

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Good Morning Church family and welcome to everyone.... whether you're in person here in the Sanctuary.... next door in the overflow room.... or online....

We're so glad you chose to join us.

Now if anyone would like a Bible to follow along... just hold up your hand and one of the Ushers will bring a Bible to you.

As most of you know.... Pastor Brent is in Israel with a team from Riverside along with a great group of local Calvary's.... And they will be returning back to Canada on Tuesday.

I haven't heard anything from the group... mostly because I don't utilize social media... but many people have shared that Pastor Brent and the group are having a very blessed time and as they wind down their trip and travel back home... please keep them in your prayers.....

In his absence.... I'll be continuing in our current series in

2 Corinthians.... and taking on the challenge of teaching chapter 8.

Why will that be a challenge?

Well..... because chapter 8 and 9 are chapters that deal with the subject of giving... giving of ourselves to the Lord and serving Him... and in serving others and yes... *that also means the giving of our finances.....*

Now I'll understand if anyone is thinking that the timing of this message in light of our recent 'Life of the Fellowship' night..... might seem a little bit planned... *but it's really just God's timing.*

On the other hand.... Pastor Brent's timing.. in choosing to be away....?? Mmmmm....

No.... I'm kidding.....Pastor Brent never shy's away from any of the Scriptures..... he faithfully teaches the Word of God.... no matter how difficult the topic is..... *and this morning..... I'll be reading this message.... **exactly** as he wrote it.....*

I'm just kidding of course.....

*Now just so you know.... this is not the **'go to'** topic of most Calvary Chapel Pastors... but it is a very important topic and can't be overlooked...*

and as it comes up in God's Word.... it needs to be taught...

*which in reality.... is one of the great blessings of teaching God's Word.... Chapter by Chapter and Verse by verse. **Amen!***

Now... before I get into this message on giving.... I want to mention... *that here at Riverside.... we don't pass an offering plate. We never have...*

Not because we think it's wrong.... many churches pass an offering plate..... and that's what most people who attend church are accustomed to....

we've just always believed in the principle of... where **'God guides... He provides'** and that has been.... *and will continue to be....* how the Elders of this church choose to navigate the financial part of the journey we're on with our Lord here at Riverside.

So.....if this is your first time here at Riverside and you're thinking **great!** I was excited about going to a church that teaches God's Word and doesn't always ask for money....

Well... be patient and know that today's message isn't asking for money.... *It's about how to be a cheerful giver....* Someone who doesn't.... **have to give....** but **desires to give!**

That's really the whole point of today's message... you don't have to.... but you get to.

That said.... **Let's pray!**

Now I want to give you some background before we get into our message this morning.

On his third Missionary journey, the Apostle Paul... as he travelled between the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, took an offering... *not for himself,* but for the church at Jerusalem, which was going through hard times financially due to a severe famine in the region as well as some other difficulties.

Paul saw this as an opportunity for a time of bonding between the Gentile Christians in Greece and the Jewish Believers in Jerusalem and he was eager to complete the gift... but the Corinthian congregation... *although they had initially seemed eager to help out... after a year...* still hadn't raised much money... so this morning we're going to look at how the Apostle Paul addresses this concern with the Corinthian church.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 8 and please stand as I read the first 5 verses...

8 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: **2** that in a great trial of affliction the **abundance of their joy** and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. **3** For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond their ability, *they were* freely willing, **4** imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. **5** And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.

You can be seated...

Now church.... Paul's not wasting any time here as he brings up the **grace of God** bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia.

Let me read verse one again.

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:

Macedonia... was located in present-day northern Greece...

Corinth... was located in the south and Paul wanted to share with the Corinthian church... *just what was happening with the believers north of them...* so he continues.... speaking of the Macedonian churches and how they had received the Grace of God and how it was observed through their generosity.

2 that in a great trial of affliction the **abundance of their joy** and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. **3** For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond their ability, *they were* freely willing,

Paul says he bears witness... he has first Hand knowledge that they were freely willing... *in an abundance of joy* and incredibly..... did so even while they were enduring a great trial of affliction of their own....

Abundance of joy to do what? What's Paul talking about?

To be freely willing to give financially.... even beyond their ability.

