

Jan 25, 70 P.M. WAKL

# Stewardship

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!

II Cor. 8:1-24

## INTRODUCTION:

Eleventh verse reads, "Now therefore perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have."

Paul advises fulfill your promise, do it right now, you were eager to pledge therefore carry it out - the time to act is now.

With the promotion of burlesque - a mockery, dramatic - imitation which makes travesty of that which it represents - Grotesque, ludicrous, exaggeration, distortion. Time for God fearing citizens to act.

*living in weird stage hour.  
demon - demonstrations - men apologise for opposing evil  
Pray for them - Power in prayer, evil didn't ask why I didn't think it would open - I believe in prayer =*

The words of our subject are in keeping with the times.

At this time in the missionary service, Paul was concerned about the church in Jerusalem. The church is poor and suffering. This whole chapter is about gathering funds to help them. He was interested that other churches he visited, feel concern for the Jerusalem church.

The subject of stewardship is pressed upon the church. Great subject of Christian giving.

Three things are set forth - the principle to follow in giving V. 1-6. A promise must be fulfilled V. 7-15. The practical administration V. 16-24.

### I. THE PRINCIPLE TO FOLLOW IN GIVING - V. 1-6.

V. (1) - There is one word Paul repeats over and over again - It occurs he wants this to be the emphasis. The word is GRACE.

Note - (Repetitions)

V. (1) - We do you to wit of the grace of God. Wanted them to

know of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.

V. (4) - Praying with much entreaty that we would receive the gift - grace.

V. (6) - Finish in you the same grace.

V. (7) - That ye abound in this grace.

V. (9) - Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V. (19) Travel with us with this grace. At least six times  
repetition of the word.

What does the word grace mean?

Heard it defined as the unmerited favor of God - even that is limited.  
It is the word from which we get our English word charity.

The word has taken on different meanings through the years - early stages  
of history it meant a desire to bring to other people goodness, health, strength,  
beauty, and loveliness.

Later - Began to mean the actual activity which expresses the desire to  
bring to others goodness instead of evil, health instead of sickness, beauty  
instead of ugliness, glory instead of punishment.

Here is the activity of heaven as V. (9) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
- that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through  
his poverty might be rich". Desiring to bring to all that which is good,  
wonderful, glorious.

What a wonderful word is this word grace! You discover the matter of  
giving is centered in this lovely word grace.

This removes giving from mechanics - from pressure or duty - from legalism.  
Giving is in the atmosphere of conveying all that is lovely, glorious,  
what a lovely word this word is!

V. (1) - Paul quotes a human example of grace as he refers to the churches in  
Macedonia - speaks of their action as the grace of God bestowed on them.

Out of the great great trial of affliction and deep poverty - poor as they were  
- the Romans had lacerated Macedonia. Grace of liberality in giving - Note  
Paul says churches, not church - each church acted independently but co-operatively.

V. (2) Liberality arose out of the simplicity of character. Poverty was deep down or down deep to the bottom.

(No area) in Christian life in which there is greater blessing than that of giving.

There is no place where the grace of God shines brighter than where giving comes from a background of poverty.

(Macedonia) Christians were so poor, and afflicted much had given out of their poverty. Out of gladness and overflow of abundance resulted.

V. (3) - Paul says I can testify they have given to the utmost of their ability and even beyond their ability of their own accord. Paul need not urge them - they out of their poverty had given far beyond what they could afford. This is the measure of their giving. The grace of God was upon them.

V. (4) - How (refreshing) - No pressure put on them to give, they were putting the pressure on others to received their gifts. Paul said they begged him to have part in the offering. This is like on of (our deacons) E. White said on Baptist Men's Day 2 or 3 years ago. Christians ought to shout Hallelujah. When the offering plates were passed.

Demanded the right to have a share in the offering.

V. (5) [Explanation] of the generous giving. They had given more than Paul expected.

Method was - they were first devoted to the Lord and this led them to be devoted to the work of the church.

Here then is the principle. Give yourselves first unto the Lord. Be careful about that!

(If) you do not do that - your giving will be of necessity - will be grudgingly.

It is a healthy exercise for each to "lay by in store, the first day of the week, as the Lord has prospered".

(If) we do not have anything, we are not responsible for what we do not

have -- is your income more than it was five years ago? What effect has that had on your giving to the cause of God?

You say I'm not doing so well.

Here is the principle to follow - first they gave themselves - committed to Christ - second they were generous givers. Giving out of poverty, without pressure - everything belonged to their Lord.

How much they owed him and the church at Jerusalem. All these churches were founded by the Jerusalem Church. Our Lord told them to go - now the church at Jerusalem was in difficulty.

