



Sunday May 13, 2018
Generosity (Part-1)

There are many areas of our Christian walk, where we need to be reminded and encouraged from time to time. One of these is in the area of generosity or giving.

As a congregation, in general, we have a very generous congregation. From the very beginning in 2001 till now, we have always had more than enough to do the things that were before us. As a church we have always tried to remain generous in our ministry - giving out to the nation, especially in ways God has empowered us to do, and giving to those who may not have what we have.

However, this two part series comes as a gentle reminder to us to keep growing in this grace that God has placed on us.

We will consider two passages today:

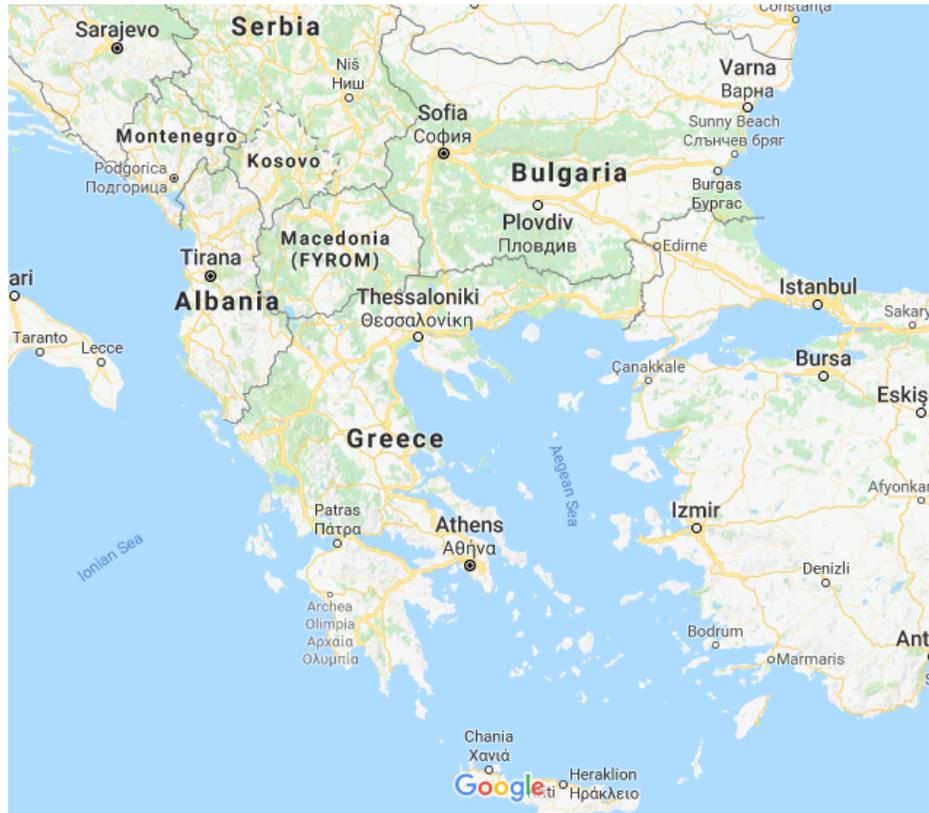
2 Corinthians chapter 8 & 9

Lets read these two chapters in entirety.

In these two chapters, Paul is writing to the believers in Corinth, teaching them and encouraging them about generosity, of the grace of giving. Paul is specifically "raising funds" to support and care for the believers at Jerusalem. The believers needed help because of a famine that had occurred in the region of Judea (prophesied by Agabus).

8:1 He makes mention first about the churches in Macedonia. Paul during his second missionary journey, was divinely directed by God to go into Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). Macedonia is the region (and country), today, north of Greece.





From Troas, Paul and his team crossed over the Aegean sea and came to Neapolis, the Macedonian seaport. They ministered at Philippi, passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica and from there on to Berea. So when Paul is referring to the churches in Macedonia, he is speaking of the believers in these cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea and possibly those at Neapolis, Amphipolis, Apollonia.

...the grace (Greek 'charis') of God bestowed on the churches....

the Greek word for grace is 'charis', similar to 'charismah' used concerning gifts of grace, the gifts of the Spirit, referring to divine empowering.

Generosity, or our ability to give is really a grace bestowed on us.

Giving or generosity is a grace given both to individuals (as we see in Romans 12:8), and to church communities, as we see mentioned here in 8:1.

8:2 In spite of their own struggles, suffered much persecutions as well as their own poverty, they gave.

8:3 they stretched themselves in their giving.



8:4 they were eager to participate ("fellowship") in the ministering to the saints...there are many ways we can minister to God's people. We can minister to them by preaching and teaching the Word of God, by praying for them, and also by giving materially to their needs

8:5 they FIRST gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us, by the will of God...many important lessons here on giving.

(A)Our giving must be an expression of our surrender to God. I have given myself completely to God, including my money. So giving my money to meet the needs of God's people is an expression of what I have already given to God.

(B)Our giving must be according to what God wants us to do, an expression of His purposes through us. For example, God's purpose through us may be to give towards certain needs, or to give towards people in a certain region...we give according to the will of God working through us.

For example, at APC we extend our generosity and minister to the saints in many ways - but many of these are aligned to our primary purpose of equipping God's people:

...through our free publications and resources that are used across the country..where many individuals and churches are blessed

...through our Bible college, our Short Term Bible College, Pastors Conferences and Youth Conferences where we provide spiritual equipping for many people at negligible cost, even free..

