

II CORINTHIANS 8:1-9
EXAMPLES OF FAITH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Corinthians chapter 8 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

When you teach through the Word of God verse-by-verse you have to cover all that the Scriptures have to say. The easy topics and the hard topics.

This is a difficult subject for many and for some, they are completely turned off by this subject.

What am I talking about?

As we move into II Corinthians chapters 8 & 9, we are moving into a section that deals with Christian giving!

Like I have said, make no mistake about it, that is a very touchy subject, Christian giving.

Someone once said that the last thing to get saved in a Christian's life is their pocketbook!

Now, the reason we are uncomfortable with it is because of the abuse we see with some of the so-called Christian ministries.

They almost beg for money, like God is broke. And, if you think about it, if our God is broke, then He is not much of a God!

And I am sure you have heard them beg before. ***"If you don't give to our ministry, we will have to go off the air. It costs lots of money to produce these shows and we need your help. If you don't, then we will not be here!"***

Well, if it is that bad maybe God is closing the door and you should not be on the air.

I am not saying you can't ask for money. What I am saying is we should not beg for money or make people feel guilty so that they will give.

I hope I have never done that over the years.

If there is a need, I will let you know and that will be the end of it.

When we purchased this building, all I did was let you know what we were praying about, since our landlord closed the door on the building we were in, and then we waited to see what God was going to do.

The same with the radio tower. We got approval from the city to build the tower; I let the congregation know what we were doing and waited to see what God was going to do.

When we helped build that water filtration unit and the radio station in Haiti, I once again let you know and that was the end of it.

And look at what God has done! Amazing things with this small church.

And honestly, I don't think I shared about anything else over the last thirty-one years of ministry here, and all I can say is that God has always supplied our needs. He opened doors for us, and He has sustained us all these years and He will continue to do so.

If He doesn't, then I guess we close the doors. But I don't see Him doing that.

But, no matter what, we want to be in the will of God and not outside of it!

And make no mistake about it, God is not broke like I have said. He does not need our money. Everything is His! And here's the thing. We have the opportunity to give back to Him what He has given to us, what He has blessed us with!

And what an honor, what a privilege that is. And what a blessing as we see what God can do as we give back to Him!

Now, keep in mind that one of the reasons for Paul's third missionary journey was to take up a collection from the Gentile churches to help those Jewish Christians living in and around Jerusalem.

It was not easy for them.

The Temple was off limits to them as the religious leaders kept them out!

When they came to Christ many lost their jobs, and their homes, as this was tied to the Jewish religious leaders.

They were also persecuted for their faith in Christ!

Rome placed a heavy tax burden upon them and thus, many jobs were lost as a result of this as well. Lots of unemployment.

And there was also a famine that hit the region.

So Paul was trying to help them out and in doing so, these Jewish believers would see the love that these Gentile believers had for them and hopefully see them come together as one in Christ!

One writer put it like this in regard to what these chapters are all about. He wrote,

Once there was an infant playing on the carpet. She picked up a quarter, stuck it in her mouth, and swallowed.

The mother saw what had happened and went hysterical. She screamed to her husband, ***“Quick, call 9-1-1, my baby just swallowed a quarter.”***

The husband responded, ***“Forget 9-1-1, call the pastor . . . he can get money out of anybody!”***

Well, in the next two chapters Pastor Paul's intent is to get money out of the Corinthians.

He teaches on giving. Paul's epistle becomes a fundraising letter, in a sense.

Famine had hit Judea. The region had fallen on hard times. Believers in Jerusalem were ***hungry and hurting***.

And Paul saw their need as an opportunity to bridge the gap between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul wanted to collect an offering from the Gentile churches for Judea.

The Gentiles had a debt to the church at Jerusalem they needed to acknowledge. The Jewish Church had sponsored the missionaries that brought the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The love these Gentiles could now show the Jews would be a way to reciprocate the kindness.

The Jews would be impressed with the genuineness of their faith and love. Paul had already collected an offering in Macedonia. He uses it as an example to inspire the Corinthians!

- Sandy Adams, II Corinthians 8

Funny story, but tragically, that is true many times as they make people feel that they have to give, they are forced to give!

