real
not plastic
synthetic
pretend phony
an actor playing out his part
hypocrite.
I don't want
to keep a prayer list
but to pray
nor agonize to find Your will
but to obey
what I already know
to argue
theories of inspiration
but submit to Your Word.

I don't want
to explain the difference
between eros and philos
and agape
but to love.
I don't want
to sing as if I mean it
I want to mean it.
I don't want
to tell it like it is
but to be it
like you want it.
I don't want
to think another needs me
but I need him
else I'm not complete.
I don't want
to tell others how to do it
but to do it
to have to be always right
but to admit it when I'm wrong.
I don't want to be a census taker
but an obstetrician
nor an involved person, a professional
but a friend.
I don't want to be insensitive
but to hurt where other people hurt
nor to say I know how you feel
but to say God knows
and I'll try
if you'll be patient with me
and meanwhile I'll be quiet.
I don't want to scorn the clichés of others
but to mean everything I say
including this.

Appropriately, Joe Bayly called that prayer "A Psalm of Single-mindedness."
pp. 58-59

- v. 3 For I am testifying that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord.

Now the apostle states the reason for the things he has had to say in verse 2: "I am testifying (telling the truth) that according to their ability, and beyond their ability."

It was ACCORDING TO and BEYOND that they gave of their own accord.

There was no pressure, no emotional stories, no pledge cards. They gave of their own accord.

Philippians 4:10-19

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

(Be Encouraged by Warren W. Wiersbe)

It is possible to give generously but not give enthusiastically. "The preacher says I should give until it hurts," said a miserly church member, "but for me, it hurts just to think about giving!"

(An Ounce of Prevention by Bruce Narramore)

A story is told of two grade school children coming home from school. The older one said to the younger one, "I carried books for her twice and bought her ice cream once. Do you think I ought to kiss her?" The younger one thought a moment and replied, "Naw, I don't think you have to kiss her. I think you've done enough already."
p. 119

- v. 4 begging us with much entreaty (earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

It was not only of their own accord but they were actually begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

When it speaks of them doing this on their own accord, they wanted to do it. The word "begging" here tells us they were "desiring" to do it.

Acts 2:44-47

And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32-37

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of lands or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

2 Cor. 9:7

Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Paul had set up the rots fund for the relief of the saints. The folks in Macedonia had been giving to it of their own accord, actually begging for the favor of taking part in this project.

They saw in this a real opportunity for ministry and wanted to have a part in it.

(Choosing Plan A in a Plan B World by Jerry White)

By contrast, it was said of John Wesley that he was “a man who died leaving behind nothing but his Bible, his horse, and the Methodist Church.”

p. 61

The sequence goes something like this:

Security—greed—power—security. Security for the present. Greed for more of everything. Power for the ego. Security for the future.

p. 90

(Bob Pierce: This One Thing I Do by Franklin Graham & Jeanette Lockerbie)

There was one man, in particular, that Dr. Bob used as an example, a Michigan farmer named Lee. I'll let you read Dr. Bob's own words about this "little" giver.

"Except for large gifts from foundations, the gifts that are given to Samaritan's Purse are from supporters who give as the widow gave her mites. In God's sight their gifts are large.

"One man who gave consistently, intrigued me for some reason. He was so faithful. One year he gave the entire amount he got for his bean crop—about six hundred dollars. He gave recklessly to Jesus, and I would write him and encourage him, telling him what his gifts were doing. When I had to go to Detroit one time, I said to myself, Michigan is Michigan; wherever my friend Lee lives, I'm gonna go and see him and thank him personally. I rented a car and learned it was one hundred and twenty-five miles to the little town where he lived. Finding him was something else: twenty to thirty miles along a barely paved road, then a dirt road. Finally I found his farmhouse with its ancient barn.

"The sun was just going down. I saw a stooped figure of a man as I pulled into this farmyard. Obviously, he would have been six feet, if he hadn't been bent with fatigue and weariness—a man in his late seventies. He walked toward me and I said, "Lee, by any chance? My name is Bob Pierce."

"He just stood there for a moment then said, 'Dr. Bob! What are you doing 'way out here?'

"I answered, 'God sent me here, Lee, to see you—and anyway I wanted to find out what kind of a man you are, and to get to know you.'

"Well, he took me inside a house that his parents had homesteaded more than a century ago. We walked in the backdoor to a kitchen with an old-fashioned wood stove, not a modern cooking range. He had an old mangy dog that was his only companion. We sat and talked, and he told me that he and his wife had once, many years before, driven three hundred miles to hear me speak. They gave to our work then, and continued to give regularly through the years as they heard me on the radio.