...through the support of outreach churches where congregations are nurtured by pastors supported by us...

..etc...

8:6 Paul had sent Titus along with two other brothers (un-named men) to receive the offering from the Corinthians and take it over to the saints in Jerusalem. Titus must have started this work of collecting their contributions over a year back, so Paul is sending him to complete this work of grace.

8:7 "...see that you abound in this grace also."

Just as we are growing in other areas of Christian life and ministry, this is an area we must also keep growing in.

8:8 "I speak not by commandment" - Paul was not commanding or ordering the Corinthians to give. Even so, we preachers and ministers have no right to command, order, compel by any means, or force people to give.

Paul, is simply sharing with them how the Macedonians were diligent to give, and wishes to really see the sincerity of the Corinthians.

8:9 Paul then points us to the greatest example of giving sacrificially - the Lord Jesus Himself. In our giving, we are following the example of Jesus Christ.

8:10-8:15 Paul encourages them to follow through on their intent to give, translate that into action and complete what they set out to do.



He also show how when we practice generosity we actually bless each other mutually. There are times, I give out of my abundance to someone who may not have as much. And then there will be times, when someone else blesses me in my area of need out of their abundance. So we must understand that even as we pray "Give us this day our daily bread"...God actually uses us to provide for others in need, and God uses others to meet our need.

8:16-8:24 Paul speaks about Titus and the two brothers (8:18, 8:22) who have been sent with Titus to bring the offering. He affirms and endorses their character and trustworthiness. About one he says "**the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches**" (8:18)

About the other brother, he says "**our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things**" (8:22)

The reason he states these is to let them know that in handling their financial contributions, he is "**providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men**" (8:21)

This is such an important lesson for us both as individuals and as a church/ministry. We have to be clear both in the sight of God and man - in how we handle the finances given to us.

9:1-9:5 Paul continues on the topic of "ministering to the saints" - as we have already mentioned, that generosity or giving to the material needs of God's people is one way of ministering to the saints.

9:5 Paul encourages us to do this as a matter of **generosity (Greek 'eulogia' = blessing, commendation)** and not as a **grudging obligation (Greek 'pleonexia' = fraudulence, extortion)**. We give as a matter of blessing, as when making an eulogy, and not as though we are being extorted or forced into this because of someone's greediness.

This is something to ponder about, given how in some circles money is extorted out of people, by a few "greedy" preachers. People give because they are being extorted and forced into it, and not because of their desire to bless.

9:6 giving into God's kingdom is like sowing.

sowing, when done properly, always - always - results in multiplication!

Every time you give, you are setting in motion a multiplication back to yourself!

9:7 Here we see two way to give, and two ways not to give

give as you purpose in your heart (make up your own mind, decide in your heart, take time to think over what you want to give)

give cheerfully

do not give grudgingly (feeling sorry that you have to give, complaining that you have to give, murmuring that you have to give, resenting that you have to give, not happy that you have to give, regret that you have to give)

do not give out of compulsion (feeling forced to give, doing it as a duty, an obligation)

9:8 Here is our confidence when we give. God will take care of us, making sure that we have more than enough for all He has called us to do.



9:9 Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9 about the righteous man who is generous and thrives and prospers.

9:10-11 Paul then reveals God part in this whole process
God supplies seed to the sower - God gives us seeds to sow.
God provided bread to the eater - God meets our needs.
God multiplies the seeds we sow and increases the fruits
God enriches us to all liberality (generosity)

9:12-15 This ministry of generosity not only meets the needs of people but also cause many thanksgivings and praise to be raised up to God.

9:13 Your giving causes people to praise God for your obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as for your generosity

9:14 They in turn pray for you who have given so generously

9:15 Ultimately, all of this points to God's generosity in giving us His Son Jesus Christ - His indescribable gift!

Now lets read a small portion of Paul's letter to the Philippians - one of the churches in Macedonia, that he was talking about in 2 Corinthians 8. The Philippians had sent money to Paul to support him twice, during his first visit to Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16), and later when he was staying at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:9 Philippians 4:15).

Philippians 4:15-19

4:17 their giving resulted in fruit that abounds to their account.

Here is how some other versions render this verse:

(Contemporary English Version) I am not trying to get something from you, but I want you to receive the blessings that come from giving.

(Easy To Read Version) Really, it is not that I want to get gifts from you. But I want you to have the benefit that comes from giving.

(Message Bible) Not that I'm looking for handouts, but I do want you to experience the blessing that issues from generosity.

So really there is nothing wrong in knowing, believing and expecting "fruit" from your giving. Expect to receive blessings that come from giving.

4:18 our giving also goes up before God as "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God"

4:19 Once again Paul emphasizes in relation to giving, that God in turn will supply for all of our need according to what He is able to provide...which is absolutely more than enough!

Prayer & Ministry Time



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday May 13, 2018
Generosity (Part-1)

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons. Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9; Philippians 4:15-19*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Discuss these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1, What key lessons can we take away from 2 Corinthians chapter 8, in connection with collecting funds for ministry?

2, What key lessons can we take away from 2 Corinthians chapter 9, about giving to God's work and to God's people?

3, Discuss the three outcomes of giving to God's work, highlighted by in Philippians 4:17-19

If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.



FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.

Close by thanking God together.