So that is what we will be looking at here in these chapters, the example of the Macedonians to give, the example of Christ in giving, why we should give, how we should give, being open to giving, some principles and promises in giving!

And I am glad none of you have run away, it is an important section and there is Scripture to support the correct way we are to give!

I have called our study – ***EXAMPLES OF FAITH!***

I know, kind of a strange title when the focus of our study is on giving.

Maybe it should have been – ***EXAMPLES IN GIVING!***

But I think I got this right, it truly is – ***EXAMPLES OF FAITH!***

But it is true and I will show you how this plays out.

In Malachi 3:10-11 we are told, **“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.’”**

Why did God say this to them?

Listen to what he said in Malachi 3:8-9, **“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.”**

As I have said, not an easy portion of Scripture, but it is an important portion of Scripture and there are many, many verses that deal with our giving to the Lord.

Now here’s the thing. A person not walking with God will always try to justify his actions! And that is what we see here with the children of Israel.

Instead of giving to God, they were keeping it for their own pleasure, their own enjoyment when the reality was, it was all God’s in the first place.

God was only asking for 1/10th in return or 10%.

But they were not doing that and thus, He tells them you have robbed Me in the giving of your tithes and offerings. This is not speculation; God is very clear here what their problem was.

And since they were not walking with God, their giving was not in line with God as well.

Let me give you an example to show you what I mean in terms of giving and the blessings that come.

During the days of King Hezekiah, he was the King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, there was a revival you might say, taking place.

And this revival began with the Word of God being read and applied to their lives. You see, many would say that we don't see that in the life of Hezekiah, but I would disagree.

As you look at the things he did you will see that they were based upon the Word of God, which tells me he knew the Word of God and lived the Word of God.

Now listen to what happened as the people returned to the Lord.

In II Chronicles 31:10 we are told, **“And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, ‘Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance.’”**

The people whose hearts were in line with the Lord were giving more than enough for the work of God and they had to stop the people from giving because they just had too much!

No guilt trip to get the people to give more, no threat of shutting down this ministry or that ministry if the money does not come in.

They gave out of love for the Lord and the work continued on!

Listen again to this challenge by God in Malachi 3:10, **“‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.’”**

This is the only area that God challenges us to prove Him in - our giving!

You see, you can't out give God.

Now please, don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that God is like a stock market investment or some kind of lottery.

Not at all!

But God does want to bless us, and it is not always with money.

And God is saying to Israel that if you honor Him with your giving you will be so blessed that surrounding nations will stand up and take notice of what God is doing.

And maybe you are thinking I am making too much in regard to giving, but let me share with you what one writer had to say about this.

He wrote,

How would the people return?

In this case, it would be through giving.

Why?

Giving is not God's way of raising money. It's His way of raising kids.

You see, because we're sinners, each of us has the tendency to be selfish, small, greedy, and material.

But God is a giver (John 3:16) and He wants His children to be like Him.

In the Bible, there are over four hundred fifty verses on faith and over five hundred fifty verses on prayer. But there are over 2,100 verses on giving.

One of every ten verses in the New Testament deals with giving, money, or possessions.

Of the thirty-eight parables Jesus taught, sixteen deal directly with giving, money, or possession.

Why is the Lord so emphatic about this?

Because Jesus said that wherever a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also (Luke 12:34).

He wants us to give to Him - not because He needs our money but because He wants our heart.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary,
Old Testament, Volume 2, p. 927

Again, I know this subject of giving turns people off but how do you ignore these two chapters here in II Corinthians. Just because something makes you uncomfortable doesn't mean you ignore it.

We need to dig deep into this subject and see what God desires of us and not what man pressures us to do.

That is my prayer for this study and the next few studies here in II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 that deal with giving, that you would see what God desires of your life.

And here it is an – ***EXAMPLE OF FAITH!***

As we will see, Paul is going to start out with the example of faith that is seen in those believers living in Macedonia who responded to the needs of others.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

In this Macedonian response we have a wonderful example of the true way to give.

I am delighted that we have come to these two chapters in this letter because I find that most Christians today, and I mean most, do not understand how to give properly.

Many of them are giving from wrong reasons, giving in wrong ways, or not giving at all, so we desperately need some teaching in this area.

