Anchored to Stand

**STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS**

**Lesson 11**

**II Corinthians 8**

***Stand and Be Willing to Give***

***For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing* II Corinthians 8:3**

Over the next two weeks, we will be discussing a topic that some of us don’t always feel comfortable discussing; the topic of giving. Chapters 8 and 9 of Second Corinthians are all about Christian giving -- not tight-fisted, miserly, grudging giving, but true, generous, gracious, abundant, what Paul calls "cheerful" giving. The amazing thing is that Paul does this all in two chapters without once mentioning the word *money*! This week, we will learn that Paul had asked the believers in Corinth to donate towards the collection he was taking. He was not asking for support for himself but for the church in Jerusalem, which was facing financial difficulties due to a famine that had severely hit that region. Paul took the opportunity to unite the Gentile believers with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem through this act of loving and supporting each other. The Corinthian church started out with good intentions to be part of this wonderful opportunity, but had not really done anything about it. Paul now gently and lovingly address the issue of giving, using the Macedonian Christians as an example because of their testimony of grace. Through our study this week, we will be encouraged, not to hide whenever a need arises, but to *stand* with a sincere willingness to give.

 **First Day Overview: Read II Corinthians 8:1-24**

1. Read through II Corinthians chapter 8 to get acquainted with this week’s text. Underline or highlight any words, phrases that minister to you personally and then record them here:
2. Amy Carmichael said, *you can always give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.*
	1. Do you think she is right? Why?
	2. Fill in the blank from John 3:16: For God so loved the world, He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
	3. What does Galatians 2:20b add to this thought?
	4. What other things has God given to you that are demonstrations of His unfailing love for you?
3. Ponder the Lord’s declaration in Acts 20:35b, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*
	1. How have you experienced this in your own life?
	2. The principle of giving is so vital that we don’t want to miss the opportunity to teach it to any young people we may have influence over. Share a practical way of doing this.

**Anchored In –** The amazing grace we have been given by God should inspire us to give to others. Spend a few moments in prayer before the Lord. Ask him to give you the right perspective and attitude about your finances.

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***If a person gets his attitude toward money straight,***

***It will help straighten out almost every other area in his life. - Billy Graham***

**Second Day: Read II Corinthians 8:1-5**

The southern part of Greece was called Achaia, where the city of Corinth was. The northern part was called Macedonia. Paul writes about the example he sees in the churches of Macedonia, which included the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The poverty of these Christians is confirmed by secular history, which states that the Romans took most of their wealth when they conquered their land. Today we will see why Paul uses these Macedonian believers as examples of graceful giving and we will see why Paul is so committed to taking up an offering for the church in Jerusalem.

1. Knowing the background for II Corinthians 8 will give us a better understanding of the verses in our study this week. Paul addressed the issue of collecting money for the poor Christians living in Jerusalem.
	1. When Paul met with the original apostles, they agreed to divide the mission field — Paul would focus on the gentiles, and they would focus on the Jews (Gal. 2:9). They made one request of Paul. What was it? Answer from Galatians 2:10
	2. We know that the first missionaries of the early church were “sent out” from the church in Jerusalem. Read Romans 15:25-27 and record what you see:
	3. Paul had given the believers in Corinth instructions to follow at the end of his first letter to them. What did he tell them to do according to I Corinthians 16:1-3?
2. In II Corinthians 8:1-5 Paul informed the Corinthians about the churches of Macedonia, citing their example of giving. Write what you learn about the Macedonian Christians from the following verses.
	1. Verse 2
	2. Verse 3
	3. Verse 4
	4. Verse 5
	5. How would you sum up their attitude of giving?
3. The phrase from II Corinthians 8:4b *fellowship of the ministering to the saints* in the TLB *i*s *share in the joy of helping the Christians in Jerusalem.*
	1. When we give, things begin to happen within us, we become more gracious, more generous, more relaxed, more open, more loving people. In what way have you experienced this to be true in your own life?
	2. The church in Macedonia considered their giving to be a privilege, not a duty. Do you consider giving (tithes and offerings) to be a duty or a privilege? Why?
4. Read II Corinthians 8:5 once more, And *not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*
	1. What did they do first?
	2. Why do you think some people try to bypass this “first” step and go straight to charity work?
	3. Notice that Paul says that they gave to others according to *the will of God*. Share some ways we can know whether it is God’s will for us to give or not?

**Anchored In** – Before we *give* our time towards anything else today, let’s *give* some time to the Lord. Express your desire to make Him the “first” priority in our life.

