

2 CORINTHIANS, PART II

STUDY NUMBER FIFTEEN – 2 Cor. 8:7-15

TEXT:

- v. 7 But just as you are abounding in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.
- v. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.
- v. 9 For you are knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being rich for your sake became poor, in order that you through His poverty might become rich.
- v. 10 And I am giving my opinion in this matter, for this is advantageous for you, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire to do it.
- v. 11 But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.
- v. 12 For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to that which a person may have not according to that which he is not having.
- v. 13 For this is not for the ease of others and difficult circumstances for you, but as a matter of equality.
- v. 14 At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, in order that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality.
- v. 15 Even as it has been written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and He who gathered little had no lack."

The Dumbest Boy

A young boy enters a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer, "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it to you."

The barber puts a dollar bill in one hand and two quarters in the other, then calls the boy over and asks, "Which do you want, son?" The boy takes the quarters and leaves.

"What did I tell you?" said the barber. "That kid never learns!"

Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of the ice cream store. "Hey, son!! May I ask you a question? Why did you take the quarters instead of the dollar bill?"

The boy licked his cone and replied, "Because the day I take the dollar, the game's over!!"

Country Preacher

I remember the story about the old country preacher
Who had a teenage son,
And it was getting time the boy should give some
Thought along the line of choosing a profession.
Like many young men, then and now,
The boy didn't really know what he wanted to do-
And he didn't seem overly concerned about it.
One day, while the boy was away at school,
His father decided to try an experiment.
What he did was, he went into the boy's room and
Placed on his study table these three objects:
A Bible, a silver dollar, and a bottle of whiskey...
"Now then," the old preacher said to himself,
"I'll just hide behind the door here, and when my son
Comes home from school this afternoon, I'll see
Which of these three objects he picks up.
If he picks up the Bible, he's going to be a preacher
Like me, and what a blessing that would be!
If he picks up the dollar, he's going to be a businessman,
And that would be o.k. too.
But if he picks up the bottle, he's going to be a drunkard –
A no-good drunkard and Lord, what a shame that would be."
The old man was anxious as he waited, and soon he
Heard his son's footsteps as he came in the house whistling
And headed back to his room.
He deposited his books on the bed, as a matter of routine,
And as he turned around to leave the room he
Spotted the objects on the table.
With a curious set in his eye, he walked over to inspect them.
What he finally did was, he picked up the Bible
And placed it under his arm
He picked up the silver dollar and dropped it into his pocket.
He uncorked the bottle and took a big drink....
Lord have mercy," the old man whispered,
"He's gonna be a politician!!"

A Tribute to Skinny Rowland through poetry:

The Road to Town (1989)

Now that old road out to the ranch,
It needs a little repair,
It has some ruts along the way,
And a pothole here and there.

Now a time or two while riding,

I couldn't tell which was which,
So I picked out the better part,
And rode home in the ditch.

Well then the road was better,
And now it's worse of course,
The last time I tried to use it,
I high centered my doggone horse.

Now the preacher came to visit,
But somewheres along the way,
He jumped in time to save his life,
But that road sucked up his shay.

The sheriff lost his buckboard,
And the doctor lost his surrey,
My wife has gone and not returned,
So my team is cause for worry.

Last week came a dun for taxes,
So I told them not to fret it,
But just to hook a buggy up,
And come on out and get it.

So now this week a ranger came,
Along with a federal inspector,
Looking for a horse and rig,
And a missing tax collector.

Well even then considering things,
It was time to fix that road,
And put some gravel here and there,
At least a wheelbarrow load.

But I've postponed that chore now,
There is a more convenient day,
My mother-in-law just sent a wire,
She's planning to come to stay.

INTRODUCTION:

The apostle's primary concern in chapter 8 and 9 has to do with the gift that is being collected for the poor saints in the Jerusalem area. These two chapters are really the heart of the New Testament teaching on one's biblical responsibility of stewardship.