Here the apostle himself will instruct us.

- <https://bit.ly/4wO9fGb>

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points.

They are,

EXAMPLE IN GIVING – II CORINTHIANS 8:1-5

COMPLETE THE WORK – II CORINTHIANS 8:6-8

ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF GIVING – II CORINTHIANS 8:9

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II Corinthians chapter 8, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

II CORINTHIANS 8

VERSES 1-5

The Southern part of Greece was known as Achaia and that is where Corinth was located.

The Northern part of Greece was known as Macedonia and that is where the cities of Philippi – (Acts 16:12-40), Thessalonica – (Acts 17:1-9), and Berea – (Acts 17:10-15) were located.

Here Paul is using the churches in Macedonia as an example to the Corinthians on how they gave, even in their poverty, their great affliction, they gave “**according to their ability**” and even “**beyond their ability.**”

And when Paul speaks of their “**deep poverty**” he is conveying the idea that they had not simply gone through “**affliction**”; they had experienced a “**great trial of affliction**” and were in “**deep poverty.**” The word describes a beggar who has absolutely nothing and has no hope of getting anything.

And yet, even in spite of all the difficulties they were going through, Paul says “**they were freely willing**” to give.

But to who?

The church in Jerusalem for these Jewish believers were hurting, there was a famine in the land, they were persecuted, and many lost their jobs because they came to Christ, they were even disowned by their families!

Paul spoke of this in I Corinthians 16:1-4 as he said, “**Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.**”

Thus, as Paul went through the churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia he obtained a collection to help these saints out.

Keep in mind that these churches were primarily Gentile in nature and thus, as they gave this gift to their brothers and sisters in the Lord who were in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers, it would help break down the walls of division that were there.

Remember the big division between Jews and Gentiles. Jews would not even enter a home of a Gentile because they would defile themselves.

But now, in Christ those walls came tumbling down for most believers, but there were still struggles and thus, this gift to the church in Jerusalem would help break down any walls of division that still remained!

Also, if you remember from our study in Romans, Paul spoke of the Gentiles being in debt to the Jews for all the riches they had given to them spiritually speaking, the things of God.

Paul said, **“But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.”** Romans 15:25-27.

And now they were able to give back and help their Jewish brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Now, what is sad to see today is that there are those who use churches for a type of welfare program or just to get something for nothing and they go from church to church.

In fact, I have had organizations warn me of people who are doing this.

That is not what the church is about; it is not a welfare program.

Yes, the church is to help those in need, (James 1:27) but there is more to it than that. The church must also determine who is in need, (I Timothy 5:3).

If a person can work and doesn't want to work or is just plain lazy, then they are not to be supported by the church.

Paul, in II Thessalonians 3:10-11 tells us, **“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”** (I Thessalonians 4:11, I Timothy 5:8).

Also, we see that if their own family can support them, then the church should not help them, (I Timothy 5:3-4).

If the church supports someone then they need to help the church out by giving their time, their skills, (I Timothy 5:5, 10).

And ultimately it is up to the leaders in the church, spiritual men to evaluate the need, even the moral conduct before giving out any support, (I Timothy 5:9-13).

It is not easy, but it does need to be evaluated and I have, or I should say the Lord showed me some who were just using the church for their support, their lifestyle, their story was made up, and we did not help them out.

Of our giving Hughes tells us, ***“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 least to give. Christian giving is estimated in terms not of quantity but of sacrifice.”***

So the Macedonian churches were going through tough times, and it was not only tough physically because of their faith, but they had tremendous poverty!

How could they give when they were going through all this?

Paul tells us that it was the grace of God that was bestowed upon them that enabled them to give freely of all that they had.

But they did not have much, so how does this work?

Let me put it like this. To the natural mind it doesn't add up. The world can't figure this out!

But with God, He has a way to take care of our needs as we give to others!

The key for the Macedonians and for us is that we first give ourselves to the Lord because as we do that, then our giving, be it money, our time, our gifts, our talents, will naturally flow from our lives.

If we don't give ourselves to the Lord, then it may flow for a time, but it will stop because it is coming from our hearts and not the heart of God and as soon as things don't go the way we want, it ends!

