



Joy of Generosity – Part 1

Rethinking What Giving Is

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Well, I do think it's true that most of us live with a running list of things that we plan to do. We plan to do them, just not right now. Right? And the things we intend to do, we really do sincerely intend to do them but we just can't do them right now. It's like so many things. It's like for me walking through the garage. I plan to clean it up. I do. I sincerely plan to do it when I get a free Saturday. That's when I plan to do it. Or, you know, you drive by the gym and you say I'm going to start going back to the gym. Right? I have to lose some weight. I have to get healthy. I plan on doing that once I get all my strength back from all these colds and flus that have been going around, you know. Or I plan on reading that book, I really do. I know I want to read it, I want to read it. Just saying my schedule has got to slow down here a little bit. So we have so many things like that that really are on our minds we want to do, we plan to do them, we sincerely do. But it just is not the right time.

Well, that's certainly true of the topic we're going to tackle for the next seven weeks. In Second Corinthians Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, Paul settles into a pretty extended period of time talking about generosity. And generosity is a topic where I think most people, if you're a real Christian, you probably do think I want to be a generous person. I plan on being generous but I just need a little bit more margin in my budget and then I can do that. You know I plan on being a good giver. I want to do that but I have to get that promotion, I need that raise and then I'm going to do it. I understand that's how it works. By the way, I know, it's an uncomfortable topic as if you already feel it. I mean, you're here now, you might as well stick around. (audience laughing) But it is uncomfortable and all I can tell you is... Yeah, and then you think seven weeks really Pastor Mike, does it have to be seven weeks? You need seven weeks. You have two chapters and they're fairly long, there are like a thousand words to exegesis and to exposit. And so I'd be remiss if I did it in three weeks. And so yes, we need seven weeks to talk about this.

And I know it feels very uncomfortable because it's so personal. Money is so personal. It's so, you know, private. It's so, you know, really gets down to things that deal with our priorities. It deals with our security, our sense of security. It's like we want people talking about our money, right? I'll deal with my money. I don't want anybody else weighing in on that. I get that that's the natural response. And any sermon, and even biblical passages you might read, feels very intrusive when we talk about money, when we hear someone preaching on money, when we hear the Bible speaking of money, Jesus talking about money. It feels intrusive long before it starts to feel instructive. And I want us to make sure that we get through the intrusive part really quickly. Right? And I want to get to the instructive part. I want us to shake off kind of the uncomfortable nature of this as best we can and as quickly as we can so we can deal with the instruction that God would want to give us in these passages. And even today I'm going to be heavy on instruction, and we're going to get into other areas of application down the road. But let's just know this is just how it's always going to feel when it comes to this topic.



And let me just defend God here as though he needs defense. He's not trying to take stuff away from you. You know that, right? The whole issue of giving and generosity is not trying to remove things from your life. And yet that's exactly how it feels, right? If I give money, I mean, you're taking away my expendable income or taking away some seemingly necessary income. I don't want to do that. That's sacrifice. Just quickly, which I think we'll arch over the entire series and there's much more to it than this but let me just say this. He wants to give you a virtue. And let me just say that it's an honorable virtue. If you really do in the next two months grow in your generosity you will have a laudable, honorable virtue that is added and increasing in your life. And I say that it is laudable and it's honorable, it's the kind of thing that people remember you for. It's the kind of thing that people admire you for. At your funeral no one's going to get up and say in the eulogy, you know, this was a really greedy person, right? He was just really greedy and I loved him. No, no, no, that's not going to come up. But if you're known for your generosity that will come up, I assure you that will come up.

So it's honorable and before people the reputation that you have which God says you should care about your reputation. There's something to do with the character of your life having an appropriate reputation. It's a good thing. God would like to give you that. It's not only an honorable virtue, but also it is a rewardable virtue and it will be rewarded. And Jesus kept saying this to us throughout his teaching. He talks about storing up treasure in heaven and then he gets into real clear details as to how to do it. He talks about even using our money to build bridges and he has a lot to say about it. And in the end one of the most powerful things he says in the Gospel of Luke is if you do well in dealing with this money that's going to fail, because none of you take it with you when you're done. I mean, you only have it for so many decades of your life and then you don't have it. If you do well with that he says then I can entrust you with true riches, riches that matter. It's kind of an echo of Matthew Chapter 6, things that are going to be able to be enjoyed long term and thieves can't steal it and rust can't corrode and moths can't eat it up. I want to reward you with this. So this is I understand long term. It's like any investing, right? You've have to look beyond the current sacrifice for the payoff. But it is a rewardable virtue. It's honorable, it's rewardable.

The title that I've chosen for the series for the next seven weeks is it certainly is a satisfying virtue. If you can look in the mirror in two months and say, you know, I've been challenged, I've worked through the discomfort of it, and it felt intrusive at first, but I learned and I grew and I applied, you can experience the joy and the satisfaction of saying this has now been built into my sanctification. I'm stronger at this, I'm better at this, or it's put in the very passages that we're going to get to in this chapter, I've excelled in this. And Paul's holding this out as a great thing. Wouldn't it be good? He's even holding up in the first five verses that we're going to study today a test case of people who are being lauded for this. And it's something that's really good if that's you, if that can be said of you. And it's not just that it's great for other people to say, wow, this guy's a great guy. He has that generous virtue in his life. And it's not just that it's going to be rewarded, it certainly will. But I just think it's a win all the way around and at the end of the day you'll say I'm glad that no one regrets, you know, being generous. And if they make it a pattern in their Christian life, which is a part of our sanctification, no one's going to wish they didn't have that virtue. Now it becomes a very rewarding, satisfying virtue. So just as by way of introduction let me just say that. And then I



want to say let's just get into this without the offense, let's get into it without all the resistance and let's just dive into this and let's do a lot of instruction this morning and lay a foundation and see if we can't get somewhere with this. There is a lot to say about it so let's dive in.

First five verses, Second Corinthians Chapter 8. Follow along as I read it for you from the English Standard Version. Here's what it reads. Paul says, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia." Underline the word "grace" here. This is probably one of the most, and I can't prove this because I haven't done all the research, but probably the most concentrated use of the word "grace," and let's just use the Greek word "Charis," because it's translated differently throughout these two chapters. But I would say you probably can't find two chapters that use the word "grace" more frequently than these two chapters of the New Testament. So this is going to be said, it's twice in our first five verses, but it's going to be said a lot. It's going to start this way. It's going to end that way at the end of Chapter 9. Grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, all this talk about grace.

Now, grace is something we say a lot. Sometimes it's fuzzy in our minds and it sounds good. And sometimes our mind just clicks off. And we're going to have to understand grace even at the outset today. But he's describing the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. There's something here to be said. It's the predicate for all that's going to come in the description of these people at the beginning of this chapter. And then it says some seemingly, you know, paradoxical, oxymoronic things in Second Corinthians 8 verse 2. By the way, Macedonian, what were the churches in Macedonian? The ones that you would know I would think from the book of Acts would be Berea. Achaia, by the way, is north of what we know of today as Greece. So, you know, it's out west from Asia Minor where most of the churches are that we're talking about, and we're going to deal with Corinth which is down lower on the map. But in Achaia up north there's a lot of persecution going on. You have Berea, you have Thessalonica. Thessalonica is a city that we know, we have two letters from the Apostle Paul to that church. And, you know, a lot of the backdrop of this is that they're suffering, they're under persecution. I mean, the book starts trying to explain how that's a sign that you're doing something right here. I mean, the world is attacking you.