(Everything to Gain by Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter)

On our Habitat for Humanity work detail in Chicago we were joined by Chuck Colson, whom we had personally never met before, but for whom we had little respect because of his statements and actions during the Watergate years, when he was quoted as saying, among other things, that he would “walk over his grandmother” to reelect Richard Nixon. We were also somewhat cynical about his supposed religious “conversion.” Now he had volunteered to help our group build new homes for poor families in the community. We quickly saw that he was at ease about his past. Interviewed the first morning on one of the television talk shows, Chuck said, “I don’t know what’s in store for me this week. The last time I worked for a president, I got three years!” In just a short time our remaining doubts were removed by his enthusiasm and persistence. Even when we were soaked to the skin with perspiration and almost constant rain, he never faltered as a hardworking carpenter, and we had a good time working together.
p. 114

When it come to giving, some folks will stop at nothing. --- Jimmy Townsend
p. 91

In Our Daily Bread booklet for Sunday, July 20, we read the following:

Two women walking down a city street came to a corner where a representative from a worthy charity was soliciting donations to help feed needy children. One of the women stopped and placed a large contribution in the collection box. Her companion, remembering that the woman had recently promised to make such a gift, said with a chuckle, “I’m glad you did that. Now your conscience is clear.” Her friend quietly responded, “I wasn’t thinking about my conscience, but about those starving children.” Her gift had come from a willing heart.

I wonder, when God examines our giving, how often does He find that our chief motive is to save ourselves from discomfort rather than to add to the comfort of others? What prompts us to give? Is it the fear that God won’t bless us if we don’t? Is it to impress our fellow Christians? Is it prompted by a concern for what others might say if we don’t contribute? Is it to ease our conscience? None of these motives honors God. Paul admonished us not to give “grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” Even though the believers at Corinth were willing to share what they had, Paul sent some brothers in Christ to them so that their promised gift would “be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”

As followers of Christ, we should share with others as God directs. But let’s also examine the attitude of our hearts. God wants us to give willingly.

■ R.W.D.

Grant us then the grace for giving
With a spirit large and free,
That our life and all our living
We may consecrate to Thee.

--Murray

Give not from the top of your purse
But from the bottom of your heart.

Look at the Birds

When you shift your mind into neutral and just let it idle, where do your thoughts go? Do you worry about money? We are to be careful with money, but Jesus taught that we are not to be full of care about it.

.....

Whether or not you live only for money, you'll ultimately leave it or it will leave you.

....

Does your concern for making money and keeping it overshadow your concern for doing God's will?

....

Poverty of purpose is far worse than poverty of purse.

I think it would be good for us at the beginning of this particular exposition to take a brief moment and examine some of the passages of the Scripture that are used in teaching us our responsibility in giving.

Malachi 3:8-12

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’

“In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

1 Timothy 6:6-11

But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Matt. 6:1-4

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing; that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Mat.. 6:19-21

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

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.

In our previous study in the earlier part of chap. 8, the apostle shared the tremendous witness of the churches in Macedonia who, in the midst of great affliction and deep poverty, dug down and gave even beyond their own ability.

They literally begged for the opportunity to have a part in this project.

2 Cor. 8:5, 6

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

- v. 7 But just as you are abounding in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see the you abound in this gracious work also.

In the Living Bible the verse reads as follows:

You people there are leaders in so many ways. You have so much faith, so many good preachers, so much learning, so much enthusiasm, so much love for us. Now I want you to be leaders also in the spirit of cheerful giving.

Plummer translates the verse:

Well now, as in everything ye are found to be abundant,--in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and every kind of zeal, and in the love which unites your hearts with ours, -- do see to it that in this gracious undertaking also ye are found to be abundant. The possession of so many rich gifts may well bear this noble fruit, and you ought not to fall short of your endowments.

Phillips translates the verse:

Already you are well to the fore in every good quality—you have faith, you can express that faith in words you have knowledge, enthusiasm and your love for us. Could you not add generosity to your virtues?

2 Peter 1:3-8

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love.

The apostle mentions five things here with regard to the Corinthians' quality of Christian commitment.

“BUT JUST AS YOU ARE ABOUNDING IN EVERYTHING.”

He is saying that they grade high in every category.

They are **ABOUNDING**. In other words, they are flourishing, or on a roll, when it comes to these five specific areas.

Jeremiah 17:7, 8

“But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
He will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”

Psalms 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.

The apostle specifies five areas for commendation:

1. **IN FAITH** – This is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then faith to walk with Him on a daily basis.
2. **UTTERANCE** – They are being commended for the words that they speak. These words obviously are meant to encourage, to affirm, to build up and to edify.
3. **KNOWLEDGE** – This is knowledge of the Living Word (Christ) and the written Word (the Bible).
4. The 4th word is the word I have translated **EARNESTNESS** – It is the word which means “haste” or “speed” or “hurry.” It is a word that expresses “eagerness” or “diligence” or “zeal.”