It is as Warren Wiersbe wrote, ***"If we give ourselves to God, we will have little problem giving our substance to God. If we give ourselves to God, we will also give of ourselves for others. It is impossible to love God and ignore the needs of your neighbor. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. Should we not give ourselves to Him? He died so that we might not live for ourselves, but for Him and for others. The Macedonians' giving was, like Christ's, motivated by love (2 Cor. 8:7-8)."***

Exactly!

What an example these Macedonian believers were to not only the church in Corinth, but many others who heard of their love and for those who received this love!

And, as we read this, it is an example to us!

Listen to this perspective given to us by Ray Stedman. He wrote,

God is very concerned about motives. I know some people who have given because they were afraid of dying and they wanted to make Brownie points with God.

I have known men to give hundreds of thousands of dollars because they felt it would help them in their standing before God at the judgment seat.

But they were not giving to help the cause of God. They had no more use for the work of God than a hog has for hip pockets. They gave to gain a reputation for giving.

All these are wrong motives.

These Macedonians gave because their hearts were moved by the grace of God.

The extent of their giving is highlighted by the apostle. They ignored all the possible excuses for not giving.

According to Paul, they were going through ***“a severe test of affliction,”*** that is, they were being persecuted.

Of course, that would tend to make them try to hang onto their property or money, because they did not know what they might need.

At the same time they were suffering ***“extreme poverty,”*** possibly because of the persecution.

What an excuse they would have had to say to Paul, ***“Don’t talk to us about the saints in Jerusalem, we are about to starve to death ourselves. We can’t send anything.”***

But they had been touched by the grace of God. Paul says that their severe test of affliction and their extreme poverty, instead of being a cause for not giving, actually became an additional cause for giving.

They understood what people feel like who are going through severe poverty. They had been so blessed that they wanted to give, and give abundantly.

Paul goes on to point out they actually outdid themselves in their giving. They not only gave ***“according to their means,”*** they gave ***“beyond their means,”*** he says.

I heard of a man who was asked to give to an offering and he said, ***“Well, I think I could give \$10 and not feel it.”***

The usher said, ***“Why don’t you give \$20 and feel it?”***

It is only when you feel it that the blessing of giving comes.

The Macedonians gave beyond their means. They dug deep, and they asked for the privilege of doing so.

That is the amazing example here. Evidently Paul was reluctant to tell them about this need in Jerusalem because he did not think they could respond.

But, when they heard about it, they asked him if he would not let them take up a collection to give to these needy people in Jerusalem.

One of the greatest marks that a heart has truly been touched by the grace of God is that it counts giving as a privilege.

- <https://bit.ly/4wO9fGb>

The Macedonians were an – ***EXAMPLE IN GIVING!***

As we read on, Paul is going to speak to the Corinthians, telling them that they need to – ***COMPLETE THE WORK!***

VERSES 6-8

Here we see that Paul's associate, Titus, was the bearer of a letter that we probably are missing, and this was to encourage the Corinthian Christians to actually give him the collection, then he would give it to Paul. He was supposed to make certain that they actually followed through on what they had intended to do earlier.

Notice Paul said that Titus "**had begun**" or this letter and his presence with them was to encourage them to give to the need in Jerusalem. In other words, what Titus began in them, they were to complete!

And notice how Paul put it in II Corinthians 8:7, "**But as you abound in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in our love for us – see that you abound in this grace also.**"

What is Paul speaking of?

Remember back in I Corinthians how they boasted about all the Spiritual gifts that they had. And Paul is telling them here, ***“Hey guys,” that is how it is in the Greek! “You are boasting of all that God has given you, in fact, you are boasting about everything! You speak of your faith, the words that you speak, the knowledge that you have, the spiritual gifts that you are manifesting in your life, and that is great. Now let’s put all that boasting into play and help these believers in Jerusalem out!”***

In other words, since they abound in all things, they should also abound in their giving, they should complete what they started in regard to this gift to the church in Jerusalem.

You see, if your faith is real, then it will be seen in the things you do, the way you help others.

It is as James tells us, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”** James 2:14-18.

Is James speaking about a salvation that is based upon good works?