"Lee lives his life in that kitchen, when he's not out breaking his back farming. He said the house was so lonely for him without his wife that he had closed it all up except the kitchen.

"He told me, 'I've outlived all my friends. I go to a little church in town, and they call sometimes to see if I've died in the night or something.' Then he said, 'Dr. Bob, the only joy I have is to send what money I can to you—to Samaritan's Purse—for all those needs. I don't need anything.'

"I thought, I doubt if he even has one suit; and here he is saying he doesn't need anything. I looked around that kitchen. There was nothing that had any value except, perhaps, the radio that brought him his gospel programs.

"The Bible says there's a day coming when the last shall be first—the least shall be the greatest. And that is when these little hidden-away givers that nobody ever writes books about or asks them to make public appearances on TV, will come into their own. Jesus will parade them. (MY friend Lee's wife will be right alongside him there.) Jesus will show them off along with that widow who gave her all; and in sight and sound of all the rest of us who may sometimes crow over how much we've done for Jesus, He will

draw to Himself and say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of your Lord.'
pp. 189-191

The need of Literature for Bangladesh would have burdened Bob Pierce's heart. As I prayerfully considered this request, I could almost hear him cheering us on with "That's a Samaritan's Purse-type need; send the check, Franklin." We did—for the full amount, 57,500. The cabled response of the delighted missionaries and their Bangalee colleagues said it all: "We prayed that our Hallelujahs would reach you!"
p. 205

- v. 5 And not even as we expected, but that gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

There is a negative and a positive in this verse:

NEGATIVELY: "Not even as we expected, but"

POSITIVELY: "they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

The secret to SACRIFICIAL STEWARDSHIP is to give ourselves first to the Lord. And when He has everything, then God gets the glory through the grace gift that results.

When the widow dropped in her two copper coins, she automatically gave herself over to God because she had nothing else left.

We have a tendency to estimate the gift by the size of the gift, and God estimates by how much we have left.

Romans 12:1, 2

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

We learned back in verse 3: "They gave of their own accord."

And now in verse 5: "They gave themselves first to the Lord."

They are just like Jesus. They gave themselves.

They gave themselves first to the Lord, and then following that giving that made themselves available to the apostles. And all of this was done by the will of God.

I ask myself the question: HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

I believe there are three things involved:

1. I GIVE ALL THAT I AM – My gifts, talents, and abilities to Him.
2. I GIVE ALL THAT I HAVE – My possessions, holding – everything are given over to Him.
3. I MAKE A DECLARATION OF BEING SUBMISSIVE AND OBEDIENT TO HIS LORDSHIP, allowing Him to be Lord of my life.

King of my life, I crown Thee now,
Thine shall the glory be;

Have thing own way, Lord! Have thing own way!
Hold o'er my being Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see
Christ only, always, Living in me!

(The Letters to the Corinthians by William Barclay)

Robert Louis Stevenson's native servants loved him. His boy used to waken every morning with a cup of tea. On one occasion his usual boy was off duty, and another boy had taken over. This boy woke him not only with a cup of tea but also with a beautifully cooked omelet. Stevenson thanked him and said, "Great is your forethought." "No, master," said the boy, "great is my love." It is God alone who can put into our hearts the love which is the essence of the generous spirit.
p. 263

(Close to His Majesty by David C. Needham with Larry Libby)

There is a story that came out of China many years ago of a missionary who found it necessary to be gone from his family for an extended time. Aware that his leaving would not be understood by his youngest daughter, he placed in his coat pocket a rare treat in that part of China—a bright red apple—to give her as he boarded the train.

Finally the moment came. He embraced his wife and then each of the older children. And then it was his little girl's turn. Picking her up in his arms, he pressed the apple into her chubby hand, hoping that this special gift would soften the impact of his leaving. But instead, as he looked back from the slowly departing train, he saw the apple slip from her hand and roll across the platform. Tears streaming down her face, she ran alongside the train sobbing, "Daddy, I don't want what you give—I want you!"