And then there is Philippi. And of course, in Philippi we've learn a lot about the time and the timeframe of what's going on there in northern Greece, as we would know it, or Macedonia. And so these three churches are the standout churches that surely Paul had in mind as he's talking about these churches. And he says to these Corinthians, and I've often said if you've ever heard my teaching about the Corinthians, it is, I like to say, the Orange County of the first-century world. And by that I mean that they were pretty well off, in part because of the location of where Corinth was. They had the, you know, the Isthmian Games. It was on the Isthmus. It was, you know, a crossway in terms of maritime trade and the north-south on this little piece of land, you know, north-south trade. So a lot of commerce took place here. A lot of trade, a lot of modernization. And so they had money. Now up north in the Macedonian church, as we know from history, and we know right here, right now it's certainly not going well. They're being persecuted. "Severe test of affliction, their," though, here's the oxymoronic part, "their abundance of joy." Okay. They were in affliction, but they had an "abundance of



joy." There's a little bit of grace right there. God's grace giving them joy in the midst of their suffering, "and their extreme poverty," here's the next paradoxical statement, "Their extreme poverty [has] overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

Now poverty and wealth are, you know, they're antonyms and they're radically different on the spectrum. And yet he's saying here are people who are suffering. Here are churches that are poor, more poor than you guys at least in Corinth. And he says their poverty, it "overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." And then verse 3, right? You say, well, how did this work? You must have had good consultants or you had some fundraising, you know, guys coming in and helping you, or maybe you had nice brochures and people visiting people at their homes. How does that work? No no, no. "They gave ... of their own accord," the bottom verse 3 says, but how did they give? Well, "they gave according to their means, as I can testify beyond their means." Now, I hate to put too much commentary in the reading of the text, but these are two words that the second word is the word "ability," I guess it's translated "means" here. It's the word we get the word "dynamite" from in English. It's the word "Dynamis" which is the word "ability" or "power," and there's a preposition in front of it, two words, and the first one is "Kata" dynamis, and that is "according to their ability." And then it says, "I can testify, and beyond their means." Well, here's another paradoxical statement, you can't give beyond your means. And this is now the preposition "Para," para dynamis. So kata dynamis, "according to their means" and then para dynamis "beyond their means."

Now in extra-biblical papyrus writings from the early era, you know, we have these words often associated with at least some of the notable references in marriage contracts. And the first one is kata dynamis, and that is that you are, if you're a husband, marrying a woman and you're covenanting, you're committing in this marriage that you're going to supply for her, you're the provider, you're the man, you're supplying for her according to your means. In other words, you know, your wife might want to live on the cliffs in Laguna Beach, right? But, you know, your job does not support that. I can't give you that. Right? You're going to have to live in a tract home in Aliso Viejo. That's just how it's going to work. It's according to my means. And so a wife can't say, well, you're not fulfilling the contract because the contract is in marriage and sometimes written in the ancient papyrus, a husband is to supply his wife according to his means. You can't have, you know, 10,000 pairs of shoes, but, you know, you can have, like most women, hundreds of them, I guess. (audience laughing) The point, though, is that you're going to do according to your means, right?

Now, the next phrase we also see sometimes relating in Greek to marriage, that occasionally you have someone giving beyond their means, para, over their means. It transcends their means. Now that just as a sentence is impossible, you can't give more than you have. Right? My means are what I have. No, but that's not the point. The point is there's a reasonable provision based on the money that you make to provide for your wife. But there are some guys, you know, they're crazy guys who give to their wives beyond what is reasonable, right? And let's just put it this way. There's no chance in the world Mike Fabrez is going to buy Carlynn, his wife, a Ferrari this year. It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen. Okay? That's para dynamis. But if you said Pastor Mike, if you pulled together everything, took a second on your house, you cashed in your retirement, you know, could I maybe find a lower



modeled Ferrari? Maybe I could do it, right? Maybe they're dumb enough to give me the loans and I could do it. You could see her pulling into the church parking lot in a Ferrari. But I assure you, what you're going to say is that's para dynamis. That is beyond his means. He should not be buying this. She should drive a Hyundai, not a Ferrari. That's how life should be for our pastor. And that would be the use of the phrase. But you do know there are extravagant gifts that some people sometimes give and you think you're really not in the economic bracket to be giving that kind of gift. Okay. That's what's being said here.

So in a sense you could paraphrase this they were suffering and yet joyful. They didn't have a lot of money and yet they gave a lot and they gave what you would expect according to what they had but then they gave sometimes just crazy stuff. They gave like they didn't have margins; they didn't have budgets. This is the kind of giving that is lauded in Scripture because it shows amazing faith in God. It doesn't take a lot of faith if you're doing well to say, well, I can give this much comfortably. That's how people normally operate. That's why we always have this backwards certainly when we start as Christians, we often think, okay, I'm supposed to give. So listen, I'll look at my budget, I'll look at my expenses at the end of the month, whatever I can have left over as long as it's not going to impede too much on my hobbies or my vacations, I can give that much comfortably. Okay. That may be according to your means, right? But what's lauded in Scripture is para dynamis, beyond your means. Like, now it's starting to cramp my life. Now I'm going to have to sacrifice. So the Macedonian churches were giving in a way that was beyond their means. That's crazy that you would do that. I mean, you're really impeding on your life.

Now Jesus did that. You might remember when he talked about a widow who was at one of the three pilgrimage feasts. This one happens to be the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Jesus is across from the treasury watching rich people come and deposit money into the treasury, which used to be probably this brass or copper cone-shaped thing into which people would give. It would make noise and they would throw money into it. And Jesus is watching all this, right? And he comments to his disciples he says, you know, they're giving out of their abundance, right? In other words, that's how a lot of people give. I'll give according to my abundance, kata dynamis. That's how they do. But then the widow walks up, the poor widow walks up. And remember what Jesus said? She only had two copper coins. Now, if you have two copper coins and you give one of them, that's even crazier. That's para dynamis. That's like nuts. Right? That's 50% of the heart pulsing. What are you going to do? You have no money. And yet she gives both of them. And then Jesus says to the disciples, you know, they gave out of their wealth, this gal's giving out of her poverty.

And I know some weird exegesis people think that somehow this is a condemnation. It is not a condemnation. It is the same exact thing that's going on in this passage. Jesus holds up this gal for the kind of giving that is the most laudable kind of giving that's demanding so much faith. That gal had to decide in her giving of this to the Lord, it's going to really impact everything. It is just all the money I have. It's a crazy kind of giving and Paul's kind of doing the same thing with the churches of Macedonia. It's not quite as severe as the widow who only had two copper coins and she gave them both but this is pretty serious.



