

**TITLE:** GOD'S GUIDANCE IN GIVING – PART 1

**TEXT:** 2 CORINTHIANS 8

**INTRO:** The giving Paul is discussing is probably the same as in **Rom 15:26** – a specific need. However this situation gives us God's guidelines for our giving as well (otherwise we'd have no instructions on how to pay the church's debts).

**I. EXAMPLE OF THE CONTRIBUTION (v. 1-6):**

(v. 1-2) *We do you to wit of (make known to you) the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial (proof) of affliction the abundance of their joy & their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

*The abundance (overflow) of their **joy & deep poverty** (can joy & poverty really go together?) abounded unto the riches of their liberality (generosity). These Christians weren't rich! But their spiritual joy outweighed their physical poverty, & their desire to give outweighed their desire to keep. Result? They gave generously! How much? (v. 3)*

(v. 3-4) *For to their power (ability), I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves (voluntary); Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

1. They were **willing**. We are to give voluntarily, as we've been prospered (**1 Cor 16:2**), according to what we have (**v. 12**).

2. But these Macedonian brethren actually gave *more* than they could really afford (cf. **Mk 12:42**)! Apparently Paul knew their financial situation, & was hesitant to take that much from them, so they had to *beg* him! If only **all** Christians cared like this!

(v. 5) *And this they did, not as we hoped (expected), but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*

This explains how they were this caring & giving – they **I<sup>st</sup>** gave themselves to the Lord (**Mt 6:33**). This is commitment! This is how the Corinthian brethren (& we too) can be as giving - 1<sup>st</sup> commit to the Lord! Then everything else will follow (incl. giving)!

(v. 6) *Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.* Follow their example!

You don't have to give as sacrificially as they did (this decision must come from the heart). But give as you *said* you would (**v. 10**)!

**II. REQUEST FOR THE CONTRIBUTION (v. 7-11):**

(v. 7) *Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, utterance, knowledge, in all diligence, & in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.* Just like these other things, your giving shows you to be strong (members who don't give are weak).

(v. 8) *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.*

Paul *did* have authority to command, but this wasn't an occasion for a command. Rather, his appeal was to their knowledge of what was right, & their sincerity & love for the brethren, using the forwardness (earnestness) of the Macedonians as an example.

(v. 9) *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* **You** were made rich (spiritually) by Jesus' poverty. So you should want to "become poor" to make your brethren "rich" (physically). He isn't saying our giving should break us (v. 12-15), just that we should have the attitude Christ had.

(v. 10) *Herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.*

1. Herein (in what he's just said & will say) is my judgment. My opinion/advice is for you to abound in your giving. Why?

2. This is expedient ("bear together"; mutually beneficial/helpful)– this is good for them *and* you! When you give, both benefit. So finish what you started a year ago. If you say you're going to do it, then perform the doing of it!

(v. 11) *Now therefore perform (fulfill, accomplish) the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have (v. 12f).* **Just do it!** Willingness & preparation are important, but you must walk the walk (**Matt 21:28-31**)!

**III. EQUALITY IN THE CONTRIBUTION (v. 12-15):**

(v. 12) *For if there be first a willing mind (v. 11), it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* God never commands us to do what we can't do! It should be "as we've been prospered" (i.e., a %). When I get a raise, God gets a raise!

(v. 13-14) *For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.*

1. The abundance of the Corinthians should benefit the poverty of others now, while later this might be reversed.

2. We all give to the work of the church. The rich may be able to give more \$, but %-wise, we all can give significantly (it's never just the duty of the rich)! Nor should the poor feel like their giving doesn't matter. We all give; & we all benefit from the giving!

(v. 15) *As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; he that had gathered little had no lack. (Ex 16:18 - giving of manna)–everyone got what he & his family **needed**. Brethren should provide for brethren in need. But this is **not** a welfare or "spreading of wealth" system. It is not to be misused by those who will not work – **2 Thess 3:10-12**)!*

**IV. HONESTY WITH THE CONTRIBUTION (v. 16-24):**

**A. Sending of the Messenger (v. 16-19)**

(v. 16-17) *But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.* Titus earnestly cares for you. He *wanted* to come to you.

(v. 18-19) *And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:* Titus is traveling with another faithful brother (not told who). So you can trust us with the \$!

**B. Integrity of the messengers (v. 20-24)** Money can present the biggest challenge to the faith of the strongest Christian!

(v. 20-21) *Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.* Honesty is always important, especially when \$ is involved!

(v. 22) *And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.* Another trustworthy brother (Luke, Apollos, Silas ?).

(v. 23) *Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner & fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, & the glory of Christ.* A final approving of the messengers – don't let anything hinder your giving!

(v. 24) *Wherefore shew ye to them, & before the churches, the proof of your love, & of our boasting on your behalf.* A final appeal!

**CONCLUSION:** Lesson from the Macedonians: Giving is personal; from the heart (willingness), as you're prospered (a %), & can even be sacrificial (more than expected). How much do we care about the church? About lost souls? Key: have we given ourselves 1<sup>st</sup> to the Lord?