That's it! That is the wonder of God's love! He does not simply give "things." He gives Himself.
pp. 83-84

(How to Discipline Your Children by Walter Henrichsen)

He best expressed it when he said, “I want to do what the Lord wants, but I want His will to be what I want.” I thought at the time, this is where most Christians live.

p. 108

1. Submission. You begin with an attitude of neutrality. Whatever the desire, lay it before the Lord and surrender to His perfect will. Until you unwrap your fingers from around the desire and give it to God—until you can say, “Your will, not my will be done” – you aren’t ready to know the will of God.
2. Word of God. How do the Scriptures enlighten you on the subject? Begin by checking in the Word of God to see if the issue is referred to. God has given you His Word to help you know His will. The psalmist says, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Ps. 119:105).
3. Counsel. Solomon says, “In the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14, KJV). A wise Christian will follow the counsel of proven men. Be careful that you don’t pick counselors that you know will confirm you in your prejudices.
4. Peace. One of the indicators of the Holy Spirit’s leading is peace. His will is accompanied by an inner quietness and assurance. Isaiah says, “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever” (32:17, KJV)
5. Circumstances. This is one of the most objective ways God uses in leading His children. You pray about whether to buy a particular house or not, and as you pray someone else buys it. The will of God has been revealed (Rom. 8:28).

All five of these guides are gracious ways God uses to assist His children in knowing His will—without negating the need to walk by faith. All five, of course, presuppose an attitude of prayer. As you pray the Holy Spirit leads.

p. 114

Our Daily Bread for July 12 has the following story:

On one occasion George W. Truett, an outstanding preacher of his day, was asked to help a struggling congregation raise money for their church building. The amount still needed was \$6,500. Truett called it “the slowest, most reluctant effort to obtain funds” he had ever encountered. When the people refused to pledge more than \$3,000, he exclaimed in exasperation, “What do you expect of me? I don’t have the other \$3,500 you need to reach your goal. I’m just a guest here today!”

Suddenly a woman near the back stood up to speak. Looking at her husband seated on the platform recording the pledges, she said in a quivering voice, “Charlie, I wonder if you would be willing for us to give our little home? We were offered exactly \$3,500 cash for it yesterday. If the Savior gave His life for us, wouldn’t He be pleased if we made this sacrifice for Him?” Truett says, “The fine fellow responded with equal generosity, ‘Yes, Jennie, I was thinking the same thing.’ Turning to me with tears in his eyes, he said, ‘Brother Truett, if it’s needed, we’ll raise our pledge by \$3,500.’ Silence

reigned for a few moments, and then some of the people began to cry. Those who 15 minutes earlier had sat in silence now either added their names to the list or increased their donations. In a short time their goal had been achieved, and Charlie and Jennie didn't have to forfeit their home."

Have you ever given sacrificially?

--H.B.G.

Grant us, Lord, the grace of giving
With a spirit large and free,
That our lives and all our living
We may consecrate to Thee.

--Murray

God judges what we give by what we keep.

(II Corinthians by H.A. Ironside)

"Naught that I have my own I call,
I told it for the Giver;
My heart, my strength, my life, my all,
Are His, and His forever."

p. 197

In our study we turn from THE REPORT in the first 5 verses, to THE REQUEST of the apostle in verse 6.

v. 6 Consequently we urged Titus that even as he made a beginning on a previous occasion, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

Evidently, the folks in Achaia were a little hesitant in getting warmed up about the giving for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem.

(Times Flies by Bill Cosby)

Trying to whip up Ennis's enthusiasm for track was like trying to whip up a fly's enthusiasm for taking a tour of a spider's web.

p. 119

Getting the Corinthians excited and turned on about this project is probably about the same as asking Mrs. Custer if she would like to contribute to Indian Relief.

"CONSEQUENTLY (in view of this—what has happened in the Macedonian churches) WE URGED TITUS THAT EVEN AS HE MADE A BEGINNING ON A PREVIOUS OCCASION (in other words, he had set up the fund)."

1 Cor. 16:1-9

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

“CONSEQUENTLY WE URGED TITUS THAT EVEN AS HE MADE A BEGINNING ON A PREVIOUS OCCASION, SO HE WOULD ALSO COMPLETE IN YOU THIS GRACIOUS WORK AS WELL.”

The apostle back in verse 1 made reference to the grace of God and now in verse 6 he is calling this project a “gracious work” as well.

It is not something that is required by law, but it is out of the generosity of the heart that has experienced God's grace that this giving takes place.

Matt. 25:34ff

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

Romans 15:25-28

But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: In the matter of giving, we are no longer under the law but under grace.

LESSON #2: Grace giving comes from a heart overwhelmed by the sacrificial love of God.

LESSON #3: The churches in Macedonia were suffering much testing of affliction.

LESSON #4: The testing was severe and long.

LESSON #5: Their giving came out of abundant joy and deep poverty.

LESSON #6: They were hurting both physically and financially but this did not stop their stewardship.

LESSON #7: Their single-minded devotion to God generated their gift.

LESSON #8: They gave of their own accord.

LESSON #9: They saw an opportunity for ministry in giving.

LESSON #10: They gave themselves first and then their means to support the project.