As the Orange County Christians of the ancient world are listening as Paul is going to continue in this chapter and the next, he's going to continue to talk about what are you guys going to do? For what? Look at it verse 4, "Begging us earnestly for the..." Now underline this. Here's the second use of the word charis, the Greek word charis that translates "grace" in verse 1, it's translated here "favor." And I think the English Standard Version even has a footnote on this, right? Does it not say that? Let me find it. Favor, yeah. And it's a Greek word charis. Grace. Yes. We're trying to show you. This is the second of ten times this word is going to show up in these two chapters. And they were "begging us earnestly for the grace of taking part in the relief of the saints." Here's another semantic domain of trying to be directed in these passages. Grace of God in verse 1 is God's doing something gracious in enabling these people to give in the Macedonian churches. And here they just so badly wanted to engage in the grace of giving. Taking part in what kind of giving? "In the relief of the saints."

Now there was enough in Paul's writings where people know what he's talking about. There's a famine in Jerusalem. There's struggle there in the Jerusalem church in part because the budgets of the church in Jerusalem was bigger than, I'm sure, all the other churches, in part because just like the church started with one of the feast days, the Feast of Pentecost, and all the people came to pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the early church that started there number one was under massive persecution we learned from the early part of Acts, and people are still traveling there three times a year, which certainly opens up the Christians who are coming and they have to minister to, they have to put up, they have to show hospitality to, and the evangelistic opportunities they had. And one thing certainly Peter knows and I certainly know new Christians, they don't give. They just have to learn. They have to be taught. And so it takes time. Churches grow far before their budgets grow because that's just how it works. And so they were struggling when the famine hit. They didn't have the income they normally would have. People couldn't give the way they would. So Paul is asking all these churches in the book of Acts, we saw it going on his missionary journey saying we're going to give to the Christians in Jerusalem.

So as we learn in our passage in these two chapters, this discussion had come up a year previous. So he talked about it. Now he was going to say let's pass the plate and see what you guys have because we're going to participate in the relief to the saints. But he says before we talk about your responsibility let me show you the Macedonian churches. It's Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, these churches have given out of their poverty and their persecution and you guys are sitting pretty in Corinth, not the persecution they have, certainly not the poverty they have and I just want to tell you what they're doing. And they begged us to be involved. You can see Paul saying look at this, right? It's like Jesus pointing out to his disciples, look at this widow putting in two copper coins. Look at it. And he's saying they were "begging us earnestly for the grace of taking part in the relief of the saints -- and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." So in a sense you see the triad here. They gave themselves to God. They gave themselves to Paul and Timothy and the rest of these disciples, Titus. And then, of course, there was money needed here and you're going to ask to give to the relief of the saints of Jerusalem. Yes, we'll give you money. And their poverty, their persecution overflowed, Second Corinthians 8 verse 2, "in a wealth of generosity on their part." Okay. That's the gist of it all.



I want to deal with the theme that will run throughout these two chapters. Almost a thousand English words that we're going to study in these two chapters. And grace shows up ten times. Grace has to be rightly understood. And I talk about semantic domains. There are different ways this word is used, there are five different ways it's used throughout these two chapters. But the first way we just need to think about it probably the way that you think about grace when someone asks you in a Sunday school quiz, what does grace mean? And you had to give an answer. And I know some people were taught the simple, you know, come back line, well grace is unmerited favor. That's almost become as ambiguous in people's minds as the word grace itself. But as long as you know what you mean by that, that's not a bad definition. Unmerited means you can't earn it, right? You don't earn it. And favor is God's good which includes lots of things. Okay. But all of that really is as it relates to my relationship with God that is really what marks my relationship with God, his unearned good toward me. He gives the good, the favor, the grace, the acceptance, the love, the forgiveness. He gives me all of that and I don't earn it. Okay.

That we'll call it just for the sake of our discussion God's work in our lives. All the work he's done, if you're a Christian sitting here today, the work that he's done in your life is all of grace. You didn't earn it. Just like the Old Testament says God did not choose Israel because they were the greatest nation, more in number. No, he just set his love on you. You weren't the greatest. You weren't the best. You weren't the biggest. But God chose to love you. And so it is, grace feels like that. Like I'm undeserving. I'm a sinner. God doesn't owe me this. And yet he gives it to me. He lavishes it as it says in Ephesians Chapter 1, he lavishes his grace upon us. Okay. So we'll start there. Let's start there because Paul's starting there and this theme will run throughout. Number one on your outline. We need to "Consider God's Work in You." And the reason we're going to get there, even though he's talking about the Macedonians and the grace of God at work in them, is because he obviously wants them to make that parallel. Look at God's grace in their lives. They want to engage in the grace of giving and Corinthians, look at you guys, right? This is an argument from lesser to greater. They have the grace of God in their lives. Look at the grace of God in your lives. Okay.

Three things real quick. We're going to understand as we all sit here today, if you're genuinely a Christian, what is...? That should give you three basic categories of God's grace toward you. Number one, the most basic, we learn these verses as we think about becoming a Christian. Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. Right? "By grace you were saved through faith." In other words, salvation is given to you not because of your works, right? But it's his gift. It's the free gift that God gives you. It's like Romans Chapter 6, right? This is the "free gift of God." God gives you this gift. You're a sinner and we know that, Romans Chapters 3, Romans Chapters 6. This is a free gift. It's called that in the book of Romans. It's a gift. If it's a gift, it's given to you and what is the initial gift that we get? We become his children. We're, as it says in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, alienated from God because of our sin. We're born in that state and then God reconciles us to himself. We become a part of his family. We become heirs because of what Christ has accomplished. So that is the grace of being an adopted child of God. And if you sit here today as a Christian, you've repented of your sins, you've put your trust in Christ, you know that you're a sinner, and you said God forgive me, you've now been



placed into his family. He accepts you as his child. That's the grace of God. Let's just start there. God's grace has been lavished upon most of you, I hope, I hope it's most of you, as Christians, real Christians and you've become children of the King. You've become adopted. That's grace. And you ought to let that marinate in your mind. And you ought to think about that often. We sing songs, I hope that makes you think of that. And this is great that we are objects of God's grace.

Secondly, as it relates to the topic at hand, when Corinth is sitting there thinking about the poverty of Thessalonica and Philippi, they certainly say, wow, we have a lot more in the bank than they do. We're making more in the marketplace here especially during, you know, the Isthmian Games when they come to town. I mean, all the trade coming through or when the merchant ships show up, yes, we will make a lot of money here. The grace of God, let's put it this way, to give you what you have. So we sit here all the way from minimum, you know, wage workers all the way to some very wealthy people in this auditorium. Whatever you have, here's what the Bible has said from the very beginning, God gives you this and you're thinking no he doesn't, I earned it. Okay, follow me now. Very clearly in Scripture God says this about your wealth. Number one, there are plenty of things that you did not control in getting to the place of earning your wealth. And God puts this all under one category, that God is the one who gives you the power to make wealth, right? Now he says to Israel if you forget God in the equation of your income, you will forget that God is the one who gives you the power to make wealth. So whatever you have, let's just look at it this way, is a gift of grace to you. The brains, the beauty, the brawn, whatever you have that's making you money, think about this now, that's given to you by God. The circumstances, the place in which you lived.

