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2CORINTHIANS

The Joy of the Generous
2nd Corinthians 8

- I. Being vs Doing
 - a. *Warning* Chapters 8 & 9 Paul deals with giving
 - i. “Here we go again, another pastor asking for money” Trust me I get it. I personally shutter at the idea of preaching on money because of how the message has been twisted and perverted
 1. But when you teach verse by verse through the Word of God you have to deal with the topics the Lord puts in front of you
 - ii. Even though Paul deals specifically with money and giving these chapters have more to do with our identity in Jesus then simply tithing
 - b. Our spiritual growth is dependent on a deepening understanding of who God is and, as a direct result of that, understanding our identity in Him
 - i. The more we seek God, the more we know Him – the more confident we are of our identity in Him
 - ii. As Paul has already told us “**2Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**”
 1. Salvation isn’t simply a change in our belief system – it’s a complete transformation of heart and mind
 2. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of this transformation - **Eze 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.**
 - iii. It’s a change of our relational status with God – we are no longer separated or alienated from Him because of our sin – we are now heirs, sons and daughters of the King
 - c. One of the marks of a transformed life – joy – a gift from the King to His kids
 - i. **Joh 16:22-24 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (23) "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. (24) Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.**
 - ii. Joy – an excitement about life that can’t be stolen. Not based on circumstances but on the promises of the present and the reality of eternity in the future
 - iii. Let me ask this – if joy is the mark of a transformed life, where has all the joy gone?
 1. Mark of many believers today is guilt, fatigue, burn out, bitterness, stress
 2. Either God has lied or we have missed something
 3. Jesus said “your joy no one will take from you” – our joy hasn’t been stolen, we have willingly given it away
 - iv. What is the clear message of John 15 – the fundamental truth that Jesus teaches in that chapter?

Joh 15:(4) Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are

burned. (7) If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (8) By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (9) "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (10) If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (11) "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

- d. Why has joy left the building? Because we have left the building that is Jesus – we don't study Jesus and His teachings, we don't set out to learn the sound of His voice – instead we are distracted by all the glitters in this world – substituting fool's gold for the true treasure of knowing God more
 - i. This chapter isn't about giving more money to the church – it's about becoming more like Jesus
 - ii. About abiding in Him and watching as our lives paint a clear picture of who God is
 - 1. Trusting God in every area of our lives and discovering what true joy really is

II. Joy in Poverty

- a. On Paul's third missionary journey, while he visited the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, he took an offering for the church in Jerusalem
 - i. They were going through very difficult times financially because of persecution and famine
 - ii. Paul had a way of seeing every trial as an opportunity for God to be glorified
 - 1. Here was a chance for the Gentile Christians in Greece to minister to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem
 - 2. The church in Corinth had committed to Paul that they would help their Christian brothers in Jerusalem but after a year they still hadn't raised any money
 - 3. That's the issue Paul is dealing with in chapters 8 and 9

2Co 8:1-4 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.

- b. Paul starts by using the churches in Macedonia as an example
 - i. The churches in Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi were going through difficult financial times themselves but despite their lack they were freely willing to give
 - ii. "That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality"
- c. Here's the contrast – the churches of Macedonia are in the midst of financial hardship and they are giving freely. The church in Corinth is in the midst of financial prosperity and they haven't raised a cent. What's the difference?
 - i. The churches of Macedonia had discovered the joy in giving
 - 1. Paul says they were "imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift." They begged Paul to take their gift to Jerusalem. They were pleading for the opportunity to give.
 - 2. They had discovered that giving was so rewarding, so joyous, so fulfilling that they jumped at the chance
 - 3. God wants to do that same work in us – so that we are jumping at the chance to share our resources, so that we are falling over one another trying to help – many in our fellowship have found that place.
 - ii. Our God is a generous God – God so loved the world that He gave – every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Lights – out of Adam's rib he created a helpmate, a friend, and companion – Jesus told the disciples I must leave so that I may give you the wonderful gift of my Holy Spirit – we learned in 1st Corinthians that we have all been given gifts for the edification the building up of the church
- d. So if our God is generous wouldn't it stand to reason He wants His kids to be generous too?

- i. If we are called to be ambassadors of Christ, representatives of Jesus shouldn't our lives reflect that same generosity?
- ii. Unfortunately for many Christians that's just not the case. We have more in common with the Corinthians than we have with the believers in Macedonia
- iii. We live in a nation of abundance where the average American household is richer than 93% of the world yet churches, including our own, are struggling financially
 - 1. I don't say that to guilt trip anyone into giving. I'm not going to stand here and say if you don't give Central is going to close its doors
- iv. I know that God is bigger than our financial needs and one way or another He will provide. But the harsh reality is that far too many Christians are missing out on the joy the comes with giving
 - 1. A verse we will take a closer look at next week - **2Co 9:6-7** *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (7) So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*
 - 2. How did the churches of Macedonia learn this truth? How did it become a reality for them?