Absolutely not!

Martin Luther had a huge problem with what James wrote because he felt James was teaching that our salvation was a combination of faith plus works, and thus, he did not believe that James should be with the other canonical books, he felt it was not inspired by God!

But James is not saying that our salvation is a combination of faith plus works but a faith that works and it is the evidence for our salvation.

And that is what James is speaking about here in this chapter.

I guess you can say that James is speaking of a person who is all talk and no walk – their actions show they are not saved.

And the way this is structured in the Greek, a negative response is anticipated!

In other words, faith without works does not profit you at all!

You see, faith alone saves but a saving faith is never alone, it is reflected or manifested in our actions, the things we do!

Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

That is how we are saved, by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works!

But then that saving faith is worked out in our lives, in the things that we do as Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

We are saved by grace and because of that we see good works manifested in our lives!

Also, notice what Paul says in Titus 3:8, **“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”**

May our faith in Christ be manifested in our outward actions as we minister to people, as we show them the love of Christ, as we see the need and reach out and help others!

The seventeenth-century English Preacher Thomas Brooks wrote the following words that fit what we are speaking of here.

He wrote,

Christ hath freed you from all your enemies, from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell; but what is the end and design of Christ in doing these great and marvelous things for his people?

It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness, but that their hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services . . . Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those that are drawn from the consideration of the great and glorious things that Christ hath done for you.

- Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, pp. 123-124

And we will deal with this more with our last point, but just look at all that God has done for us. And now, may we serve Him with hearts filled with love and reaching out to people with His love that they may see our faith is real!

Now, dead faith is just that, it does nothing.

Being a nurse in critical care I have seen a lot of death. And one someone dies, that is it. They don't move. They don't talk to you. They do nothing!

And you can dress them up, make them look nice, but the reality is, they are still dead!

As Christians, we need to be careful that we don't try to dress ourselves up looking like a Christian without having good works seen in our lives!

James says that this person may use some spiritual jargon to make themselves look good, but it is a dead faith, there is no life to it, just words!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

This is a well-chosen analogy, because compassion is one of the evidences of true regeneration.

The story is told of a European queen several centuries ago who left her coachman sitting outside during the winter while she attended the theater. The drama was so heart wrenching that the queen sobbed throughout the entire performance.

But when she returned to the carriage and discovered the coachman had frozen to death, she did not shed a tear!

She was deeply moved by a fictional tragedy but completely untouched by a real one with which she was directly involved and for which she was even directly responsible.

It is amazing that so many people can become emotionally involved in a movie, play, popular song, or TV program, weeping over tragedies and becoming incensed at wrongs and injustices, and yet show no concern or compassion for the plight of a neighbor or acquaintance who is in real need.

In our artificial, self-centered world, fantasy often becomes more meaningful than reality.

- John MacArthur

Can you imagine someone who is so uncaring?

And yet we see that today. May we keep our eyes open and see the needs of others and help them.

Here's the point. True faith is lived out in the life of a believer, and it is manifested in many different ways. But the key to those things we do is the fruit of the Spirit, which is **LOVE!**

It is that love, **AGAPE** love that flows from our lives as we serve others!

It is as Sandy Adams wrote,

The church at Corinth prided themselves in their use of spiritual gifts. But so what if they spoke in tongues, and healed, and discerned spirits - if they were greedy and stingy.

On occasion you'll find a Christian who excuse away his responsibility to give to God financially. He'll say, ***"Well, it's just not my gift."***

Paul disagrees. Giving is everyone's gift. It's our response to God's grace. We are all called to open up ***our hearts and our wallets.***

- Sandy Adams, II Corinthians 8

Not an easy subject, but it is an important one!

And please understand that Paul is not pressuring them to give. He is not twisting their arm to force them to give. There is no guilt trip here. Paul did not put up a chart showing how much the Macedonians had given and challenge them to outgive them.

He is not commanding them to give but he is calling for them to give out of love for the brethren!

Notice that Paul says that this is not a law that you have to give as Redpath also reminds us.