Here are Corinthians thinking well we're in Corinth and we're in a great place. We're in the Orange County of the ancient world. Well, there's no Newport Beach up there in Macedonia. Right? Well, who determined that? Certainly in their day, they usually spent all their life within a very short perimeter of where they were born. And so this was the providence of God as Acts Chapter 17 says. Even your life, when you were born, where you were born, the opportunities you had, the parents you had, the education you had, all of this God says I'm giving you this. You work; I get it. But this is all set up by God. And even if you struggle with that, can you remember Hosea Chapter 1 verse 6? Even if you struggle with that remember Hosea Chapter 1 verse 6. Even if you think somehow, wrongly and heretically, that you've earned all your money and God had nothing to do with it. I think you can maybe know this just by having some awareness of reality, that God has the power to take it all away. Right? In Hosea Chapter 1 verse 6 he's doing that actively in the post-exilic Jews. And he says, don't you start to realize that I'm involved in the fact that you make all this money and you put it, here's how it's put, you put it in purses with holes in it. Where's all your money going? I'm taking it away from you and the richest person in this room God could take your money away. I don't care how many lawyers you have, I don't care how protected it is, FDIC or whatever you have, your financial accountants, God could take your money away. He's great at drilling holes in people's purses when he wants to.

So if you're doing okay, better than the Philippians or the Thessalonians or the Bereans, then all I'm going to say to you is that God not only gave you by his grace the power to get wealth,



but he's given you the grace to keep whatever you have, right? You only have this because God has allowed you to keep it. So that's what you have. Now we're going to talk about stewardship in future sermons in this series but, I mean, let's just think of it that way. So the grace of adoption, the grace of provision, let's call it that, and here's the third one that really matters the most, especially in light of, you know, we had another funeral here yesterday, and all of us are going to end up there. You just remember this. Here is the grace of eternity. The grace of a secured eternity. The Bible is very clear that if you are a child of God the bottom line is this you are secured a place, as First Peter 1 says an inheritance that's reserved and protected by the power of God for you when the grace is going to be revealed at the last time. So there's a future grace that's coming and God is going to give you security and say to you, welcome into "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

So God has given you, let's just think in terms of his work in you, if you sit here today as a genuine Christian, the grace of adoption, the grace of provision, and the grace of a secured future in eternity, a secured eternity. That's huge. And if we can just start there we can start to say, okay, what does that do? Hopefully it leads you to sing with some sincerity. It gets you to the place where you say I love God for doing that for me, right? And all of that then leads us to where we're going. The grace of God and acknowledging the grace of God in your life starts to motivate you to love God. And when you love, what's attached to that in Scripture, you give. And the example that Jesus gave to his disciples was when a sinful woman came to Jesus in the middle of this banquet at the Pharisees' house and she comes in, takes an alabaster jar, and she pours out this expensive perfume and then she cries and weeps on his feet, and untangles her hair and dries his feet with her hair. And everyone's freaking out about it. And Jesus asks his disciples who loves more? Who loves more? The one who's forgiven a lot or the one who's forgiven a little? And they go, well, I guess the one who's forgiven a lot. Yeah, you'd be super grateful if you had a big debt and it was all forgiven. And he's trying to make a point. You guys haven't even offered to wash my feet. She's washing my feet with her tears. Why? Because the sinful woman has been shown such grace in her mind. She loves so much. If you've been forgiven much, he says you love much, right?

And here's the point. All of us can sit around if we think about our sins that merits our lives to be cast into outer darkness. We're going to sit back, I hope, and say you know what? We should love God more than we do. And the great thing about the love of God is that when we love God we want to be generous. We want to be generous and we want to do that because we understand the grace of God in our lives. That is foundational and I will say as Phillips Brooks famously put it, right? Love is a good motive. It's the best motive. Here's the thing, he says this: love is a better motive than duty. Would you agree with that? Love is a better motive than duty. And here's how he put it. He said, "Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do things beautifully." And let me add an asterisk and say what that often means is "Para Dunamus," extravagantly. If you love a lot you are extravagant in your giving and your sacrifice. That is how it works and that's why love is a better motive than duty. And that's where we're going to go in this two-chapter study because grace is the theme that's threaded throughout this whole thing. It's woven throughout the whole passage that we should focus on grace and grace leads us to love and love is always associated in Scripture with generosity.

He says how can you love your brother and not meet a need? How can we love God and not keep his commandments? Which brings us to duty. Because as some of you say as many people do, I'm not feeling a lot of love so I'm not doing what I am supposed to do. Well, is it their duty to give? And the answer is absolutely yes. Okay? There are two categories, actually three in the Old Testament, two in the New Testament that you need to rightly understand. So here's an extended sidebar. Are you ready for this? Here's the instructive part so you can not feel the pressure. But let's just think academically here or, you know, at least in terms of a book study of the Bible. Okay? Let's go to the Old Testament because these are the words that many of you grew up with, at least I did when the old-time, you know, pastor said, okay, now it's time for our tithes and offerings. Did you ever grow up with that verbiage? Okay? There are three categories in the Old Testament. The first one is called tithes. And the second two are called offerings. And we'll divide those two and distinguish them in a minute. But let's start with the first one.

Tithes. Do you know what the word tithe means? What does the tithe mean? Tenth. Right? That's all it means, a tenth. So let's build a heading for the category of the tithes, plural, in the Old Testament. Okay? The tithes. This is what we would call a mandatory specified percentage. And the percentage starts with the first of the three tithes which is the first tenth. So you make \$100,000. Here's \$10,000 of your income this year that goes first of all to the Levites. Now the Levites were not given an allotment. They didn't have, you know, fields to plow, they didn't have oxen, you know, to yoke together to plow the fields. They were reliant on the other eleven tribes to bring their tithe to them. Which, by the way, the Levites didn't get off the hook. They were also supposed to give a tenth of everything they got from the other eleven tribes and put it right into the coffers. So the coffers that fed the Levitical tribe, that all came from everyone in the nation saying, okay, God set this nation up and we're all going to give 10% to make sure that our spiritual leaders here in Israel who lead worship and take care of a lot of things, which a lot of it was wrapped up before the monarchy with justice and administration, how the nation worked. All of it's going to go to them. And these Levites are going to deal with the leadership of the nation and our worship.

The second tithe, and there was a second of the three tithes which was a mandatory 10% that was all supposed to be set aside. This was for, sometimes they just called it the temple tithe, or sometimes, it's not the temple tax, that's different in the New Testament, but the tithe, here's a better word maybe, the festival tithe. You were supposed to then set apart a 10% of all you made, another \$10,000, which was then going to be set aside for us to participate in the festivals. Now, there were three festivals that were pilgrimage feasts, as I mentioned. And you go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover. So for those I'm supposed to travel to Jerusalem. Do you remember Jesus when he was 12 and was left behind in the temple? Do you remember that story? Why? Because they came from Nazareth and they came, as they were supposed to, to that festival, that feast and they traveled to Jerusalem. Well, where did they get the money to do all that traveling? And if you remember some things I always seem to quote in December, like when we talk about the Feast of Booths, it talks about extravagant decorations, the best food, where are you going to get money for all that? Well, that's the second tenth. The great



thing about the second tenth is YOU get to enjoy a lot of that. That tenth is used for the celebration of God's feast to worship and remember him and that is the second tenth.