He's telling the Corinthian believers.... *that even though these northern churches.... Thessalonica... Berea...and particularly Philippi.... were going through tough times too...* they shared generously and joyfully.

Do you remember the story of the widow's two mites?

In Mark 12 we see Jesus sitting in the courtyard of the temple and he's watching as the people put money in the treasury.... and many who were rich.... *put in much*. Then one poor widow drops in two mites - *about an eighth of a cent in our day* - into the offering.

So Jesus calls His disciples over and said to them... *“Assuredly I say to you, that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance... but she out of her poverty put in all she had... her whole livelihood.”*

It's interesting that the widow... *from a monetary stand point... gave almost nothing... have you ever thought... “what's the point in only giving a few dollars or even a few cents to the Lord....*

How's that going to help anyone?

Well.... understand this.... Our Lord doesn't look at the amount... *He looks at the heart....* If all you have is a few dollars or even a few cents.... but you give it freely and willingly and with an **abundance of joy**... then like the widow.... *and the Macedonian believers....*

You're expressing your conviction that all belongs to the Lord.... and He is worthy of it all.... And never underestimate what God will do with it. *Remember the fish and loaves story!*

When this fellowship first started Pastor Brent came to me and rightly said, *“I never want to have knowledge of how much each person tithes, so I want you to take care of that.”*

Well... I was hesitant to agree to do that....
because I didn't want to know either.... why.....
because I didn't want that knowledge to influence
how I related to someone.

So I prayed and asked the Lord. *"If you want me to have this responsibility.... then please allow this knowledge to never affect how I see someone."*

To this day you will see my signature on your tax receipt for charitable donations and I will say this.... My prayer was answered and God has explained it to me this way.... *although I might know the amount that people give....* I don't know the heart or the circumstances of the person when it was given.... therefore...

I am never impressed or disappointed.... and 'Praise God' never even remember.

The Macedonian believers..... even when in a great trial of *affliction* and their deep poverty... abounded in an **abundance of joy** the riches of their liberality.... which extended not only according to their ability to give.... but beyond their ability to give.

Let's look at the next two verses.

4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.

Paul didn't have to beg for money from the Macedonian Christians (***which he wouldn't have done anyway***). Instead, they were *begging him* (imploring us is what he said) to **receive the gift!**

Why were they so insistent to give of their finances... Perhaps because of the fellowship that takes place when there is sharing of finances.

Matthew 6:21 says, "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." So perhaps the Northern churches knew... that if their treasure went to their brothers in Jerusalem.... there hearts would be united with them as well.

Pastor Jon Courson once said, "The pathway to fellowship is often through the pocketbook because our money is representative of our time and energy. Therefore... when you give of your finances to a brother... a sister... or a ministry, you're actually giving a part of your life.

Thus the most practical way of laying down your life... is to give financially.

So just how did these believers get to the place where they completely understood the principle of giving and were so willing to put into practice what they believed and give beyond even what Paul had hoped? *Let's find out*

5 And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.

I came across this story and I think it might help us to understand what Paul is saying here.

As the offering was being taken during a revival in Africa, a brand-new Christian told the deacon holding the collection plate to put it lower. "lower, lower, lower," he said until the offering plate was on the ground. Then he stood up and stepped in. This man understood.

This brand-new believer got the picture.... He gave himself.

Church.... in giving, the real issue isn't giving money. It is giving ourselves to the Lord. If we really give ourselves to the Lord, then the right kind of material giving will naturally follow.

Ephesians 6:6 says..... *not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*
And Colossians 3:2 says.... *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

I remember early on in my Christian walk... struggling with giving of my finances.

I would give a portion of whatever I had in my pockets each Sunday..... but it never seemed right to me.

I began to look up verses on tithing trying to determine what was the proper way to give.

I talked with my Pastor at the time and listened to his good council and decided to pray specifically about it.

After much prayer..... I decided that Debbie and I should be giving at least a tenth of our gross income....

Problem was that when we did the math.... We would be broke in less than a year no matter how we worked the numbers.

But as we pondered and prayed and read the Word... we began to understand that we were fooling ourselves.

We truly believed that we trusted God to take care of us and to provide for us and protect us.... But we felt we couldn't trust Him with our finances.... And if that was true.... Then really.... we didn't trust Him at all.