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***Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee...***

 ***Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold***

 

**THIRD DAY: Read II Corinthians 8:6-9**

Jesus’ willingness to give is an example that believers are to follow. Our priority in life is not our own comfort — it is service, and we are to serve Christ by serving others. His grace toward us should be reflected in our grace toward others — grace not only in forgiveness, but also in the material blessings we have been given and should share.

1. Paul hoped the generosity of the Macedonian Christians would encourage and motivate the Corinthian believers to follow through on their giving to help the church in Jerusalem. Read II Corinthians 8:6-8. When Titus delivered this letter he was also asked to speak to them about their offering. Observe this in verse 6: *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.*
	1. What did Paul say to the Corinthians in verse 7?
	2. Why do you think it is important for all of us to abound, or overflow, in the grace of giving?
2. Paul was not commanding or putting pressure on them to give, but rather was identifying giving as a test of love. Think about this as you fill in the blanks from II Corinthians 8:8

…I am to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

* 1. Read John 3:17-18 –In what way is your giving a proof of love?
	2. How does this inspire you to love, in deed and truth?
1. Selah - pause and think about II Corinthians 8:9 and the supreme example of giving.
	1. What do you know from verse 9?
	2. *For your sakes* reveals the reason for the Lord’s incredible sacrifice. How does this minister to you today?
	3. *…that you through His poverty might become rich* (verse 9c). List a few of the riches that are yours in Christ.
2. The glorious riches Jesus enjoyed while seated on His heavenly throne make any amount of wealth on earth seem poor.
	1. Jesus stepped down from His throne in Heaven. What does Matthew 8:20 say about Jesus?
	2. What does Philippians 2:6-8 say about Jesus?
	3. Psalm 40:17 says, *but I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer.* It is true, we are poor apart from the riches found in Jesus Christ, our deliverer. Look again at II Corinthians 8:9. How does our Lord’s gift of love speak to you about sharing what you have with those in need?

**Anchored In –** God’s gift of love is one we could never repay. The cost of our salvation is more than we could ever comprehend. Take some time to praise and thank the Lord for the riches of His grace and mercy in your life today.

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***How many kings stepped down from their thrones?***

***How many lords have abandoned their homes?***

***How many greats have become the least for me?***

***…only ONE did that for me***

**Fourth Day – Read II Corinthians 8:10-15**

We might imagine that the Corinthian Christians were willing to take up a collection for the saints in Jerusalem for Paul to take with him. But when things became difficult between Paul and the Corinthian Christians, they may have been less willing to take up the collection and put it in Paul's hands. One reason Titus was sent, with this letter, was to collect this donation from the Corinthian Christians, to make certain they followed through on their original intent

1. We know this is not the first time the Corinthian church heard of this offering for the church in Jerusalem.
	1. According to II Corinthians 8:10, how long ago did the Corinthian believers agree to this offering?
	2. What does verse 11 say about their willingness to give in the beginning?
		1. Why is it important to complete what we say we will do?
2. II Corinthians 8:11-12 provides key principles for Christian giving. What are they?
	1. Verse 11a
	2. Verse 11b
	3. Verse 12
		1. With this verse in mind, read Mark 12:41-44. What lesson do you find in this illustration?
3. II Corinthians 8:12 says, *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.* How should this bring comfort those of us who have very little to give?
4. Read II Corinthians 8:13-15. Pastor Chuck Smith says, “*Paul sought a balance between those who had an abundance and those who had need in the church*”.
	1. What does this imply about giving and receiving?
	2. This is not just a New Testament principal; it’s the same principal God used with the Israelites regarding the gathering of manna while wandering in the wilderness. Read Exodus 16:16-20. What do you see?

**Anchored In** – Sometimes we have the tendency to hoard our resources. Spend a few moments to do some brainstorming. Are there any resources you have that could be shared or given to others?

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***Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. Luke 6:38 NKJV***

**Fifth Day – Read II Corinthians 8:16-24**

1. To avoid any blame and to maintain a high level of accountability with the Lord’s money, Paul planned to use Titus and two unnamed Christian brothers to carry the gift to the Jerusalem church. Observe this as you read II Corinthians 8:16-24. Jot down one or two discoveries about:
	1. Titus (verses 16,17,23)
	2. the brother (verses 18,19,23)
	3. our brother (verse 22-23)
2. Consider II Corinthians 8:20-21 TLB: *By traveling together we will guard against any suspicion, for we are anxious that no one should find fault with the way we are handling this large gift. God knows we are honest, but I want everyone else to know it too. That is why we have made this arrangement.*
	1. What reason did Paul give for traveling with companions?