So that's now you're down to 80, you get to keep \$80,000 of your \$100,000 if that's what you're making. Okay? Then every third and every sixth year, every three years, you had to give a tenth for the, let's just call it the Social Security tax, which is really in the Bible it's described as for the widows, for the orphans, it certainly would include all those who were incapable of earning a living, not people who don't want to earn a living. We're good at that in America. No, I'm talking about people who can't. Right? So people who absolutely cannot support themselves and often that was the orphans and the widows, it included them, you set that aside. Now, the good thing was, as you read in Scripture carefully, it supplanted in the third and sixth year the festival tithe. So in essence you had just as a locked-in set about 80% of your income with 20% going to the nation's social security, the worship funds for the temple or the tabernacle before the temple, and just supporting the Levitical tribe. Okay?

Now, is that all? Well, those were the mandatory tithes. Outside of the tithes let's call it this, the mandatory unspecified amounts and we'll call those offerings and they were offerings. Let's call it offering Type One. Okay. We have mandatory tithing, and now we have mandatory offerings. We'll call that offerings Type One. What were the mandatory offerings? There were a couple of them. Let's talk about the gleaning laws. Let's say just to modernize it you're a corn farmer in Ohio. Okay. A lot of those. So you're a corn farmer in Ohio. You have 100 acres or whatever and you're growing corn and you're selling it and you're going to the marketplace and, you know, you have your animals and that's part of your livestock. And so you're making money off the land and you're feeding your family, supplying for your future, all that's great. You were not allowed to harvest the entire 100 acres. Do you remember what that was called? Gleaning, the law of gleaning. And the gleaning law was this, it is mandatory that you do not harvest all the way to the edge of your crops. You were supposed to leave that. Why? Because in the ancient world you didn't have a 7-Eleven on every corner and if you're a traveler the great thing was, if everyone did what they were supposed to do, you could travel and be able to take ears of grain or, you know, of corn or whatever, you could have food if you needed it as a sojourner or a traveler by going to the edge of any field. The edge of any field was not harvested.

Now the question: what amount? What percentage? There was no percentage. There was no amount. So if you came to my house and I'm a godly person, quote unquote, and you came and you said, oh, it's harvest time and we're way back in the 10th century B.C., and we're just pretending now we're in Ohio, right? This is not Mormonism I'm just talking about. It's an illustration or in Ohio and I'm a corn farmer. And you say, oh, you just had the harvest, right? Let's go look at your fields. How much did you leave for the gleaning? And you see four stalks, one group in each corner. And if you ask, did you know the law of gleaning? Yeah I know. And what did it say? I think I'm not supposed to glean to the... Well I didn't. There are four stalks of corn in every corner of my field. Now, did I do what the law said? Well, I guess, right? I hope there are no hungry travelers near your farm. But what does God think of that? Here's the thing about unspecified amounts. The mandatory ones, of course God would want us to love the sojourner and the stranger, as he so often put it, enough to leave a decent



amount so that no one's like, oh, I have to go to the next field here. So this was the economy of the ancient agrarian world. And God said you have to give up part of your field. Now, I don't want to give a part of my corn field. This is my income. This is my money. And yet God said it's mandatory. How much? You decide but it's mandatory.

How about this? The first fruit offering. According to Exodus 23 and Deuteronomy 18, when it was harvest time as a response to God bringing you a harvest, you were supposed to bring a first fruits offering, the best of your crop. Now, how much of the best? The top 5% of my crop and my livestock? The top 2%? The top 10%? Well it doesn't say, just bring some of the first fruits and you're supposed to do that in response to God bringing you good crops for this year. Now, if you didn't have a lot that year well then you couldn't give that much, right? If you had a lot, a bumper crop, well then maybe you bring a lot. And if your animals all, you know, calved well and you have a lot of livestock. Great. You bring what you bring. No specified amount but mandatory. The other one is not just the 10% for the festival tithe, but when you go to the temple, when you come to worship, here's how it's put in Exodus, you shall not show up at the feast empty-handed. You had to give something. It doesn't say how much. Which, by the way, is the setting when the widow comes up. It is the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Pharisee or the rich people, I should say, are giving, and they're giving out of their abundance. It didn't really hurt their income. It didn't hurt their comfort or their convenience. But this lady came because she wasn't supposed to come empty-handed. And I guess with only two copper coins, if that's all you had because that's the smallest, you know, currency they had, well, you know, I guess you'd have to give half of it. But the point is there's no specified percentage.

Now, I know you don't think of these very often but you should. The weekly sabbatical. Every Saturday you could not do gainful employment. This is a day set apart for God. If you're in Israel this is the sign of the covenant, one of them. There were a few signs of the covenant, but the sign of God saying these are my people. You do not work on the seventh day. And because of that, as this sign of the covenant between Israel and God, you could not go and take your stuff to the marketplace. You couldn't work seven days a week. You had to do no gainful employment. And think about it. That's costly, right? If I'm Kentucky Fried Chicken, why do I want to stay open seven days a week? Because there are people who are hungry on the seventh day. Right? And that's why, and I know it's just a throwback reflection of that, but when Hobby Lobby and as Kanye said, Chick-fil-A is closed on Sunday... Anyone? No? He's kind of a has-been, a weirdo at this point. But sorry Kanye, but here's the thing. They're closed in honor of the reflection of this Old Testament requirement, right? It was not mandatory. Some people make a point in the Puritans about, you know, a Sunday Sabbath. That's not what the Bible teaches in my mind. But here's the point, right? You would say Chick-fil-A would make more money, right? Hobby Lobby could make more money and the interesting thing about those is compared to KFC or to Michaels art supply or whatever, they do better. But whatever. We can get into that in future sermons, they'll match up well with the rest of what we're going to deal with. But the point is I don't want to close my Michaels on Sunday because there are people who are going to shop on Sunday. So you're taking your income and you're lowering your income because of the Sabbath.



Then let's turn that to the Sabbath year, something Israel was really bad at keeping. Every seventh year you were supposed to let the fields lie fallow. You were not supposed to harvest. You weren't supposed to plant. You weren't supposed to harvest every seven years. Can you imagine this is not going to be popular in Forbes magazine, right? You're not going to, like, make a fortune having a year when you don't harvest. Now there's other work to be done. You can work on your house, you can work with your livestock, you can go to market and do all kinds of things, but you cannot harvest your field. That's a financial hit. Okay? And speaking of things that the Wall Street Journal is not going to be excited about, how about this one? Every 50th year was called the Year of Jubilee. And what was the bad thing if you're a financier that you really cared about, you had to do what on the Year of Jubilee? All debts are released. Can you imagine? Right? Can you imagine you go and tell Bank of America or wherever you get your car loan, isn't it the 50th year? Right? They don't care about that. But if you're a devout Israelite you were supposed to care about it. And if you did this, you were a person who loaned money and you had someone indebted to you, you were supposed to forgive it. Matter of fact, if you bought property as God says you really didn't buy it. You're really just basically leasing it because it has to be returned to the original owners at the end of the 50 years. So twice every hundred years all the land goes back to the people.

Now, what does that do for your finances? Right? If you don't become some, you know, multi-millionaire landowner because I own half of Israel now. Impossible, because every 50 years it's a financial hit. Everybody's kind of zeroed out again. And God's not stupid. He tells you about even loans and everything else, you factor it in. Let your accountant factor in how many years until the Jubilee. Clearly, God's wise about all this. But the point is we know it's all going to be zeroed out every 50 years. All of those are mandatory offerings because in one way or another it's an offering. You're doing this out of devotion to God. That's offering Type One.