They were excited about their faith and enthusiastic about the opportunities that were theirs, and they were eager for evangelism.

5. **LOVE** – Paul says, “This is a love we inspired in you.”

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love.

2 Cor. 5:14

For the love of Christ controls us,

In the first epistle that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he devoted a whole chapter to this subject in 1 Cor. chap. 13:

1 Cor. 14:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

In the last phrase in verse 7 the apostle says, “SEE THAT YOU ABOUND IN THIS GRACIOUS WORK ALSO.”

Here the apostle is challenging and not commanding them with regard to this gift project for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

He calls giving “a gracious work.”

He has used the word “grace” a number of times previously, referring to this responsibility.

The thrust of verse 7 is “you are abounding in everything.” He singles out these five areas and then presents a challenge: “See that you abound in this gracious work of giving, just like you are abounding in all of these other areas.”

The main principle that should come out of verse 7 is: The apostle Paul calls giving “a gracious work.”

v. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

Paul, when he comes to the whole business of giving, is not going to put pressure or command them to sign pledge cards because the whole focus upon giving is that it is to be spontaneous, without any necessity placed upon the person doing the giving.

He chooses here then to CHALLENGE them rather than to COMMAND them.

Negatively: “I am not speaking this as a command”

But in contrast:

Positively: “as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.”

“The earnestness of others” refers to the folks in the Macedonian churches. This takes us back to the earlier part of the chapter.

2 Cor. 8:1-5

Now, brethren, we are making known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their liberality. For I am testifying that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty (earnestly) for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints. And not even as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Paul in this 8th verse takes a word that he has already commended them about in verse 7 and uses it to describe what had happened in the lives of the Macedonians; and that's the word: EARNESTNESS, or zeal, or eagerness.

Negatively: “I’m not speaking this as a command, but

Positively: as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.”

He is challenging them to follow the example of the Macedonians and to demonstrate this by getting involved.

The translation of the word “SINCERITY of your love” is the word used for “test.” In essence, the apostle realizes that in giving we demonstrate the sincerity of our love. Our love is tested in our giving.

Our sincerity is demonstrated when we accept the responsibility for others.

(Higher Honor by Robert Boardman)

Bamboo can serve mankind most effectively only when it dies. This is also true of the Christian. When we die to self-love and selfish interests, our usefulness is multiplied in the hands of the Master Farmer.

In our lives as Christians, God applies His rough forms and ropes to conform us to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. In some lives there is also the extra suffering of the mud mixed with acid. The pressure, the darkness inside the forms, and the searing, burning pain of acid is almost more than we can bear. We cry out for freedom and relief as we see other people around us apparently untouched.

For those who pray “not my will, but Thine be done,” it may mean the difference between becoming pulpwood and becoming a beautiful square bamboo pillar of great

worth. To be made conformable to Christ's death is, in some measure, to tread the path the He trod on His way to the Cross.
pp. 57-58

This particular verse in the Living Bible reads:

I am not giving you an order; I am not saying you must do it, but others are eager for it. This is one way to prove that your love is real, that it goes beyond mere words.

- v. 9 For you are knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He being rich for your sake became poor, in order that you through His poverty might become rich.

In this 9th verse the apostle now provides a reason for them proving the sincerity of their love: "FOR YOU ARE KNOWING (that is, knowing by personal experience) THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Here the apostle uses the word GRACE rather than giving, just like he used the term GRACIOUS WORK back in verse 7. Salvation comes to us as a gift from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf.

Isaiah 53:4-6

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgression,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

2 Cor. 5:18-21

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He entrusted to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, since God as it were is making his appeal through us; we are begging you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“FOR YOU ARE KNOWING THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT HE BEING RICH FOR YOUR SAKE BECAME POOR.”

Philippians 2:5-8

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

“THAT HE BEING RICH, FOR YOUR SAKE BECAME POOR.” The word for “poor” is the word for “beggar.” He was poverty-stricken. Who did He do this for? He did it “for your sake.”

Christ became poverty-stricken for us.

“IN ORDER THAT YOU THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME RICH.”

The purpose for His forsaking the wealth of glory for the poverty of earth was that “you through His poverty might become rich.”

His poverty is underscored in:

His birth – in a stable

His life – He had no place to lay His head.

His death – He died on the cross and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

The instrument of our wealth in Jesus Christ is through His poverty.

