

**My Needs in Giving
2 Corinthians 8-9**

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April 15, 2018

Introduction to the Text: The example in 2 Corinthians 8-9 of the Macedonians' giving is the best on record. The Macedonians were not known for being an affluent people. In fact, they were best known for being an afflicted people. Other New Testament passages tell us of the hardships with which they heard, received, and believed in the Gospel. In addressing the church at Philippi, which was the first church formed in Macedonia, Paul said, "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29)

The background for these two chapters is found in Romans 15:22-29 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. These two passages reveal Paul's intention of collecting an offering among all the churches to bring to the poor saints in Jerusalem. In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul gave some practical procedures as to how to collect the offering. The tone of the rest of the letter, along with his address of the situation in 2 Corinthians, causes us to wonder if the Corinthians have questioned Paul as to the need for the offering or given some other excuse as to the offering. If indeed this is the case, notice how Paul reflects on the gracious giving of the Macedonians as a way to motivate the Corinthians to be involved in this offering.

Text: We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia: ²During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³I can testify that, according to their ability and even beyond their ability, of their own accord, ⁴they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, ⁵and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by God's will. ⁶So we urged Titus that just as he had begun, so he should also complete among you this act of grace.

⁷Now as you excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this act of grace. ⁸I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Introduction: Please excuse the irony of preaching this text on April 15. There will be no citation of Matthew 22:21 today. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

In fact, there is no particular reason that I am preaching on the subject of our giving today. Certainly, this is not a sermon because we aren't giving enough or that our budget is suffering. Quite the contrary in fact!

This is part of our discipleship. Though I have preached many times on the subject of the tithe and giving and money, I want today to do something different. Using this text as our guide, I want to be testimonial today. I want to talk to you personally about giving. In fact, the title suggests where I am headed in this text today—"My Needs in Giving."

I need to be challenged in my giving.

I have been tithing, giving offerings to God, giving above the tithe for a long time. I am at a place where it is not even difficult to decide to do. But, that is why I need to be challenged. Because even in the place of giving above a tithe, I could grow complacent and not allow myself to be stretched in the area of giving. I need this challenge. My family needs this challenge. I am challenged . . .

- **By the Example of Others**

This whole passage starts with the example of the Macedonians.

- (1) By God's grace (8:1)
- (2) According to faith not circumstances (8:2-3) Sometimes we excuse the necessity to give because we cannot afford to give. We can afford to give what God calls us to give. God would not call us to do something that we cannot afford to do. The Macedonians gave according to faith, not the severe trials that they were experiencing.
- (3) With joy (8:3)
- (4) Above their ability (8:3)
- (5) By their own accord (8:3)
- (6) Eagerness (8:4)
- (7) According to the will of God (8:5)

Jesus was moved by the example of a widow.

Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴²Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. ⁴³Summoning his disciples, he said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)

- **By the Enormous Needs of our World**

The needs of the world should challenge our giving, not our wants. I think sometimes our giving is tied to how much we can keep. What if our giving was tied to what we can give away?

- **By the Extraordinary Grace of Jesus**

I have learned to remove from my vocabulary the phrase "sacrificial giving." In comparison to Jesus' giving to us, we will never be able to rightly talk about sacrificial giving.

This past week, I participated in an ordination council. For those not familiar with that terminology, in our Baptist tradition, our denomination does not ordain people for ministry, churches do. When a church feels led to ordain one of their own, the church will usually call on area Southern Baptist pastors for an ordination council. This is a time of questioning then recommending to the church whether the person should be ordained. The line of questioning usually revolves around calling, theology, and practice.

In our gathering last week, one of our pastors asked what I thought was an incredibly powerful question: “For you personally, is the tithe the floor or the ceiling?” The veteran pastor continued, “Don’t ever think of the tithe as the ceiling—it’s just the beginning. Ask God to help you to do more.”

I was challenged by that statement. I need to be challenged. Whatever your current pattern of giving is, receive the challenge today to excel in giving.

I need to be consistent in my giving.

