

9. 6-27-21

Sermon- Excel in Giving

Scripture- 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, CTW Psalm 130

Hymns- 95, 102, 529

Theme- Paul urges his readers to excel in faith, utterance, knowledge and also in giving to God and others. Its very motivational and inspiring to practice it in our life journey.

Introduction

Paul wrote four letters to the churches at Corinth: (1) A letter referred in 1st Corinthians 5:9, (2) the First letter to Corinthians, (3) "severe" letter referred in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, (4) Second letter. One of the purposes was "To teach Corinthians about the grace of giving".

One of the key themes was to make them understand that "Repentance expresses itself in holiness." This is a purity-producing love for God and his church and a unity-creating love for one's neighbor (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 & Chapters 8-9). "Koinonia," communion. Dated AD 55.

I. WE ARE TO GIVE WITH RICH GENEROSITY (2 Corinthians 8: 1-2)

A. The churches of Macedonia were in extreme poverty but their joy was overflowing because of their rich generosity in giving to God and poor.

Now the faith community in Jerusalem became poor because of war, famine, and persecution. Macedonia and Achaia never recovered from the three wars between Cæsar and Pompeius, between the Tri-um-virs and Brutus and Cassius, and between Augustus and Antonius.

Under Tiberius, heavy taxation was a big issue. Most of them were poor when they embraced Christianity. Jesus' mission was of course to preach the Gospel to the poor, Luke 4:18.

Jews had a custom that during their 'Feast of Purim' every poor man must find someone poorer than himself and give him a gift.

The most genuine expression of giving is frequently displayed by those who have the least to give. Christian giving is estimated in terms not of quantity but of sacrifice.

B. Generosity and plenty stand against each other.

Those who have plenty are the ones who close their hands to the Church and to the Poor. The poor, who have fewer resources are the ones who give generously.

The giving is sowing the seed. Seeds are always less the harvest is plenty. The plenty is a result of the sown seeds. Giving to God by Tithing in the form of donations is to make an investment in the future of the kingdom. The dividend will be high and the returns will be plenty.

The truth is that once giving is centered in grace, it lifts the whole act away from mechanics, from pressure and duty, from obligation and mere legalism. Giving because of compulsion and command is taxation. Giving should measure the sincerity of our Love for the Father.

Romans 12:8 reminds us to give with cheerfulness and generosity.

II. WE ARE TO GIVE BEYOND YOUR CAPACITY (2 Corinthians 8:3-5)

A. God commanded us to honor Him with our Tithe and free will offerings. We cannot rob God to pay Caesar or the other way around. We can't bandit the glory of God. God expects us to obey the Word in total. He looks at our intent and He already knows our capacity.

God was very particular about offering when He spoke to Moses saying, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man..." (**Exodus 25:2**). **Leviticus 14:30** reads "give according to your affordability". **Ezra 2:69** reads "people gave according to their ability". **Acts 11:29** reads "the disciples according to their ability gave to the need of the brothers".

Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you. **Numbers 31:50 & 2 Samuel**

8:10, Ezra 8:28 tells us that: People brought offerings of armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces to the Lord, silver, gold and bronze.

Our giving should be focused on the giving of the precious, and dearest of our hearts, to God. Give that which is holding your life, which is hindering your faith in God, which is blocking your further development, which is pulling you down from the work of God.

Today decide what you have which could be used for God and His ministry. Then decide that you will give that thing to God.

Abraham gave his beloved, loving, dear child to God. He gave the only son he had. He gave what was dear to his heart – that brought great blessing on his life. When God demanded, tested he never consulted with the wife but gone to sacrifice.

Give according to the means (v. 11). Give with the willingness (v. 12). Supply from the plenty (v. 14). The earnestness of your life (v. 8).

III. WE ARE TO GIVE BY GRACE (2 Corinthians 8:6-15).

A. Excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, in your love. Sincerity and earnestness. In Christ, the rich became poor and the poor became rich. During this past year under the restrictions of COVID, as a church we excelled in Giving. We had focus, we had purpose, we were certain of our call and need, and we had sincerity.

Our faith and knowledge of God in our everyday lives should always compel us. Remember that the word "Give" expresses the act of giving to God intentionally with **volunteered enthusiasm**. Giving to God is honoring God. Paul says, "they first gave themselves to the Lord."

Order of giving was first to their body, then their things. This is the key to a giving heart. There were however, three motives of giving: a tax write off, gain reputation or to gain more favor in judgment.

Cain and Abel gave their best things but Cain withheld his heart. Cain was jealous, hardened his heart, and became a Murderer. He lived with highly selfish motives and lost the divine favor of God **Genesis 4:5-16**. Cain was therefore one who was known throughout scripture as one who went against God.

C. Willingness and eagerness makes the gift acceptable. (2 Corinthians 8:12).

Spurgeon says Paul argued that five things effect how we give our gifts: 1. How others give; 2. How Christ gave; 3. How we have given in the past; 4. How we have need for God's attention and action; and 5. How we sense the rewards for giving more.

The Old Testament law is a Tithe of 10 percent of what we have, but the New Testament speaks with greater clarity on the principles of giving. It teaches us that giving should be regular, planned, proportional, and private, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and that it must be generous, freely given, and cheerful, 2 Corinthians 9: 5-8, and 11-15.

Giving is not just a duty toward God. It is always the result of the grace of God.

John Wesley famously put it as this: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can".

Wesley explains further that you need to:

"Get all you can without hurting your soul, your body, or your neighbor. Save all you can, cutting off every needless expense. Give all you can. Be glad to give, and ready to distribute; laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may attain eternal life".

He finishes with an important reminder:

"Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of

all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?”.

Folks, it is up to each person to ponder these things in their heart and with much prayer and discernment, give as the Holy Spirit directs them.

Amen? Let us pray...