He wrote, *“Once you see the matter of giving is centered in this lovely word grace, it lifts the whole act away from mechanics, from pressure and duty, from obligation and mere legalism. It lifts us up into the most lovely atmosphere of an activity which seeks by giving to convey to others all that is lovely, all that is beautiful, all that is good, and all that is glorious. What a lovely word this word is . . . For there is no area in the Christian life in which grace shines out so much, so beautifully, so delightfully, and so happily as when giving comes from the background of poverty.”*

Titus had previously told them about this need, and now Paul is calling for them to –
COMPLETE THE WORK!

Now I do understand that giving can be something that turns you off. You don’t want to hear about it.

And yes, there is a right way and a wrong way to share a need, but giving is important in our Christian walk.

I remember before I was saved, Julie took me to a Christian church and the focus was not on the Word of God, but this need and that need and you have to give, and I was turned off. It was the same stuff I heard on television, begging for money.

That is not what Paul is doing, that is something that I have never done, beg for money. Where God guides, He will provide and He has!

In fact, Paul, like I have said, is calling for them to give *“Without pressure, he exhorts them to consider what giving is - a manifestation of a heart that has been touched by the love and grace of God.”*

But if you are still struggling with this, I think Paul will clear that up for you as he will share with us the – **ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF GIVING!**

VERSE 9

Paul lays it all out for them and then they will have to decide if they were going to give or not.

He is basically telling them, ***"I know you may be struggling with this, even though when Titus was there you were willing to give, now you have to go through with it. And if you are struggling with this, think about it like this. If you won't follow the Macedonian's example of giving, then what about the example of Jesus. You see, our Lord made Himself materially poor that we could be rich spiritually. Talk about giving!"***

Paul gives us what Jesus did for us in Philippians 2:5-8, and this is from *The Amplified Bible*, where he wrote, **"Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!"**

Jesus Christ, God Almighty, the one who created the heavens and the earth, **"emptied himself"** of all the rights He had as being deity and took on the body of not just a man, but a servant!

It was not that Jesus was 50% God and 50% man or even 75% God and 25% man. But He was 100% God and 100% man in the Incarnation, and God alone can do that.

I may not understand that, but it is what the Scriptures teach.

I like the way that one writer summed this all up for us.

He wrote,

What is the Incarnation but His humility in emptying Himself and becoming Man?

What is His life on earth but humility in taking the form of a servant?

What was the His death on the cross if not the supreme demonstration of humility -

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Everything about the life and ministry of Jesus spoke of humility.

What could speak of humility more than a lion becoming a lamb - the Lion of the Tribe of Judah becoming the Lamb of God - the Sovereign of the universe becoming the sacrifice for our sins?

- Source Unknown

That is our God. He is our example in how we are to live out our lives and if Almighty God could focus on the needs of others, why can't we?

“Because I don't want to!”

That is not a good answer!

If our Lord and Savior, Almighty God can do it, there is no reason why we can't follow His example.

And please understand that I am not only speaking about money, but our time, our gifts we can give to the Lord to be used by Him!

That is what God wants to do in us and through us if we would humble ourselves before Him!

In other words, “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 2:5.

Back here in II Corinthians, notice what Paul is focusing on – ***GRACE!***

And as we read this, we can see from the context as well as how Paul has used the word “**grace**” in this passage, we know that Paul means, “**You know the giving of our Lord Jesus.**”

Paul is showing us the ultimate example of giving by looking at the life of Jesus.

He did not have to do this. No one forced Him to do this. But He freely gave Himself to those that did not deserve it because of His great love for us!

Jesus was rich, He lived in Heaven, everything was His, He is the second person of the Holy Trinity, and yet, He emptied Himself of some of His Godly attributes, He became poor for us so that we can be rich in Him!

Now don’t think this richness is speaking of money, it speaks of the richness of our salvation, that we are a child of God, and all that is His is ours in Christ!

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 1:3-6, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.**”

Look at what God has freely given to us – ***EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST!***

That is amazing and I don’t think we even consider that today. We are looking for material possessions instead of what the Lord has given to us.

And I am not saying we are not blessed with those things, we are. But do we realize all that God has given to us!

Thus, as we see what Jesus did, let Him be our example in our giving!

Let me give you this perspective to think about. And please understand that I am not laying a big guilt trip on you to give, not at all.