How is it that we become rich?

1. ETERNAL LIFE
2. OUR INHERITANCE IN JESUS CHRIST

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Plummer translates this verse:

You know how gracious the Lord Jesus Christ was. He was so rich in the glory of the Godhead; yet all for your sake He became so poor, in order that you, yes you, might become spiritually rich.

Phillips translates it:

Do you remember the generosity of Jesus Christ, the Lord of us all? He was rich beyond our telling, yet he became poor for your sakes so that his poverty might make you rich.

Mark 12:41-44

And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Our Daily Bread for July 18 had a reading called "Giving from Poverty":

There's at least one advantage of being poor—it affords an opportunity to give "more" to the Lord's work than people of wealth. Of yes, compared with the sizable sums offered by well-to-do believers, the dollars-and-cents amount is much less. Yet God doesn't measure the gift by its face value; He judges it by the sacrifice behind it. That's why Jesus put the widow's two mites higher on the scale of giving than the large contributions of the others. She gave from poverty, they from abundance.

I recently read of a Christian who lives in a small apartment. His only income is his social security check. Yet he contributes a large portion of it to help spread the gospel and assist the needy. He has scaled down his already meager existence so that he can give a maximum amount. To him it's a privilege and an indescribable blessing. Another believer comes to mind. His assets run into the millions and his contributions are substantial. God has given him the ability to make money, and he too is wholly dedicated to Him. We rejoice because of the great good such people can do. Yet, as I think of the well-to-do Christian and the "welfare" Christian, I see a degree of sacrifice open to the one that the other will never know—unless, of course, he gives his wealth away. The poor man sacrifices more to give his little gift than the rich man does to bestow his large one.

If you feel your "mite" doesn't count for much, remember, you have a special opportunity to receive a unique blessing. You can give from your "poverty"!

--D.J.D.

It's not what you'd do with a million
If riches should e'er be your lot,
But what you are doing at present
With dollars and quarters you've got.
--Anon.

We are rich only through what we give and poor only through what we keep.

(Second Corinthians – Where Life Endures by Roy L. Laurin)

A newspaperman once asked Thomas Edison this question: “Mr. Edison, what is electricity?” “I do not know,” Edison answered. “I only understand some of the things it will do.” “But how do you explain it?” the reported inquired. “I can’t explain it. It just seems to me God has given it to the world to demonstrate His power. I simply take it on faith and go on working.”
pp. 163-64

- v. 10 And I am giving my opinion in this matter, for this is advantageous for you, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire to do it.

The word AND ties us in with the illustration of the Lord Jesus in verse 9. The apostle makes it clear that this is not a command. He is simply giving his opinion in this matter, and the reason being: “FOR THIS IS ADVANTAGEOUS FOR YOU.”

Matt. 10:42

“And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”

Matt. 25:34-40

“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.’”

“AND I AM GIVING MY OPINION IN THIS MATTER, FOR THIS IS ADVANTAGEOUS FOR YOU, WHO WERE THE FIRST TO BEGIN A YEAR AGO NOT ONLY TO DO THIS BUT ALSO TO DESIRE TO DO IT.”

He concludes this 10th verse with a negative and a positive:

“Who were the first to begin a year ago—

Negatively: “not only to do this but”

Positively: “also to desire to do it.”

The Living Bible reads:

I want to suggest that you finish what you started to do a year ago, for you were not only the first to propose this idea, but the first to being doing something about it.

Plummer translates it:

I say I am not giving orders; it is just a view of the matter that I am offering you in what I write. This surely is the proper way in dealing with people like you, who were first in the field, not merely in doing something but in cherishing a desire to help, and that was as far back as last year.

Phillips translates it:

Here is my opinion in the matter. I think it would be a good thing for you, who were the first a year ago to think of helping, as well as the first to give, to carry through what you then intended to do.

(Second Corinthians: Where Life Endures by Roy L. Laurin)

It is so easy to become calloused by the frequency and the commonness of human tragedy. It is so easy to become wrapped up in the comfortable garments of our own circumstances and to build around ourselves and our domiciles the high wall of selfish indifference.

This is the surest way there is to become small and unhappy. Cultivate sympathy and carry a sensitive spirit and you will find your life flowing into channels of usefulness and happiness. There is a homely phrase “it is better to slop than to skimp.” A skimping selfishness reveals a shriveled soul. A withholding hand reveals a withered heart.

pp. 174-75

- v. 11 But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

Here the apostle does issue a command. Since they had already desired this a year ago and were working on it, his command is: "Now finish doing it also."