Here's offering Type Two. I call it this voluntary unspecified amounts. This means you don't have to do it. It's not compulsory. God doesn't say you have to. But there are plenty of things that you can do in giving to God that are free will. Matter of fact, that's what it's called in Leviticus, the free will offering. You want to come and bring an offering just because you love God and you're going to come and bring him an offering. Bring him an offering. Great. I know it's finances to you but bring the animals, bring the crops, the harvest, the barley. Bring it and give it away. Where would it go? Well, the Levites would take it and put it into the treasury of the temple or the tabernacle in the Old Testament before the temple was built. What is this? Just an offering. Do you have to do it? No. You went to worship and you heard the people preach on the scrolls of the Bible and, you know, you didn't bring an offering. You didn't have to. Not for that, right? You already had 20% of your stuff taken by the government mandates that God has given and then all these other things. You're not making what you could make. But this is over and beyond that. Offerings Type Two, voluntary offerings of an unspecified amount.

Here's another one. Thanksgiving offerings or vows. Vows and thanksgiving offerings. In other words, you can be a mom and your kids go off to war against the Philistines and you're praying. Think of young David when he goes to the front lines, brings cheese and bread to his brothers. What if you're David's mom and you're thinking, man, my oldest kids are out in war



against the Philistines. They're all lined up there in the valley. And so, you know, I'm just praying they come back. God, please. If you bring all my kids back. Right? I only have David out here watching the sheep and occasionally going back and forth to the battle lines. If you bring all my sons back, I will give \$15,000 to the Levites. Okay. Just to modernize it. Okay. If she makes that vow the Bible says you're supposed to keep it. But do you have to make the vow. You don't have to make the vow. What does Ecclesiastes say? "It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay." So you want to make a deal with God about God if you do this, I'm going to respond well? And people make that kind of deal all the time with God, right? If I get this promotion, if I get this... Okay. That's not the mandatory offering. That's the voluntary offering of unspecified amount.

There are an of examples. I can go on, First Chronicles Chapter 29 all the way in the post-exilic period, Ezra Chapter 1, Ezra Chapter 7. We can look at Proverbs, which we often hear about coming, bringing, honoring God with our wealth. There are plenty of examples of voluntary, unspecified. So do you have the three categories of the Old Testament? Mandatory specified percentages, three tithes. Right? Which is really always 20% in vogue in any year. Right? And you had all these other mandatory losses of your income for the sake of God and your devotion to God. And then you had all these voluntary, do what you will, do what you want. Right? Okay.

New Testament. Do we have Type One in the New Testament? The answer is no. No redundancy of the tithe. Why? Because God was giving instructions to a nation. They came out of Egypt, God was building a nation. So to build a nation, part of what he's doing is setting up the tithes as basically a tax. In the New Testament God brings Jesus on the scene at just the right time when Rome is now taxing the Jews. And in Rome, the Jews ask Jesus the question because as the Jews are wondering, like we shouldn't be paying taxes to Rome, this pagan government. And Jesus says pay it, pay it. Whose image do you see on this coin? Right? "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." And then the New Testament makes that super clear in Romans Chapter 13. Right? Pay taxes, pay tolls, pay revenues, pay what you have to pay to the Roman government. Just do it. Why? Because you're not a nation living among nations. You're an international organization living under the government that you're in. Now, you don't always have to obey them if they're telling you to do something that's not biblical. But insofar as they're asking for your tolls, your revenues, you know, your taxes, you have to pay them. And Jesus made that clear. The New Testament makes that clear. So we don't worry about the tithe. There is no tithe. If you want to talk about tithes, just think of the IRS, you have plenty of tithing going on, right? And you do it for the sake of God because it's obedience. Okay.

Offering a mandatory unspecified amount. Does that end up in the New Testament? Absolutely. Galatians 6:6 is a good example. First Corinthians Chapter 9 is a good example. We have even in the gospels, in Matthew Chapter 10 verse 10, Luke Chapter 10 verse 7. We have plenty of examples of this and that is that you as a Christian being taught by someone who's given his life to teaching, you were required to give to him, right? That's what the Bible says. And of course, that takes place as God built the Church in the context of a church. Right? We have the pastors, elders, overseers, and we have the deacons, the ministry



leaders. And you're supposed to give to that organization because that's your church. And you go there and you're supposed to be taught there and have the Scriptures explained there, and you worship there. So kind of like the Old Testament, you know, offerings that relate somehow to the worship at the Temple. You have to do that. Now, does it say how much? No, because it's an offering Type One. It's mandatory but the amount is not specified. So in essence, could you check this box and touch this base if you put in \$5 every week to your church? You could just like I can put four stalks of corn in the corners of my 100 acres. Would you be doing the right thing? Well, I don't think it's a great thing. God wouldn't think it's a great thing. Just like the gleaning law is required but it didn't tell us how much. So we're required to give to our church. That is a requirement. Everyone listening to me if this is your church and you get taught by me, the Bible's very clear you have to give. There's just no way around. That's the teaching of the Bible, right? How much? No percentage is given, right? So that's the obligation.

There's only one other. And this one's hard because we're dealing with in... Let me get into the third one then I'll go back to the second one because the first one is not applicable. Offering Type One and offering Type Two. Let's go to offering Type Two. And that's the non-mandatory. That's the voluntary unspecified amount. So there are plenty of voluntary, unspecified amounts. And according to our passage, relief to the saints in Jerusalem, he says in verse 8 of Second Corinthians Chapter 8, "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine." So in other words, he's saying, well, you should love, and love should result in something but it's not a command. And he says it in the next chapter also and Chapter 9. It's not giving under compulsion because you have to. So he is saying this thing that we're talking about that brings up the topic, surfaces the topic of generosity, is not compulsory. You don't have to do it. At least that's how he pitches it to the Corinthians. When he pitches this in Romans Chapter 15 to the Romans he adds some words there that at least to them it becomes compulsory. The amounts are not specified, but it's mandatory.

Now, here's the reason I don't think it's applicable today although maybe it could be. I think he's pulling his apostle card. He's dealt with in the book a couple of things that are very important that feed into this. The same thing, if you read it in Romans Chapter 15, he's talking about the same exact thing. The delivery of money to the Christian church in Jerusalem. The same thing that's asked for here is asked for there. But then he says, you must do it, you ought to do it, you're indebted. He uses the word "owed." It is owed. And then he explains why he says that which touches on the issue of the Jew and Gentile factions within the church of Rome. And in Chapter 14, he's trying to get them to get along and make sure that they don't step on each other, you know, for the sake of your freedoms. But the point is he makes this, just like he did in Romans Chapter 11, he says because that Jewish church should remind you that you're the wild olive branch, especially you Gentiles in Rome, which is the majority, you are grafted into that Jewish root. And here are the Jewish convert Christians. You ought to be giving to them. You ought to and you have to. Now he's pulling the apostle card and saying that. And in 40 years of doing this work I've never pulled that card because I don't think I have that card. The Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." I'm not an apostle; I'm not a prophet. Right? That's Ephesians 2:20.