All I am doing is sharing with you what Paul shared with the Corinthian church and what the Holy Spirit is sharing with us.

Listen to this and you will once again see what Jesus did for us, all that He gave and it would take us a lifetime to study everything that He gave, but this is a good perspective.

We are told,

Born in a borrowed cradle, Jesus preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, ate His Last Supper in a borrowed room, and was buried in a borrowed grave.

He who made everything laid it all down and entered into total poverty that I might be rich.

“This is the real issue,” says Paul. “Not only did the believers in Macedonia give in their poverty, but to an infinitely greater degree, Jesus gave everything to set us free.”

To the person not in love with Jesus, giving is a difficult, painful, arduous, burdensome task. He who loves Jesus, on the other hand, welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate his love.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson’s Application Commentary, p. 1132

I think, like with the Spiritual gifts, people abuse and make people feel guilty about giving. They cry for money and yet they have huge homes, jet planes, all kinds of things. Thus, like the abuse of Spiritual gifts, we tend to ignore them or think that it is not important.

Again, if it is not important, why would the Holy Spirit, through Paul, give us two chapters on giving! And remember, there are many other places in the Scriptures that deal with giving!

So it is important.

Perspective is so important for us. I don't think we realize what we have in Jesus. I know we touched on this, but no matter how little we have or how much we have, is Jesus enough for us?

He should be!

Here is a great perspective.

The story is told of a Persian monarch who reigned in opulence [wealth] and splendor, living amid the wealth and comfort of the royal palace.

Yet his concern for the common people frequently drove him to dress as a poor man, leave the palace, and mingle with the lowliest of his subjects.

One day he visited a fireman, whose job was to heat the water in the bathhouse.

Dressed in tattered clothes, the shah descended a long flight of steps down to the tiny cellar where the fireman sat on a pile of ashes, tending the fire.

The ruler sat beside him, and the two men began to talk.

At lunchtime, the fireman shared his humble meal of coarse bread and water with his guest.

Eventually, the shah left, but he returned again and again, his heart filled with sympathy for the lonely man.

The fireman opened his heart to his kind, compassionate friend, who gave him wise counsel.

Finally, the shah could not bear to keep up the pretense any longer and decided to reveal his true identity to his friend.

He then asked the poor fireman to name a gift he could give him.

To his surprise, the man said nothing, but merely sat looking at him with love and wonder.

Thinking he had not understood him, the shah offered to make the fireman rich, elevate him to the nobility, or make him ruler over a city.

But he replied, ***“Yes, my lord, I understood you. But leaving your palace to sit here with me, partake of my humble food, and listen to the troubles of my heart - even you could give me no more precious gift than that. You may have given rich gifts to others, but to me you gave yourself. I only ask that you never withdraw your friendship from me.”***

That parable illustrates the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, heaven’s King who left His glorious throne to become the friend of sinners.

- John F. MacArthur Jr., 2 Corinthians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp. 287–288

Look at all the Lord has done for us, all that He has given us, and like this man who was so poor, he shared what he had with the Lord. May we do the same because as we do, and I guess I should say, as we share with others, we are sharing with the Lord!

Jesus said that in Matthew 25:40, **“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”**

May prayer as we go through these chapters in II Corinthians is you would be encouraged; you would be blessed as the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart on this subject of giving.

As we have seen, the Macedonians were an – ***EXAMPLE OF GIVING!***

And like Paul encouraged the Corinthians in their giving to the believers in Jerusalem and as he speaks to us, may we – ***COMPLETE THE WORK!***

And as much as you may be struggling with this, and if you are, then you need to look to the – ***ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF GIVING – THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!***

And I will close our study with this. We are told,

I heard a story about a little boy who wanted to give God an offering but had nothing to give.

He sat on the floor, watching people pass by and place their offerings in large wicker baskets.

How he longed to give a little something to the Savior he so dearly loved.

He walked to the front of the church, grabbed the rim of the basket and hoisted himself inside.

When the deacons went to retrieve the boy, one scolded him, saying, ***“This is not a play area!”***

Embarrassed and bewildered, the little boy responded, ***“I didn’t have anything to give the Lord, so I was giving him myself.”***