God delights in finishers.

John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

The Living bible says:

Having started the ball rolling so enthusiastically, you should carry this project through to completion just as gladly, giving whatever you can out of whatever you have. Let your enthusiastic idea at the start be equaled by your realistic action now.

Our Daily Bread for March 7 says:

The apostle Paul said that giving is a "grace," a lovely quality of life produced by the Holy Spirit. The Macedonian Christians had done well in this area, sharing liberally out of their poverty. The Corinthians, on the other hand, had a long way to go. They abounded in faith, speech, knowledge, and love for Paul, but were lagging in their giving. They had good intentions, but lacked follow-through. That's why Paul encouraged them to "perform the doing of it."

As a little boy was walking down the street with his mother, he told her that when he grew up and earned a lot of money he was going to help a missionary. He said, "I think I'll support a whole mission station and a hospital too." "Are you sure you'll feel that way when you get the money?" asked his mother. "Oh, I know I will!" he answered confidently. "If I had it right now, I'd give it; but you know I don't have any." Just then he spotted a coin on the sidewalk. Before his mom could get out the word "missionary," he had darted into a nearby store. Moments later he emerged with a pocketful of his favorite candy.

You may be a boy or girl with a small allowance, a teenager with a very limited income, or a college student with tight finance. It would be easy to say, "Someday I'll support my church and help with its missionary program—someday when I have more." Look again at 2 Corinthians 8:12. Giving according to what we have, not according to what we have not, honors the Lord. The key to growing in this grace is follow-through.

--D.J.D.

One grace we all should learn to show,
Is giving from a willing heart,

Yet if we wait till riches grow,
It's likely we will never start.
--D.J.D.

God entrusts us with a little to see what we'll do with a lot.

Don't Put It Off!

An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River, Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment were captured.

Nolbert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions. 'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent."

"BUT NOW FINISH DOING IT ALSO; THAT JUST AS THERE WAS THE WILLINGNESS TO DESIRE IT, SO THERE MAY BE ALSO THE COMPLETION OF IT BY YOUR ABILITY."

(The Pursuit of God by A.W.Tozer)

Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

p. 17

The apostle puts this parameter on the project in the last phrase: **"BY YOUR ABILITY."**

He wants it clear that he is not asking them to overextend themselves and to do something that they are unable to do.

- v. 12 For if the willingness is present, it is acceptable according to that which a person may have not according to that which he is not having.

The Living Bible says:

If you are really eager to give, then it isn't important how much you have to give.
God wants you to give what you have, not what you haven't.

Phillips translates it:

After all, the important thing is to be willing to give as much as we can—that is what God accepts, and no one is asked to give what he has not got.

One of the big hurdles to get over is the hurdle of willingness. They had already manifested this a year ago, and he states here this reason in verse 12: “FOR IF THE WILLINGNESS IS PRESENT, IT IS ACCEPTABLE ACCODING TO THAT WHICH A PERSON MAY HAVE”—that’s the positive statement, and negatively: “NOT ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH HE IS NOT HAVING.”

Paul is making a plea for proportional giving. Giving in view of one’s resources, not in view of what he hopes to acquire.

2 Cor. 9:7

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

(Holy Sweat by Tim Hansel)

We must have eyes to see as well as hands to help, or we may never help at all. I think this well-known poem expressed it powerfully:

I was hungry and you formed a humanites club
to discuss my hunger.
Thank you.

I was imprisoned and you crept off quietly
to your chapel to pray for my release.
Nice

I was naked and in your mind you debated the
morality of my appearance.
What good did that do?

I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for
your health.
But I needed you.

I was homeless and you preached to me of the
shelter of the love of God.
I wish you’d taken me home.

I was lonely and you left me along to pray for me.
Why didn’t you stay?

You seem so holy, so close to God; But I'm still
very hungry, lonely, cold, and still in pain.
Does it matter?

-- Anonymous

pp. 162-63

(Balancing Life's Demands by J. Grant Howard)

Take today's mail, for example. It contained letters from four legitimate nonprofit organizations asking for money. My heart says yes. My budget says no. I must face the fact that there will always be more good causes than I can afford to support. I enjoy public speaking engagements. When requests come my way to speak, I am sorely tempted to accept every one of them. Saying yes to everyone may be good for my ego but it may be bad for my health, my nerves, my wife, my kids. I need to remind myself of Howard's law.