I’m giving you my testimony this morning as much as anything. I need discipline in my life. I need discipline in every area of my life. I need discipline in my schedule. There are so many things that I do in my life that I do at the same time every day. I do certain things on the same day. I need this kind of discipline.

In 1 Corinthians 16, we get a pattern for consistent giving.

Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches. 2 On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come.

There are different ways to be disciplined I guess, but find a pattern and be disciplined.

I need to be cheerful in my giving.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, we note a lot of reasons to be cheerful in giving.

- I am blessed when I give.
- Others get blessed when I give.

So, when I see this happen, I don’t give reluctantly, I give expectantly and therefore cheerful.

I need to be connected to my giving.

When we read chapters 8-9, we get the sense that Paul realized that they must be connected to the gift they were being asked to make. We feel the same way.

Many are saying today that the younger generation needs to be reminded of the vision in order to give. They need to see what they are giving to. They are not motivated to give to a non-specific goal.

If you want to talk about a vision for giving through our local church, I believe we have a very compelling vision. There is no way to highlight all of what our offering dollars do, but I want to remind you of several very compelling parts of our giving vision.

Basically, you can categorize our budget into three parts.

1. Personnel
2. Fixed Operational Costs

3. Ministry and Missions

About Personnel, I realize that there is not a great deal of excitement that is generated by providing the salaries of our paid staff. However, I want you to think about these men and women as the personal providers of pastoral care, of Christian education, of vision casting for the particular ministries of our church.

About the fixed operational costs, again there is not a lot of excitement. But, I challenge you not to just think about the building, but what happens in these buildings. Take for example this week's calendar.

- Every weekday, FBCS is in session. Some 280 children. That's 280 children with 2 parents and perhaps 4 grandparents—all being impacted by the Gospel.
- On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday—Mother's Day Out
- On Tuesday evening about 50 folks gathered for our weekly visitation ministry
- On Wednesday—Prayer and Bible Study, Ga's and RA's, Choir and orchestra rehearsed, the opportunity for a meal together, the youth group met, the Spanish Church met
- On Thursday—at two different times groups met for Bible Study and Prayer Blanket Ministry met
- Friday and Saturday—Painting with a Message
- And today—over 1,000 people will meet with a small group in Sunday School, people will gather for worship, other groups will meet for Bible Study
- In these buildings, there is equipment that produced a television cast of our service
- We could go on and on—these are not just buildings—but world-wide mission centers.

That brings us to the third and last category—ministry and missions. Here is the most exciting category. This is what we want more dollars to do. Please understand though that because of the fixed aspect of the first two categories, this is the part of the pie that often gets squeezed when we do not give to our level of expectation and potential.

We are blessed to be part of a cooperation of churches that meets probably every passion that you might have as a Christian.

- Christian Higher Education—Seminaries and LA College
- Missions—5,000 plus in over 100 countries
- Saving babies from abortion—The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home is doing more ministry than ever to provide places of adoptive and foster care

We are not perfect as a denomination by any stretch, but we are part of a Great Commission convention of Churches making a difference in every corner of the world. We ought to be careful to not say this with arrogance, but we can say this with pride.

This is the vision that you give to.

So, don't get frustrated in giving to people and buildings. Re-capture the vision of giving for the advancement of the kingdom.

I need to be complete in my giving.

Go back to 8:5. They gave themselves first to the Lord. Once you do this, giving generously and obediently is no issue at all.

Think of it like this. It all belongs to God anyway. Think of it this way. Suppose you had gone one day this week to the bank to cash a check or by the ATM. You wanted to draw \$100 out, but instead you got \$1,100--\$1,000 more than belonged to you.

I don't think that there is a person in this room that would not upon finding out, go back to that bank and return the \$1,000. You recognize that it is not yours and to keep it would amount to stealing. And suppose when you returned the money to the bank that the president came out and said, "It was a test. And because you passed the test, I want you to keep 90% of the money and return only 10%."

There is not a person in the room that would not think that this is a great deal.

The money wasn't yours to start with.

If we begin with the principle that we are simply stewards of all, not owners of any, then we will never have trouble with the tithe. If, we have given ourselves first to Him.