It was then that we realized that we hadn't first given ourselves to the Lord.

We needed to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth.

So we decided to do just that and decided to trust Him with everything and began to tithe 10%.... *and if we were broke in a year.... So be it.*

Apparently.... God doesn't do math like we do... amen!

and we have never been left in want since.

Church.... now listen carefully....

The question should never be.... ***“How much of my money should I give away?... but “How would God have me use His money”.***

So.... giving back to God what is already His is to be done with thoughtfulness.... sacrifice.... generosity.... and abundant joy.

That said.... We should *all* thoughtfully consider how much to give..... based upon our income

We were just recently taught in ([1 Corinthians 16:2](#)) the following...

Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. **2** On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.

Along these same lines and as Pastor Brent will be touching on in a few weeks in [2 Corinthians 9:6–7](#) it says, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give...not reluctantly or under compulsion.... for God loves a cheerful giver.”

So....thoughtfulness.... generosity.... freedom.... and abundance in joy..... *are all part of giving.*

Church.... we are to be “[cheerful](#)” in our giving.

If you're being pressured or compelled to give and you're not able to give in a cheerful manner.... then please don't give! God doesn't want you to give.... *if you can't do so willingly and cheerfully.*

Church isn't it easy to be joyful when singing praise songs to the Lord.... and shouldn't this same joy.... be present in our giving?

And yet so many of us struggle with the latter. *Here's a little illustration of how not to view the privilege of giving.*

During his message on giving, a pastor was doing his best to teach his congregation what a tithe was. He said,

'Now, if you have 5 million dollars,' he asked the crowd, 'how many of you will give out... just one-tenth to the church?'

All but one raised their hands. Bemused, the pastor walked down towards the one who didn't.

'Why not, my child?' he asked, '*Isn't there nothing more joyous than giving back to the church and serving God?*'

'Well no I guess not,' the man replied, 'but.... I do have 5 million dollars.'

(Hughes) had something interesting to say and it needs to be heard in our day... “The example of the Macedonians is practical proof that true generosity is not the prerogative of those who enjoy an adequacy of means. The most genuine liberality is frequently displayed by those who have the least to give. Christian giving is estimated in terms not of quantity..... but of sacrifice.”

6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also. **8** I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

The Apostle Paul is so excited over the example of the Macedonians.... he now wants the Corinthians to imitate them and he's encouraging Titus to follow up with the believers in Corinth and complete what was started.

When Titus first visited the Corinthians..... he had brought up this idea of taking up a collection for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.... and now when he goes back.... Paul is telling Titus to see that the Corinthians **complete this grace** or *in other words*.... take your good intentions and translate them into action!

Church.... our good intentions... our vows.... and resolutions *are useless without action.*

*It's like seeing a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, **16** and you say, "Well... it was so nice to see you.... good-bye and have a good day; make sure you stay warm and eat well" —but you don't give that person any food or clothing.*

What good does that do?

In verse 7..... Paul continues and begins to commend the Corinthian believers for abounding in faith... in speech... in knowledge... and in their love for him and Titus.

But Paul wants to be able to commend them for one more virtue... in all generosity!

Scottish theologian James Denney warns of.... the man who abounds in spiritual interests... who is fervent... prayerful... affectionate.... able to speak in the church.... But unable to part with his money.

That is a man that has not yet given himself to the Lord.

Paul ends verse 7 with - see that you abound in this grace also.

*This is the fourth time since the beginning of the chapter... that Paul refers to giving money as a **grace** in which Paul uses the ancient Greek word charis (Harris) to describe financial giving which translates as.... affording joy... pleasure... and delight...*

Church.... do you feel abundant joy... pleasure and delight when you drop your tithe into the offering box?

*I hope that you do... because our giving should be like God's giving of grace to us: giving freely... generously... because we want to give... and because the motive of the love and generosity of God is so big in our heart that we simply *must* give.*

Paul now makes it clear in verse 8 when he says.... I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

He's not commanding them to give.... He's not laying down the law on them...he's saying to the Corinthians... *and in reality to us....* Here is an opportunity to prove the sincerity of your love for Jesus!