I can't say here's a special project that goes beyond the mandatory unspecified to a non-mandatory unspecified for a special project. That's why whenever we have a building project like this thing that we just finished, I say you don't have to give to it. You don't have to. It's like the Old Testament when Moses built the tabernacle. Same thing. I didn't mention this one, but here is a non-mandatory unspecified Old Testament. He says anyone whose heart is moved, anybody who God moves their heart, do you want to give? Solomon did the same thing. Do you want to give to the temple? It happened later, too, with the reconstruction, refurbishing of the temple. The command was, hey, you want to give to this. If God moves your heart, give to the special project. So special projects in Scripture, at least to the Corinthians, he says are optional, the amount unspecified.

All right, then there are things that do reflect the offering Type Two's of the Old Testament in the New Testament, as we see examples of it like in Luke Chapter 19. Zacchaeus is saved and he's saved there and he has Christ in his house. He was a little short guy who climbed out of the tree, you know the story. And when he gets saved here's what he says. He says if I've taken anything, if I've defrauded anyone, I'm going to pay them back fourfold. Now, the mosaic law was clear about restitution. If you steal \$100,000 from someone, you have to pay them \$120,000 back. There was a fifth that you had to add, 20% you had to add to whatever you stole. Right? I think our Jewish jurisprudence should learn from that. But anyway, that's what's supposed to happen. Zacchaeus says four times. That's way past that. And then he says, out of jubilation and excitement and relief regarding his forgiveness, he says, and then I'm going to give half of all that I have to the poor. Okay? All of that giving is just motivated by thanksgiving. And that's a lot like the Type Two offerings in the Old Testament, the non-mandatory, totally volunteer, totally free will, unspecified amounts. So in the New Testament we have examples of that.

Missionary giving. I mean, I know it's through a church in Philippians Chapter 4 verses 15 through 18, but in that passage Paul is saying this, I'm a missionary and there are people giving to me as I'm doing my missions work. He even says in that passage, my budget is full. I don't need it. Right? And yet you gave it and that is an acceptable, "fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." So here's something over and above what God says is supposed to happen in giving to the church that you have to deal with your own church and your own leaders, right? And even the top leader, First Timothy Chapter 5, he's supposed to determine who will be "considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." So there's a lot going on within the church giving but then missionary giving. Of course, your church certainly supports missionaries, foreign missionaries. But if you said, well, I feel moved to give to some missionary not through my church, there's a pattern for that in Scripture even though it was through their church in Philippians, I think the principle is clear.

Christians. This is not the offering plate. This is not giving electronically through Pushpay. This is not the church budget. This is when you're sitting in a small group. Here's the other one, provincial needs within the church. You're sitting in a small group. Someone's wrecked their car. They don't have, you know, a replacement or a car rental, insurance or whatever.



And you have an extra car sitting in your driveway. Or even if you didn't, you want to give them your car because you're not going anywhere this week. Great. That is an act of giving that the Bible clearly spells out in First John Chapter 3 verses 16 through 19. And you are moved out of love, right? That's voluntary. It's not compulsory, it's not mandatory. But if you do it it's certainly an acceptable, fragrant offering to God. And we should be. This whole series is not just about church budgets. It's about you becoming a generous person. Which means when you see a need, according to First John Chapter 3 verse 16 you are moved because God's done something for you. You respond to the grace of God and you see a need and you don't close your heart toward them, you meet the need. If you can meet the need, you meet the need. And Jesus talked a lot about that.

So Christians first. I get that principle, by the way, from Galatians Chapter 6 verse 10, because that's the next one. And that is what we give to those, it could be your next-door neighbor, they can be a Buddhist, right? It doesn't matter what they are. They're non-Christians but if they have a need, I'm ready to be a generous person who wants to give. That's how Christians should act. But he says, "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." So I know the priority, right? And yet I'm still going to be a generous person. I hope I'm known for generosity in my neighborhood, which, by God's grace, in my case, I could talk about. But the point is we should be and we ought to be. And that's good even though the "ought" is not compulsory and there are no percentages attached. So Old Testament, right? Mandatory specified percentages. Right? Offering Type One. Mandatory, specified amount is not specified. There is no specified amount. And then offering Type Two is not commanded, you don't have to do it but you do it because you love. You love more and you give more. Okay? New Testament, no tithing. That's the IRS. You can deal with him later. And then you have offerings to God, mandatory offerings, you have to give. And then non-mandatory, voluntary free will, give it if you want. And according to First John Chapter 3 if you love you're going to do it. James Chapter 1 verse 27. First Timothy Chapter 6 verse 18. So many examples of us saying, I'm just going to give because I see the need and it's just laterals, not for a tax write off. It's just because I want to meet needs because I love people. All right. There's the sidebar. It only took five minutes. Right?

Back to our passage. I know I should have left a little more room for the first point if you were note taking. Second Corinthians Chapter 8 verses 2 through 4. We've already read it. We've read it with commentary. They had severe affliction and yet they rose up with joy and they had poverty and yet they overflowed with a wealth of generosity. Why? Because they gave beyond their means, not according to their means. They gave beyond. Why? Because they were "begging us earnestly for," the grace or, "the favor of taking part in relief to the saints." What do I learn about these people? I learn that they really couldn't afford it practically or logically but they did it anyway. Why is he telling the Corinthians that? They have expendable income, most of them, they're pretty well off. This is a wealthier part of the ancient world. Because it's a good way for us to think. Number two, let's put it this way "Refuse to Let Circumstances Delay Obedience." I started with an illustration about all the things I plan to do, and if I'm a Christian I plan to be generous. I plan to be a good giver. But I can't say right now I just can't afford it. That just is not the pattern of Scripture. I have to be able to say God is always holding up examples like the Macedonian churches, like the widow giving her two



copper coins, the example of great faith and love is generosity, right? And that is something God is saying this is how we ought to think about it, right? We ought to think about it saying that there is a kind of costly giving that goes beyond comfortable giving. Which, by the way, we can learn from generosity in other people.

Let's look at verse 9 in our passage, we'll center on this next week but look at verse 9. Here's another reference to the word grace. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Of course he sacrificed, that's what Philippians 2 is all about, he sacrificed so much to come and to enrich us, to give us forgiveness. What did it cost him? It cost him a ton. Was it convenient? No. Was it leftover? No. Was it margin? No. It was all, right? He gave his all. And that picture there is one held up as an example. The Macedonians were held up as an example. Not as extreme as Christ. And in this week's small groups, which I hope you meet in a small group this week, one of the questions is who do you see? Right? Maybe your grandmother, maybe somebody from church history or George Mueller who knows. And you say I see some amazing faith and amazing generosity and I am saying I want to emulate that.

By the way, I mentioned the gal in Luke Chapter 7, the sinful woman in the Pharisees' house. Do you know that happened twice in Jesus' ministry? It happened again at the end of his ministry in the village of Bethany, Mark Chapter 14. And some people get confused. They think I'm trying to harmonize the gospels. Well, there are some mistakes and confusion. It's not, it's not, it's not. This was a huge thing people talked about, right? It was extravagant. Jesus made an example of all this. It happens again in a home in Bethany where the same thing happens, some different circumstances, a different time. And she takes her vial of, in that case it's specified pure spikenard, and she pours out this fragrant aroma. And Jesus says, "she has anointed my body beforehand for burial," and it's a picture. And then he says you know what? This will be told all over. It will be proclaimed when the gospel is proclaimed. This will be a reminder of extravagant giving because of extravagant love. And all I'm saying is where'd that come from? That came from the story everyone was telling that took place in Luke Chapter 7 verses 26 and 27 where the sinful woman did this. And the point is here's a gal, not the sinful woman forgiven much, but she wants to love much. And I just think that's the pattern. And you ought to have some examples in Scripture, in Church history, in your family, in your small group where you've really said I admired the generosity and I would like to be motivated, fueled. I'd like it to be catalytic in my life.

