

## An Example For Giving

The apostle Paul commends the Macedonian brethren for their big heartedness. In the second epistle to the Corinthian, the apostle gives some of the reasons for the kindness of the Macedonian church. The church was not tied to the philosophy of opportune times. According to Paul, *“How that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality”* (2 Corinthians 8:2 ASV). They gave not because of favorable conditions but rather they gave in spite of them. It seems that this was characteristic of the first century church. *“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles...They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word”* (Acts 8:1,4 ASV). Hardships and tribulation did not get in the way of the work of the early church.

A criterion for generosity is to prioritize one’s life. *“Beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: and this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God “* (2 Corinthians 8:5 ASAV). Jesus taught us to put things in their proper order, *“But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33 ASV). Joy comes with service. However, some in the church will never experience that joy. God wants us to be cheerful givers. Unfortunately, some today are like the Pharisees who want to be seen of men, *“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments”* (Matthew 23:5 ASV). Remember the mockery of giving that was done by Ananias, and Sapphira. They lied about their giving and were struck dead as a result (Acts 5). How many times do we hold back in our giving? Christians are commanded *“Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper...”* (1 Corinthians 16:2 ASV). How can a child of God sing, *“Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to thee: Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love...Take my love...Take my-self, and I will be ever only, all for thee.”*

Another reason for the generosity of the Macedonian brethren was an attitude. *“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”* (2 Corinthians 8:12 NKJV). Purposing and planning are required. Most successful endeavors begin with a plan. Our giving should be planned, not left to chance. The account of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) speaks volumes on planning and preparedness.

The Macedonians practiced the “golden rule” concerning giving. *“For I say not this that others may be eased and ye distressed; but by equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want; that there may be equality”* (2 Corinthians 8:13,14 ASV). Some one said that ten percent of the church did ninety percent of the work. If this is true, obviously some are getting a “free ride”. Everyone in the church should pull their own weight in service and giving that none would be burdened.

Bill Dedmon - 9/17/2006

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