Requests will always exceed resources.

Doing good is imperative. Doing everything is impossible.
p. 16

There is a sense in which the world is designed to extract every ounce of potential from us. We place similar demands within ourselves. Motivated by internal and external forces, we run to win. But we must be cautious. The legitimate desire for excellence can easily drive us to excess.

The Problem

We are surrounded by innumerable options. Gathered around each of us is a massive array of alternatives. Some must be done, others can be put off. Some are bad, others are good. Some tend to deceive us. Others try to motivate us. And the supply is ever-increasing—tending to overwhelm us. We are overstimulated, overchallenged, overexposed. And if we don't watch out, we can become overcommitted.
p. 19

Yes, yes, yes we say,
 without a thought for the day.
Running and fretting to make ends meet,
 rushing from Suzie to Joe and to Pete.
Our lives, in upheaval, have turned to a tizzy,
 never completing, because we're too busy.
All we must do for a tranquil soul,
 is employ a word, just one, called NO.
(Author Unknown)

p. 144

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

Dr. Bob loved this man and his little spot on the river. Shortly before Dr. Bob's death, he went to Kalimantan to say good-bye to Borneo Bob and to see if there was something God wanted him to do. While he was there, on his way down to the river, he noticed a girl lying on a bamboo mat and asked Bob Williams what she was doing there. Bob Williams explained that she was dying of a form of cancer and had very few days to live. Dr. Bob's anger flared. "How come this girl is lying down there in the mud when she could be up there in that nice, clean clinic?" he stormed.

Borneo Bob explained that this girl was a jungle girl and preferred to be near the river where it was cooler, that she had specifically asked to be placed there for the day. Bob Pierce's heart broke. He went over to the girl, knelt down beside her, held her hand, and, rubbing her forehead, he prayed for her. After he prayed, she looked up and said something to him. He turned to Borneo Bob, who translated what she had said, explaining that with her disease and the unbearable pain she was unable to sleep and was saying, "If I could only sleep again, if I could only sleep again!" Bob Pierce began to cry, for he himself was dying of leukemia and had less than a year to live, and he knew what it was to be unable to sleep. He reached into his pocket and grabbed his bottle of sleeping pills. He gave it to Bob Williams and said, "You make sure she gets a good night's sleep from now on." Dr. Bob knew that he would have to go another ten days before he could get to Singapore and replace his medication—he knew that he would have to forfeit ten nights of sleep for this little girl.

By the time Dr. Bob arrived at his home in California, there was a letter waiting for him from Bob Williams stating that this girl had died and that one of the last things she had said was, "Please thank that kind man who gave me this medicine so that I could sleep."

p. 180

- v. 13 For this is not for the ease of others and difficult circumstances for you, but as a matter of equality.

The reason stated for proportionate giving from verse 12 is now stated in 13. "THIS IS (negatively) NOT FOR THE EASE OF OTHERS AND (positively) DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR YOU."

"BUT (in contrast) AS A MATTER OF EQUALITY."

The principle here is equality.

The Living Bible translates the verse:

Of course, I don't mean that those who receive your gifts should have an easy time of it at your expense,

Plummer translates it:

I do not mean that other people should be relieved at the cost of bringing distress on you, but that there should be equality of burdens.

The principle here is: SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE.

(Holy Sweat by Tim Hansel)

In John 17, Jesus says “may they be one even as we are one”, and he repeats the essence of the phrase at least five times in one chapter. That gives us a strong indication of how important the message is for us. We are called to be the body of Christ. The word community comes from the same word as communion and communication. Communion, we must remember, is made up of broken bread and crushed grapes. So, it is in our brokenness and our imperfections, that we are called to come together and help each other be whole---the best we can be.

p. 106

- v. 14 At this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, in order that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality.

The need in Corinth is probably spiritual, while the need in Jerusalem is material. Paul makes contrast between the present and the future in this situation in describing what he means by equality. “AT THIS PRESENT TIME YOUR ABUNDANCE BEING A SUPPLY FOR THEIR NEED, (and then the purpose stated) IN ORDER THAT THEIR ABUNDANCE ALSO MAY BECOME A SUPPLY FOR YOUR NEED, THAT THERE MAY BE EQUALITY” (and he comes back to this word once again.)

