

**DISCOVER
NEW
TESTAMENT
GIVING**

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Oct. 4, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: Acceptable financial giving in the New Testament is inspired and motivated by Jesus' example of giving, and our heart of gratitude toward Him.

Congregational reading: 2 Cor. 8:1-9

Scriptures: 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; Luke 6:30-31, 36-38 (*38); Matt. 6:19-21; Rom. 12:6-8 (*8); Luke 12:13-34 (*34)

2 Cor. 8:1-9 NKJV Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: ² that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. ³ For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, ⁴ imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. ⁵ And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God. ⁶ So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. ⁷ But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—*see that you abound in this grace also.* ⁸ **I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.** ⁹ **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.** ¹⁰ And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; ¹¹ but now

you also must complete the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there also may be* a completion out of what *you* have. ¹² 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. ¹³ For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; ¹⁴ but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. ¹⁵ As it is written, “*He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*”

For many people, nothing is more important to them than their money. How they earn it, how they spend it, how they invest it, and even how they waste it, consumes a great amount of their time and energy.

At the root of it, money is simply a means of exchange. It represents the value of the work we have done, or what someone is willing to give to us from the value of the work *they* have done. It is a representation of the value society as a whole places on our efforts.

- E.g., compare society’s valuation of a professional baseball player vs. their valuation of a doctor. Or a mother.

When money comes into our possession, important decisions need to be made regarding what we will do with it. Certainly, some decisions are made for us, based upon what society deems to be of greatest value to its survival. Hence, we have no discretion over the amount the government removes from our pay cheques before we even see them! This is the wonderful invention called taxes – the monetary value society places upon preserving our communal lifestyle and wellbeing.

But what do we do with what is left over after the tax department has had it's way with us? What do we do with our "discretionary income?" How much of it will we apportion to housing ourselves, transporting ourselves, clothing ourselves, amusing ourselves, beautifying ourselves, feeding ourselves, educating ourselves, healing ourselves, even 'vacating' ourselves. (I.e. our vacations to 'get away from it all', or even substance abuse to 'get away from it all'.)

Then after we have taken care of all these things for ourselves, we may even consider giving a little something to charity. A little something to help those less fortunate, maybe even a little something to bless the work of God!

Let me not burden you with numbers, but you may find the following information interesting. Statistics Canada tells us that in 2010, those who are religiously inclined (i.e. attending church at least once a week) gave an average annual donation to religious organizations of \$1,004.¹

To help put this in context, the median, 'after-tax' family income for 2010 was \$65,500: (In other words, half of Canadian families earned more than \$65,500 while half earned less).² For the moment, let us assume that there are two income earners in each religious family (along with non-working school-age children). With average donations of \$1004 each, this would equate to 3.1% of their after-tax income.

This percentage calculation may be of interest to those

¹ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11637-eng.htm>, accessed Sept. 30, 2015.

² <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120618/dq120618b-eng.htm>, accessed Sept. 30, 2015.

who would like to compare modern giving practices to tithing requirements under the Mosaic Law.

Hebrews 8:6-13 (*13) reminds us that we are no longer living under the imperfections of the old covenant. Therefore, since there is no NT stipulation that saints remit a 10% tithe to the church, we do not demand it. Many pastors (myself included), see tithing as a very good benchmark for our giving, but at best it is a guideline, not a command.

As we will see, however, financial giving to the work of God is a well-discussed NT topic.

Speaking about giving under the new covenant, Paul draws upon a commonly understood agricultural reality:

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

Paul highlighted the incredible example of the sacrificial giving of the Macedonian saints in 2 Cor. 8 and then speaks of the natural response that should be expected from such an act. The more “seed” we sow, the more bountiful our harvest will be. The more we give, the more we will receive.

It is clear that the Macedonians were not thinking along these lines when they made their donation toward the care of the saints in Jerusalem. They just wanted to be a blessing! So Paul was simply stating a natural fact: we reap what we sow. In fact, every farmer expects to reap much more than he sows! This is the basis of all farming activity. It is also one of the offshoots of NT giving, although certainly not its core consideration.

However, Jesus *did* say:

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.

The Macedonians saw a great need and went well beyond what we could ever consider to be appropriate or expected; they gave everything they had, out of nothing! They totally understood and participated in the example of Christ's sacrificial giving for us:

2Cor. 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Jesus gave His all! *This* is what motivates Christian giving: Jesus' example in meeting the great needs of others. So, as we plan our giving as part of our personal or family financial plan, or as we respond to needs that routinely arise around us, we do it with an eye that is focused outwardly on others, not inwardly on ourselves.

2 Cor. 9:7-11 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. ⁹ As it is written:

*"He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever."*

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, **11** while you are enriched in everything for all liberality,

which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

The way we spend our money and the way we give are flawless indicators of what is important to us in life. So the Lord teaches us how to think about money and how to use it in godly, productive and life-sustaining ways. He says:

Matt. 6:19-21 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

We can easily see where our heart is by where our money is.

Illustration: On a number of occasions around our city, proposals have been made to put halfway houses for recovering criminal offenders or recovering mental health patients in certain communities. In no time, opposition has arisen from homeowners who are immediately struck by the NIMBY syndrome: Not In My Back Yard! What is their opposition based on? The fact that they feel their property values will diminish if the halfway house is approved. Their treasure is in their home and their heart is very much there.

We get quite emotional about the things our money is invested in.

Give illustration of Belarus revival services.

Truly, our emotional response to the destination of our finances should be positively heightened when we are investing in the kingdom of God!

Luke 12:15 And He said to them, **“Take heed and beware**

of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" 18 So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." 22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. 23 Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? 29 "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. 32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you have and give alms;

provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Lastly, be open to see if God has given you the spiritual gift of giving.

Rom. 12:6-8 **Having then gifts** differing according to the grace that is given to us, **let us use them**: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; **he who gives, with liberality**; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Thank God for those in our assembly who have received this gift! We all need to give, and give liberally, but thank God for the few who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty and enter into such a realm of love and trust in God that they give with seemingly reckless abandon. We'll call them our "Macedonian givers". Truly, we would not be in this building today, had it not been for our Macedonian givers. Our former pastor, F. W. McKenzie, was blessed with the gift of faith, and he displayed it as he presented the vision of purchasing this building to our congregation. The givers grabbed on to it and began to exercise their gift, even as he had exercised his gift. When we all allow our gifts to operate, the Body of Christ takes giant leaps forward.

Therefore, whether we give out of a heart of love for God and His work, or because we have received a spiritual gift, let us practice the kind of NT giving that acknowledges the lordship of Christ over our finances.