And then I'm going to say, just for the very small application I'll bring to this sermon, just get in the batter's box and do something. If you want to exercise the muscle of generosity, start. There are so many people sitting on the bench and they think if I get into the batter's box and try and take a swing at this I know, I'm just lame. And you may have the lamest swing in all of baseball. I get it. But get into the batter's box and trust God and take a cut at it, man. Do what you can. Right? And it may be a full swing bunt. And maybe it's never going to be written about in Church history, your generosity. But if you start, no matter what, it could be four stalks of corn on the edges of your field. But you're like I'm going to start. I'm going to take a stab at it. A bunt is better than sitting on the bench. It may not be a home run but that's where this all starts. We don't let circumstances delay obedience. I had people even after the



sermons this weekend. Well, you know, I'm on a fixed income and all that. Listen, I told this guy, I don't care if it's \$0.50. Right? Get started and just step into the batter's box. That's the whole point of raising up the Macedonian churches as an example. And of course we're going to get to verse 9. Christ is the ultimate example.

All right, one more verse. No time to talk about it but Second Corinthians 8 verse 5, "and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." Okay. Number three, you need to "Start by Giving Your Full Devotion to Christ," which, by the way, is how the Christian life starts. We give our full devotion to Christ. We're coming off the whole series which has been about devotion to Christ. And all I'm saying is that's how the Christian life starts. Jot this down. Luke Chapter 14 verse 33. I quote it all the time. He says, "Anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple," you don't give up all that you have. And it's an example of surrendering to an army that's bigger than yours, right? It's the Maduro moment. Sorry for the news. But, you know, it's like I can't fight this. They're overwhelming me, I can't fight, I surrender, right? That's the picture. You give up everything. And if you give up everything and you get back to how we talk about it around here, that little acronym I've come up with ATAPAT, it's "AnyThing, Any Place, Any Time." And from that, of course, Jesus sometimes, like in Matthew 19, says okay, if it's anything, any place, any time, and that's what it is to come to Christ, right? Well, then we can add "any amount."

And when he says to the rich young ruler, hey, you know what? You're talking about keeping all the commandments and you have it all locked on and you're the example of obedience. Hey, sell everything you have. You know, talk about putting God first, sell everything you have, give it to the poor, come follow me. Join the band of former fishermen and tax collectors and the political zealot and come and follow me. And "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.'" Why? Because if you're not coming with an ATAPAT heart to God then of course how can we even claim to have a relationship with God if our faith is not fully in Christ? And the point of all of that is that that's the starting point for all giving, and that's what will get us to stewardship later in the series. I'm saying all that I have is his. I'm under new management now, and whatever I'm supposed to walk here, go there, spend that, do that. Great. We talk about going the extra mile and staying the extra hour, which is what we do for the body of Christ, what we do for people. And when the Macedonians say they gave themselves to us, certainly that included that. The warm reception the Macedonian churches gave to Paul is noteworthy in the book of Acts.

And yet there was one more thing, right? One more thing. They may have stayed the extra hour, right? They may have gone the extra mile, but they also spent the extra dollar. A dollar that was "Para dunamus It was like beyond reasonable because they were poor and under persecution. If there is ever a time you want to keep your money it's when you're being persecuted. Because who knows, I may lose my job because I'm a Christian, right? But they didn't worry. They had faith that God would deal with all of that and they gave in a crazy way. It always starts by giving your full devotion to Christ.



Now, I could have, I suppose, tried to look through, you know, different churches around and picked a congregation and done exactly what Paul did, which is here's the Macedonian churches, they didn't have a lot, look at how they gave and look at us, look at our giving. We have a long way to grow. I could have done that, but I don't have to go outside of the church because it happens right here in our church. It happens in our church, particularly in one category of our church. And that's our new married people. You don't get married here by a pastor of Compass unless you go through pre-marital counseling. And it usually starts with this. You cannot get married unless you're able to leave and cleave. And leaving means you're financially leaving your mommy and your daddy. And to do that, you tell me you want to get married to this gal, you'd better come in, both of you, and talk about your budget. So that's the first thing, at least in my premarital counseling and all of our pastors do premarital counseling, we deal with budgets. And what's great about that, if you want to talk about a couple starting a new family with no margins, it's usually the 22-year-old getting married in our church, but they can't get through premarital counseling unless we sit down and deal with their budget. And of course, we're pastors and we know there is mandatory unspecified amount giving. And so we don't say what's left over. We start at the top. The first line is, I'm not telling you how much but we have to build this into a budget.

Now, having done ministry in South Orange County now for almost 40 years, I can say I've taken couples through pre-marital counseling that now have gray hair. Right? And they, when they got started, built a budget with me at my desk. And what was great was those that I saw doing what the Macedonian church did. No margin, no big jobs, no promotions, no big bank accounts, but with hardly anything. And they're buying like, Top Ramen to eat. They started with giving. And when they did, I'm just telling you, those people have grown in their faith. They've grown in their virtue. They've grown in their admirability. They've grown in all the rewards that are going to come in the next life. But here's what they've really grown in, right? They've grown in the fact that they're loving God with their tangible means. And I'm telling you, they're the people who haven't lacked the thing. And God has continued to provide. And some people get addicted to this, as is sometimes the case, the book of Romans talks about those who have a special gift. They get addicted to this and they continue to increase the percentages throughout their marriage. It's amazing how God has made these people very joyful. Joy of generosity. It's real. It starts by stepping into the batter's box and taking a cut at it. And there are examples in this room looking at some faces you've been through pre-marital, you started with that, you've been faithful to do it and by God's grace you've found the joy, you found the honor and you found you will find the reward that comes with being a generous Christian.

Let's pray. God, help us, please to be people who listen carefully to your Word as we study these principles. And I know we try to lay a foundation this week by just understanding tithes and offerings. But as we think about our offerings, Type One, which is really hard because we can't wiggle out of it, I just pray that we would just start. That we would leave parts and say this is Kings' X. This is devoted to the Lord. And we deal with this grace of giving because we understand your grace toward us. So grow us in this, please. We just ask for that. I know it may feel intrusive today but I pray that the rest of this series would continue to be very instructive, that we'd be open, that we'd have ears to hear, and we'd be able to see if we



might be able a couple weeks down the road to really see measurable growth, just in our joy of being a generous Christian, not just in the budget and the offering plate, but as we just look around in our families and in our small groups and in our sub-congregations, seeing how we can be a blessing. So help us in this God. We know, just like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Chapter 5 that our stuff you've entrusted to us we're free to do with it what we want when it goes beyond the mandatory offerings. But God, how great it is when Barnabas steps up in Chapter 4 and just says I want to meet needs, the son of encouragement, help us to be more like him and care. Please.

In Jesus' name. Amen.