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

The Apostle Paul now directs our attention to the greatest example there is..... of what it means to give sacrificially.

Here Paul cleverly teaches the pre-existence of Jesus when he says.... that though our Lord Jesus Christ was rich..... He became poor

Church.... When was Jesus rich?

Well.... as the second person of the [Trinity](#).... Jesus is as richas God is rich. Without doubt..... our Lord owns everything and possesses *all power.... all authority.... all sovereignty.... all glory.... all honour.... and all majesty*

He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lord's.... and yet.... we don't see that during His time here on this earth.... No one can rightly read the Scriptures and consider Him to have been rich?

During Jesus time here on earth..... He willingly relinquished His eternal riches and most of the privileges of His deity.

Becoming poor..... our Lord took on the nature of a lowly and humble servant..... and by the time our Saviour endured the tortures of the cross for us.... His earthly possessions amounted to no more than the clothes on His back.... And even they were divided up by the soldiers who crucified Him.

In Luke chapter 9 it says, As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, *“I will follow you wherever you go.”* But Jesus replied, *“Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.”*

In fact.... When we consider our Lord’s time here on earth... we realize that He didn’t own much of anything:

Consider the following:

Jesus slept in a borrowed cradle

Jesus preached from a borrowed boat

He rode into Jerusalem... on a borrowed donkey

He ate his last meal in a borrowed room and He was buried in a borrowed grave

He was a homeless stranger... in the world His hands had made.

And yet He.... who made everything.... laid it all down and entered into poverty.... so that whosoever believes in Him might be rich.

We are urged to give a little money... clothing... food.

He gave Himself.

So really.... this is what it comes down to.... Not only did the Macedonians give abundantly in their own poverty.... But to an infinitely greater degree.... Jesus gave everything to set us free!

Salvation is available in Jesus alone...

***10** And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; **11** but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. **12** For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*

Paul now turns his attention back to the Corinthians and offers them some advice.

He reminds them... that they were the ones who had thought of making a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem.... even before the Macedonians had determined to do it.

In fact the Corinthians had actually begun collecting before the Macedonian churches had even started their fund and yet a year has now past and the giving was never completed.

There was good intentions without much action.

Paul reminds them that there was a readiness to desire it.... *So there must also be a completion out of what you have.*

In other words Paul is saying... “You expressed the desire to give.... Now do it!”

(Barclay) said, “The Devil will let you resolve (or determine to do something) as much as you like — the more the better — just as long as you never carry it out. “The tragedy of life so often is, not that we have no high impulses, but that we fail to turn them into actions.”

Did you catch what Paul said in the last part of verse 11..... He’s telling them that as there was a readiness to desire it.... *So there must also be a completion (in other words ‘Get it Done’) out of what you have....*

But Church.... we can't give what we don't have and that's okay..... because God judges our giving based on what resources we have at the time.

That said... also remember.... that the issue of what and how we spend is relevant to what you have... as an example...

If you want to have the latest of everything and spend accordingly..... and that's why you never have any money to give.... *you can't use that as an excuse before God by saying, "Well, I don't have anything to give to you Lord... because you're not meeting my wants."*

If that happens to be the case for you.... then you probably won't have a willing mind as Paul continues to explain in Verse 12.... when he says, *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*

Again.... God doesn't expect us to give what we don't have... but He does want us to have a willingness to give.

True Christian giving can't be measured by the amount. True Christian giving is measured by obedience, proportion, and need, not by amount.

So how does each of us know what we should give?

Based on the principles taught all throughout Scripture... there is no one answer to that question for every believer...

but the New Testament gives us great clarity in teaching that giving should be... **regular...**
planned... proportional to what we have.... and **private....**

...and that it should be **generous... freely** given and **cheerful.**

A few weeks ago we had a 'Life of the Fellowship' which I thought was such a blessing to see so many of us in one place... hearing about what God is doing here at Riverside.

One of the topics that was shared was the finances of the Church and also the desire to find another place to meet.

Looking at where the church is financially.... and then looking at the costs to buy land and build a facility... makes you realize how daunting and expensive that endeavour can be.

But God.

As an update... at the time of the 'Life of the Fellowship' there was \$1,690.00 in the 'New Church Building' fund.... and as of this week it has grown to around \$14,000.00. PTL!