* 1. In what way would this plan safeguard both the gift and the reputation of Paul and his companions?
1. Look at II Corinthians 8:22. Notice that Paul commends this man in terms of his attitude to God and in his attitude toward the Corinthians.

* 1. What does it mean to be considered to be *diligent*?
	2. Explain why diligence would be a character trait we all should desire to have?
	3. Read Proverbs 7:15 and Proverbs 8:17 to discover one way we should all practice diligence. What is it?
1. D.L. Moody said, “If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself.” What character traits are Christian men supposed to possess, according to Titus 2:6-8?
2. In the final verse of chapter 8, Paul asks the Corinthians to give like the good givers he has claimed they are. He tells them to show proof of their love for the church in Jerusalem.
	1. In a way, Paul is telling them to *put their money where their mouth is* by telling them to show “proof of their love”. Why is this an important concept for us to remember?
	2. It is interesting that the Corinthian believers were seeking proof of Paul’s ministry, yet they had failed to produce any proof of their own claim of concern for the impoverished church in Jerusalem. Romans 12:9 tells us to *love without hypocrisy*. Why is this so important?

**Anchored in** – When we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to show proof of our love and concern for another, we should listen and obey. If God has recently put someone on your heart, pray about what you can do to act on that prompting in your heart today.

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***Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established***

**Proverbs 16:3**

**Sixth Day- STAND and Be Willing to Give**

Giving is a vital part of Christian living. This is why Paul, who usually focused on the cross of Christ, used so much of his letter asking for donations. He understood that there is a logical and spiritual connection between the cross and Christian behavior (including how we handle our resources). The Bible doesn’t portray us as owners of anything, but rather, tells us that God Himself is the ultimate owner of all things. Today we hope to gain the right perspective of money as we see that Christian giving is simply the grace of God at work. Like the Macedonian believers, we should excel in generosity to others and *stand with a willingness to give*.

Let’s begin today’s study by looking at the testimony of grace found in the life of multi-millionaire, RG LeTourneau. As the “father of the modern earthmoving industry”, he was responsible for 299 inventions, including the Electric Wheel. Many people consider LeTourneau to be one of the most influential men of the past 100 years. As a Christian man, his life's verse was Matthew 6:33: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you*. He must have given a hearty “amen” to that verse because it was reported that LeTourneau gave 90% of his profit to God’s work and kept only 10% for himself. As a special friend of Billy Graham, in his early days, he designed a portable dome building intended for Graham Crusades. LeTourneau also founded a university that is thriving to this day. He said that the money came in faster than he could give it away and was convinced that he could not out-give God. *I shovel it out*, he would say, *and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel*.

1. Since God is the owner and giver of all things, we are but trustees, managers, or stewards of another's goods. It is not "my" home, "my" car, or even "my" money. We must avoid being "possessive." I am just a trustee of God's possessions. Look up the following verses and write what they reveal about God’s ownership:
	1. Psalm 50:10-12
	2. Haggai 2:8
	3. James 1:17
2. Many of us become worried or anxious when we experience financial struggles. Our tendency is to hoard our resources and withhold any giving. Jesus knew we would experience these kinds of struggles and provided us with words of comfort and encouragement. Read Matthew 6:19-34. Highlight any verses that stand out to you.
	1. What are some things you notice that you could apply to your own life today?
	2. Do you think the Christians in Macedonia practiced this principal?
	3. Reflect on this beautiful poem by Annie Johnson Flint and underline or highlight any words or phrases that minister to you:

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,*

*He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;*

*To added affliction He addeth His mercies,*

*To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,*

*When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,*

*When we reach the end of our hoarded resources*

*Our Father’s full giving is only begun.*

*His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,*

*His power no boundary known unto man;*

*For out of His infinite riches in Jesus*

*He giveth and giveth and giveth again*

1. It is true; we cannot out give the Lord. He has already given us so many glorious things, including the forgiveness of sins, and He simply asks that we cooperate with Him so He can keep on giving. If we cooperate with this request, there is a marvelous promise given to us found in Luke 6:38, *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you*. What is your response to this?

**Anchored In –** In II Corinthians 8:3, Paul told us the Macedonians were *freely willing* to give. If you don’t have a willing heart today, ask Him to give you one. We don’t want to run and hide when a need presents itself. Pray the Lord would strengthen you to *stand and be willing to give* in response to what He was willing to give to you.

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