The Living Bible translates the verse:

But you should divide with them. Right now you have plenty and can help them; then at some other time they can share with you when you need it. In this way each will have as much as he needs.

Philippians 4:19

And my God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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.

(Glad Reunion by John Claypool)

My mother sat me down then and taught me a lesson that would surface in my mind twenty-five years later. She said, "You have forgotten how the washing machine ever came to be in our basement. It never did belong to us. It always was a gracious gift. That we ever got to use it at all was great good fortune. You relate to gifts differently than you relate to possessions. With gifts, you receive them gratefully, hold them lightly. And when they are taken away, you use that occasion to give thanks that they were even given at all."

p. 18

v. 15 Even as it has been written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and He who gather little had no lack."

Here the apostle quotes from Exodus 16:18

Exodus 16:11-27

The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.'"

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, he who gather much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gather as much as he needed.

Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning."

However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person---and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.

So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any."

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none.

The prevailing principle here is that God is supplying their needs, and He is doing it on His terms.

Galatians 6:7, 8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

CONCLUSION:

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

LESSON #1: The Corinthians were abounding in every area except for giving.

LESSON #2: The sincerity of our love is demonstrated when we begin to give.

LESSON #3: Jesus Christ is our example, who gave His life, that we might have the gift of salvation.

LESSON #4: He became poverty-stricken for us.

LESSON #5: It is to our advantage that we learn to give.

LESSON #6: God delights in finishers.

LESSON #7: Our giving should be in proportion with what we have.

LESSON #8: The undergirding principle in giving is for equality.

LESSON #9: What a man sows, that shall he also reap.

(Higher Honor by Robert Boardman)

In the immediate post-war, years, God mightily used the testimony of Jake and Florence DeShazer throughout Japan to help reconcile the former enemies to one another and many Japanese people to the Great Reconciler, Jesus Christ. In one of Jake's public meetings in Osaka, four years after his return, two of his former prison guards became Christians when they heard his testimony. What drama and emotion there was in that encounter! Could there ever be any more dramatic account of reconciliation? The answer has to be yes when we see what happened in the life of Fuchida.

Fuchida Mitsuo came back from losing the war a miserable, dejected man. Most of his flying companions were dead. Japan had been devastated by the Allied bombings, and his people were defeated and discouraged. Many had lost all their possessions and

were close to starvation. Never in Japan's history had foreigners occupied her land. Now all that had changed. What hope was there? Here are Fuchida's own words:

From Pearl Harbor day I spent myself as a most patriotic soldier for my mother country. But, four years later, Japan had lost the war. I returned to Nara Prefecture disillusioned and took up farming. These were the most miserable days of my life.

However, one day General MacArthur, the supreme commanding officer of the occupied forces, asked me to come to Tokyo to testify at the war trials. I got off my train at the Shibuya railroad station and there I saw an American handing out leaflets. When I passed by him, he gave me one. I saw this pamphlet was the story of DeShazer. There was a startling title, "I Was a War Prisoner of Japan." I read it and this inspired me to get a Bible.

I never had read the Bible. At that time I was 47 years old and during all my years I had never heard the name of Jesus. I was very lost. Jake DeShazer's story inspired me to get a Bible. I bought a Bible and I read through the pages so eagerly every day. One day as I was reading the Bible, I came to Luke 23:34. Jesus was hanging on the cross, nailed there, yet He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Right at that moment Jesus came into my heart.

I clearly understood what Jesus had done on the cross. He died, too. Right away I accepted Him as my personal Saviour. Then He transformed me. I was a sinner, but He cleansed me. Since then I dedicated the balance of my life to serving Him.

Later Fuchida Mitsuo and Jake DeShazer met in a dramatic moment of full reconciliation: onetime enemies now worshipping and serving the same God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was truly a miracle. Only the living God could cause such a transformation in the hearts and lives of avowed enemies.

From time to time these two men teamed together in meetings throughout Japan, preaching the message of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Fuchida once revisited Honolulu, Hawaii, scene of the Pearl Harbor attack, and gave out Bibles to the people. He told one American, "I came with bombs once, but now I come with the Bible. Jesus Christ is the answer."
pp. 115-117

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee; take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love, at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for Thee; take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King, always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages for Thee; take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold, not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love, my God, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store; take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee, ever, only, all for Thee.

Take my mind and let it think
Thoughts that pleased and honor You
Let the mind of Christ my Savior
Show itself in all my ways
Show itself in all my ways.