So were now only \$4,986,000.00 away from our \$5,000,000.00 goal. *Praise God! And thank you to those who have given.*

Church.... That's a big plan with high hopes... and if it's God's will... He will make a way.

But giving isn't always financial.... There are so many needs that we can give to right now.

Open your heart.

Share with the person who's struggling financially

Write an email or send a text of encouragement to someone you know who needs it

Pray for the person who's hurting

Do something.... Do anything. Just do it! If you are sure that God has placed something on your heart for you to do and you've been holding off..... for whatever reason.... Just do it!

Okay.... It's time to wrap this up!

13 For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; **14** but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also *may supply* your lack— that there may be equality.

This is something that we can easily miss as we go through this life... *especially here in North America...* and Paul explains it so well to the Corinthian believers.

He's saying, "I'm not trying to convince you to over extend yourself and give more than you have... but as the northern believers shared so generously... so should you. Why we might ask? Because you don't know when the situation might unexpectedly change.

Saints in Corinth.... you don't know when you will unexpectedly need their help!

And this is not only a principle of your finances... but of life.

Scripture teaches the following...

Do unto others as you would have them do to you
(Luke 6:31)

Give and it shall be given unto you... (Luke 6:38)

This applies whether it's *money* or *mercy*... *goods* or *grace*... The basic principle being - whatever you extend... will come back your way.

Proverbs 19:17 says, He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what He has given.

Do you get it? this is God's program for dealing with want in His church... all over the world.

It works like this.... Whenever a need exists in one area among Christians... then there should be a flow of funds from other areas to that spot in need.

This constant flow and interflow of funds would result in equality among churches world-wide.

Isn't this what a family is supposed do?

So what Paul is explaining as he writes this letter is that there should be a flow of funds from Corinth... Macedonia and other places... to the saints in Jerusalem.

And in the future.... things might change unexpectedly and it may be the saints in Jerusalem that will have opportunity to help the saints in Corinth.

Why? So that there may be equality amongst the believers.

15 As it is written, “He who *gathered* much had nothing left over, and he who *gathered* little had no lack.”

Paul is referring to Exodus 16:18 where we read about the manna from heaven and this principle of equality.

When the children of Israel went out to gather manna.... Some were able to gather more than others. But it didn't matter.

When the manna was distributed... each man received the same amount - one omer or about five pints.

So “He who gathered much had nothing left over... and he who gathered little had no lack”

Now if anyone tried to hoard manna.... What happened to it... it bred *worms!*

So everyone was equal when it came to manna... but this equalization didn't happen by miracle or magic... it happened because those who had too much shared with those who didn't have enough.

Listen to this quote by an unknown source:

God intends each man to have a share of the good things of life. Some gather more... however... and some gather less. Those who have more should share with those who have less. God permits unequal distribution of property... not so the rich shall selfishly enjoy it.... But share it with the poor.

So what did we learn today?

1. God owns everything and gives His things, including money, to whom He chooses.
2. How we spend and give away God's money is a fundamental aspect of worship.
3. Giving to the church and the ministry of the gospel is commanded by God.
4. Giving is to be done with thoughtfulness, sacrifice, generosity, and joy. We are to thoughtfully consider how much to give based upon our income
5. Our giving is to be done quietly.
6. As we give for God's glory, sacrificially, generously, and joyfully, God promises blessing.
7. We as believers are family and we are to take care of one another so that there is equality among us.

I'm sure there's more.... but I'm running out of time and I have one last point I want to make.

The only way I think there is... to be able to put this message of giving into practise... to be able to give financially as the Macedonian believers did... freely willing... *in an **abundance of joy*** and incredibly..... doing so even while they were enduring a great trial of affliction of their own....

is to live the command by Jesus is Luke 22

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is *the* first and great commandment.

39 And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

That's my challenge to myself.... and if I truly try to live that out.... I have a lot of work to do to get even close.

The outcome of this message... *more importantly these verses we've read today....* at least measured financially...will be interesting to see in the coming weeks and months of the heart condition of this congregation.

Will I.... will we... have hearts like the Macedonian believers when it comes to giving..... or like the Corinthian believers?

Let's Pray