

Sunday Celebration (11-28-04)
"Restoring the Joy & Privilege of Giving"

Restoration of the Church Series (Pt. 8)

I. WHEN "EXTREME POVERTY" & "SEVERE ADVERSITY" EQUALS JOY & GENEROSITY

2Co 8:1-4, 7

v. 1 ... "the grace of God that has been given"

v. 2 The Setting (or Living Condition) of Those Who Gave

- during a "severe test of affliction" in a time of "extreme poverty"
 - It's interesting to face this truth as an American these were 3rd WORLD CHRISTIANS who were Living in PERILOUS TIMES
 - There are almost NO AMERICAN CHRISTIANS who ever face this kind of Poverty. We are a people with Great Abundance and Very Little Hostility Against Us
 - 3rd WORLD CHRISTIAN LIVING CONDITIONS — They would not have known what an INSURANCE POLICY was. They would have been unfamiliar with a 401K Plan or IRA account. There would be No Pursuit of HIGHER EDUCATION.
 - AFFLICTION & PERSECUTION —

— Today, however, there are many American Christians who use These TIMES of Their Lives as the Reason they're Not able to Give

The Attitude (or Mood) of Their Giving

"an abundance of joy" ... v. 2

"of their own free will" ... v. 3

"begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part" ... v. 4

The Amount of Their Giving

"a wealth of generosity" ... v. 2

"according to their means" ... v. 3

"beyond their means" ... v. 3

– Does God think You're Giving Generously?

— The Macedonian's Offering was probably like the WIDOW'S MITE (not a Large Amount, but Large in the Eyes of God)

Mark 12:41-44 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

v. 7 ... Giving is Part of the Charismatic Christian Life

- The Corinthian Church was a Church that EXCELLED in: Faith ... Speech ... Knowledge ... Earnestness ... and Love

1 Cor 13:1-2 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

- Believe it or not, there are some Christians who will "excel in everything"— while not giving as they should. People who ATTEND Regularly SERVE in Various Ministries Have Been CHURCH MEMBERS for Many Years can TEACH the Bible will COUNSEL Others PROPHECY & PRAY Publicly

When We Realize the HUGE Emphasis Placed on Finances in the New Testament, we realize it is NO SMALL THING if Our Giving is Not What it Should Be.

"How could the Bible's Author and Editor justify devoting twice as many verses to money than to faith and prayer combined? And how could Jesus say more about money than about heaven and hell? ... The sheer enormity of Scripture's teaching on this subject screams for our attention. And the haunting and immensely important question is, why?" Randy Alcorn, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity", p. 16

"Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man's real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man's true character. All though Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money." Richard Halverson (quoted in "Money, Possessions, and Eternity" p. 15)

II. WHAT DOES A LACK OF GIVING REVEAL ABOUT US?

– 1st Let Me Say It Does Not Reveal That We Are to POOR Remember the Macedonians!!

● We May Have a Dangerous Preoccupation with the Temporal

Matt 6:19-24 Don't lay up treasures on earth, because your heart goes where your treasure is; This runs the risk of making the eye unhealthy You cannot (will not) serve two masters

Ps 62:10 Do not trust in oppression And do not vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.

Luke 12:15-16 Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Ps 39:6-7 Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them. 7 "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.

Ecccl 5:10-11 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. 11 When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?

Heb 13:5-6 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," 6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

- **We May be Ignorant of Sinning Against God**

Mal 3:6-12

v. 6-9 The Amazing Ability to be UNAWARE of Financial Sin Against God

v. 9 The FULL TITHE — Since the Tithe is 10% and Not a "General Word" for Giving, it affords us the opportunity to be precise (both in Observing the Lord's Provision as well as Our Response)

Pr 3:9 "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of your crops."

"The tithe or firstfruits was recognized as belonging to God in the first place. Hence, one was not "giving" a tithe but simply 'repaying' it to the one to whom it belonged all along. ... No one said 'I feel led to tithe' or 'I think I'll give my firstfruits this month.' No one asked, 'Would you like me to tithe, Lord?' The answer had already been given in God's Word." Randy Alcorn, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity", p. 210

"Tithing gives us perspective. It reminds us that all we are and all we have is from another, a higher one. ... Through the tithe, God built into the rhythm of life the unceasing reminder that he owned the land, the cattle, the jewels, the money, everything." Randy Alcorn, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity", p. 211-212

v. 9-12 The Promise of God's Favor Coming Into Our Lives (From a VARIETY of ANGLES)

- **Our Possible Failure to Depend on God as Our Source & Provider**

Job 31:24-28 |f| have put my confidence in gold, And called fine gold my trust, 25 |f| have gloated because my wealth was great, And because my hand had secured so much; 26 |f| have looked at the sun when it shone Or the moon going in splendor, 27 And my heart became secretly enticed, And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, 28 That too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, For I would have denied God above.

Matt 6:25-33

"The concept and practice of firstfruits was an important statement made by the people of God. It was a way of saying, 'We give of our first and best to you, our Lord, because we recognize all that is good comes from you.' ... The nature of 'firstfruits' requires that it be taken 'off the top.' It is both the best and the first, ... The spiritual community's giving back to the Lord what was rightfully His was a consistent thermometer of their faith and trust in Him. When they slid spiritually, they ceased to give as they should. And when they ceased to give as they should, they slid spiritually." Randy Alcorn, "Money, Possessions, and Eternity", p. 208-209

HOW DOES... "Severe Affliction" + "Extreme Poverty" = "Abundance of Joy" + "Overflowing Generosity"

- **Our Possible Failure to Bank on God's Promised Reward**

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Matt 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Mal 3:10-12 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. 11 "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts. 12 "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

- **Our Ignorance that Stinginess Closes the Door of Blessing**

Pr 21:13 Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.

2 Cor 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Isa 58:6-11 Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? 7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. 9 "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday. 11 "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.