III. The Secret to Generosity

2Co 8:5 *And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*

- a. They gave themselves to the Lord first – they submitted themselves to His will and in the midst of that God planted His desires deep within their hearts
 - i. God's desire was that the church in Jerusalem be well taken care of and the churches in Macedonia got to be a part of that work which is an unexplainable joy (being a part of what God is doing)
 - ii. We see this same thing happen in the life of Zacchaeus. When Zacchaeus had come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ he immediately gave half his money to the poor. And then he paid back those he had cheated four times more than what he had cheated him for. God instantaneously gave him a generous heart – one so generous that his wicked dealings with money sickened him and he had to make it right
 - 1. This isn't religion – this is transformation – this is a man being made new – his old ways have passed, they are history – he is a new creation in Christ
 - 2. And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 - a. Jesus said "this is why I have come, to rescue, redeem, and transform!"
 - iii. Same thing took place with the early church in Acts – the way they viewed their resources changed – How can I use what I have to be a blessing to others?

2Co 8:6-7 *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.*

- b. Remember the Corinthians boasted in their gifts – Paul reminds them not to neglect this gift of giving
 - i. We may say I give of my time and my energy – I lead worship or serve in the Children's Ministry – that's my gift.
 - ii. The question is why has money become our idol – the one area we don't trust God in? We simply don't believe the principal of reaping and sowing.
 - iii. "Lord," prayed a young man, "I'm going to start a business and of whatever money it makes, I will keep 10 percent and give You 90 percent." Founder of the Quaker Oats Company, he kept his word and died a wealthy man, even though he gave nine cents of every dime to the Lord.

1. I know a few who have prayed that prayer and once that money started flowing in it became a little more difficult to keep that promise
2. As cliché as it may sound, we can't out give God. The more resources that pour through us, the more resources He provides. That's not a prosperity message that's a Biblical message

2Co 8:8-9 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.

- c. Love is not love without action. We can say we love our church family but if we are not all accountable for providing for the needs of this family what does it say about our love.
 - i. Paul tells us that Jesus is our perfect example of what generosity fueled by love looks like
 - ii. "Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"
- d. There's a story that touches on this kind of love - A wonderful story about a Persian monarch. We would call him a king and they would call him a Shah. This particular Shah reigned in Persia in a time of great splendor and magnificence and lived in the midst of all of that wealth and prosperity. But he had a heart for people who were poor and common, and so he decided that he would dress himself as a poor man, and that he would descend from the lofty heights of his splendor down to the commonest man that he could find and try to make a friend out of him. And such a man was a man whose job it was to stoke fires and prepare fires that could then be put into little containers and taken around the palace to keep people warm. He worked all the time in ashes and soot and smoke and filth, way, way down in a basement. The king then put on the garments of a poor man, descended the dark, damp, cellar stairs and came down to where the man was seated in a pile of ashes, he was called a fireman, appropriately, and he was tending to his fires. The king sat down beside him dressed in rags himself, and began to talk. At meal time the fireman produced some coarse black bread and a little bit of water and they ate together and drank together. And then the Shah went away. But he came back day after day after day after day, again and again because his heart was filled with sympathy that eventually was demonstrated to that man in this longing just to be there to share a little bit of his common and difficult life. He gave the man sweet counsel from his wisdom and experience. This poor man opened his whole heart and loved his friend, so kind and so wise, and he thought so poor like himself. At last the emperor thought, "I can't keep this up, I have to tell him who I really am and so I'll tell him and then I'll ask him what gift he would like from me, now that we're friends." So he said, "You think I'm poor but I'm not, I am the Shah, your emperor. What would you like?" He expected the man to petition him for some great thing but he sat, simply gazing in wonder and love. The king said, "Have you understood what I've told you? I can make you rich. I can make you noble. I can give you a city. I can give you anything. What do you want?" The man replied according to the story, "Yes, my lord, I understand. But what is this you have done to leave your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse bread, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry? Even you can give nothing more precious than that. On others you may bestow rich presents but to me you have given yourself, it only remains to ask one thing...and that is that you never withdraw your friendship."
 - i. Jesus is our highest example of true love displayed through generosity – true love gives of itself freely – love absent of generosity is not love at all
 - ii. If that love is missing let's plead with the Lord to grant us that depth of love for our family

IV. Moved to Action

2Co 8:10-14 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.

- a. Paul says you were moved to act, now follow through
 - i. Jon Courson writes - Herein lies a great danger for us, for one of the great hazards of Bible study is thinking that by writing something in our notes, or agreeing with it in our hearts, we're actually doing whatever it is we're writing down or agreeing with. James likens this to one who looks in a mirror and realizes there should be some changes made, but doesn't do anything about it
 - ii. ***Joh 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Knowledge does not always lead to action. Knowledge without action is worthless.***
 - iii. We're not going to pass around the offering bags again but if the Lord is laying it on your heart to experience the joy of giving then deliberately make it a part of your life. Has God ever lead you astray?