LESSON #11: It is not the size of the gift, but what we have left that the Father sees.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

LeRoy ???? – Lost Art of Disciple Making

In late 1971, Lorne Sanny, president of The Navigators, asked me to form a team of men and women to represent our organization at Campus Crusade's "Explo '72" in Dallas, Texas. We designed a display booth and prepared some materials to give away to interested people. We also obtained a British Broadcasting Company film that told the story of the conversion of James Fox, a rising, talented, and popular British motion picture actor.

I had written to James and asked if he could prepare a trailer to tack on to the end of the film that would explain the follow-up he had received after he had come to Christ. He was growing in his Christian life and was well on his way to becoming a fruitful, mature, and committed disciple of Christ. I wanted to show the film and the trailer to the

delegates at “Explo ‘72” to paint a real-life picture of what goes into the discipling ministry.

James wrote back to say that BBC had agreed to shoot it, and that we would have it in time. We received the film right on schedule, and after viewing it I wrote a note of thanks to James. Here is the letter I received in return:

Dear LeRoy:

Thank you for your letter stating that you had received the film and were happy with it.

I would like to relate an incident connected with the making of the trailer that demonstrates the kind of walk and sense of purpose in fulfilling their ministry that Doug and Leila have [Doug Sparks was the Navigator director for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and his wife, Leila, was ill with cancer at the time].

As Doug met me the night before at the station, he told me that Leila and he had been to the doctor and that the growth had been analyzed and was malignant. The following day Doug prepared the script with Chuck and myself. I saw Leila, who spoke of her interest in what I was doing and in the film. Then she cared for the whole family all day as usual.

The following day there were five of us making the film and Doug spent the whole day helping me by holding up cards on which the script was written. Leila saw to it that the crew had all they required.

But as I left the house that night, I thought, what a lot it costs to be in this ministry, where they had both been giving themselves to this film and to those who were making it, at a time when naturally their hearts might have longed to be alone with the Lord and with each other.

When I visited the home, on a trip to London, three weeks ago, Doug was in Finland, but Leila spent 45 minutes encouraging me and teaching her children to have a real interest in what other people are doing.

I believe I have seen a living example of Philippians 2:3-4 and so have been brought closer to the Lord.

Yours in Him,
James Fox

(Leila Sparks died in June 1972, shortly after I received James's letter.)

Into the Very Presence of God

To read: Matthew 26:57-68

They spit on his face and struck him with their fists. Matt. 26:67

It was early morning Iraqi time. Crouched in a modified tank, NBC News correspondent David Bloom picked up his phone and played back his messages. One was from Jim Lane, a New York financier. The two were sharing a daily, long-distance devotional time using Oswald Chamber's classic *My Utmost for His Highest*. Lane read the message for

April 5, based on a passage from Matthew: "Because of what the Son of Man went through, every human being can now get through into the very presence of God."

Moments later, Bloom climbed out of the tank, took a few steps, and collapsed. Soon after, he was ushered into the presence of God.

David's death from a pulmonary embolism devastated his family, friends, colleagues, and millions of TV viewers. At age thirty-nine, David was a rising star at NBC. Viewers looked forward to watching Bloom file his reports while bouncing across the desert on his "Bloom-mobile," face streaked with dirt, hair snapping in the wind. He loved his job, and everyone knew it.

But what most viewers did not know was that David was a committed Christian. But while he had a strong understanding of the gospel growing up, it wasn't until he was in his late thirties, according to Lane, that Bloom "effectively came to a saving knowledge of Jesus and started a real faith journey."

On the day Bloom died, Lane says, "David was in a very good place at peace with himself, his faith, and his family." That peace was reflected in the last message he would ever send to his wife, Melanie—one that reveals that in the middle of a desert battlefield, his own mortality was very much on his mind. Bloom wrote: "When the moment comes in my life when you are talking about my last day, I am determined that you and others will say, 'He was devoted to his wife and children; he was admired; he gave every ounce of his being for those whom he cared most about – not himself, but God and his family.'"

At the end of the April 5 devotional reading, Oswald Chambers writes: "The cross of Christ was...not only a sign that our Lord had triumphed, but that He had triumphed to save the human race." Those who knew Bloom thank God for that triumph in the short life of this ebullient, gifted man.

What about you? Will you be remembered for your devotion to Christ and your willingness to serve His cause with gusto? Do you live as though each day were your last?

Father, may I never forget the agony your Son endured for my sake-so that I might one day be ushered before your throne. I pray that my life will be a daily witness to my devotion to you and that on the day of my earthly death, those who know me will celebrate your triumph in my life.