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Overflowing Joy, Rich Generosity!

2 Cor 8:1-9

Background

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also!”

2 Cor 8:1-9

The Collection for the Lord’s People

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Corinth — a place, which thrived from its strategic location, rich in all material aspects. However, the Church of Corinth defaulted in their pledge as opposed to their neighbouring churches that gave faithfully.

Paul wrote to the Church of Corinth to remind them of their pledge. (2 Cor 8:3-9)

True giving happens only when one has given until it hurts. Whether we hold tightly to our treasure or allow God to freely take from us is an indication of the state of our heart, our commitment and our faith.

Introduction

3 Conversions (Martin Luther)

- Conversion of the Heart (Of the heart when we know God loves us)
- Conversion of the Mind (Of the mind as we learn to think as Christians)
- Conversion of the Purse (Of the purse, the litmus test of the above!)

If faith has not touched our purse, it is unlikely that it has penetrated the heart or the mind.

The Example of Giving

1. The Macedonian Churches (2 Cor 8:1-2)

Severe Persecution – Overflowing Joy, Extreme Poverty – Rich Generosity

- By Ability, not by Amount (v3), E.g. Widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4), 5 loaves and 2 fish (John 6:9), (2 Cor 9:10)

²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

- Is a Privilege, not a Pressure (3b,4), None of our treasures truly belonged to us, it belongs to God and we should give freely and willingly.

Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.⁵

- Out of Excellence, not out of Expectations (v5,7), We should excel in the grace of giving.

⁷But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

- Not how much Money but how much of Me (v5) (Proverbs 3:5-6) Giving is being caught up in His grace.

⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

- First to Christ, then to the Concern (v5), Give first to the Lord wholeheartedly before devoting to the concern, trust in the Lord. As stewards of God, we must be wise with our spending but generous with our giving.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ

- Christ became poor so that we can become rich – The grace of God was seen clearly by the Macedonian churches and hence they gave freely.

(2 Cor 5:21) ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Christ came to Earth so that we can go to Heaven

Conclusion

- Christ gave His all, let us also give our all to Him
- Christ gave freely, let us also give unconditionally
- Christ gave because He loves us, let us give because we love Him too!

You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. - Amy Carmichael

(1 Cor 13:3) ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have I experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in my life?
2. What is my motivation for giving?
3. How have I been giving?
4. Can I ask God to supply me more so that I can give more?