## II. THE PROMISE MUST BE FULFILLED - V. 6-15

V. (6) Titus had begun or promoted a collection in Corinth before it was begun in Macedonia or elsewhere.

Macedonia Churches had finished, while Corinth lagged behind.

They need to finish - bring to an end - finish at once expresses urgency.

Made what we call a faith promise - they had expressed a willingness to help the Jerusalem Church. They had not acted upon this willingness, there had been no performance.

I am interest in knowing how Paul goes about the task of seeing to it that people keep their promises.

How does he persuade people who are willing but take no action.

### V. (7) [Real test.]

First, gives a word of praise

Tells about their good qualities. They excell in faith and the Holy Spirit, warm fellowship.

Paul says you are growing rich in other things but you need to grow in giving. This is a kind irony in this reference. It is needed so much today! Claims to gifts of knowledge, teaching, but short on grace of giving.

2 V. 8 - Second, gives a challenge of motives. A collection is a test of one's love for Christ, not the only test, but a real test!

This is not a command, I am giving you my advice -- first, remember the earnest haste and diligence of others and second, this will prove or test your love. This is a challenge of motives -- sincerity of your love is tested by enthusiasm of others.

3 V. 9 Third, the example of Christ.

Paul tells them that they know by experience.

Grace of our Lord - refers to act of giving himself.

Became poor - was not poor - relinquishing. For your sakes became poor. Strongest word here translated (poor) occurs nowhere else in N. T. The strongest use of the word that it is possible to make. It indicates absolute pauperism. He became so poor that he had absolutely nothing more to give away. This example should inspire the Corinthians to be liberal in their giving.

4 V. 10 Fourth, their promise must be honored.

It is expedient or appropriate - it is his opinion, not a command.

You promised a year ago to take an offering.

V. 11 - You had a willingness to give - quick to pledge, eagerness.

Do it right now, as there was willingness, complete the performance out of what you have.

Suggests Corinth's wealth as over against Macedonia's deep poverty. They should pay the pledge which they made last year. Good advice even today.

The time to act is now - there is no evidence that they did. Lists of churches accompanying Paul to Jer. with the offering I Cor. 16:3-4 does not include any from Corinth Acts 20:4.

Along with its other problems Corinth was a stingy church. Strife within this one church affected the Christian cause in distant places.

V. (12) - Paul says I want you to perform - not according to what you have not - that is not expected of you.

Give by a standard of grace and love.

If a willing mind is present the gift is well received (accepted) not according to what he does not have. God does not expect a man to give what he does not have.

V. (13) - Not fair for one church to bear all the burden.

V. (14) - Your abundance may offset their want and the (reverse) may be true someday. Their abundance may relieve your burden.

Recognition of partnership.

(What) abundance had the church at Jerusalem?

It had a great deal of want - many very poor. If it had not been for the church at Jer. there would not have been any other church at all.

Other missionary churches were formed from the Jer. Church as they scattered through the world.

This is a partnership.

V. (15) - (Manna) in the wilderness illustrates some gathered little some much, but each had an abundance and there was no lack.

### ✓ III. THE PRACTICAL ADMINISTRATION - V. 16-24

Spoke of people giving now there must be some administration.

V. (16) - (Titus) - delegated responsibility - has same interest I have.

V. (18) - A brother (Luke) - His praise is ringing through all the churches.

V. (19) - Appointed by the church - elected.

V. (22) - Our brother - Apollos, a brother in Christ.

The last two I mentioned are not listed - however, I'm sure they could be trusted with this sacred responsibility.

Why should Paul trust Titus with such a task?

V. (20) - Titus had a good reputation.

Paul was careful not to lay himself open to dishonesty in handling of money.

This is going to be a big offering. He handed it over to someone he could trust and they could trust.

Titus had been to Corinth. They knew him. They trusted him, they loved him.

V. (21) - Paul made a wise choice - this is a matter of absolute integrity.

Transparent honesty.

This was for the glory of God - no matter of suspicion as to gathering of money, in the sight of men, should take place in the church.

Here he emphasizes the importance of the business side of things in the finances of the church.

When the Salvation Army started Wm. Booth was charged with dishonesty. People said that all the property was in his name, and he might at any time take it all over. That was criticism of the work. He was very careful from the first to publish his accounts, and perfected the handling of the money. Process of years criticism ceased. Never heard now that Salvation Army Officers are making money out of the work.

In the sight of all men - all things honourable - in the sight of God and of men.

This is good Christian apologetics. It is not like living in a castle with the drawbridge up and occasionally tossing a stone over the walls. It is not sitting inside and saying "you cannot reach me here".

They must face the task of their generation. We must speak to our generation!

The past generation has gone - the future generation is not here yet!

Therefore, you must give a defence and communicate to your generation!

Unreasonable to expect the people of the next generation to continue the historic Christian position unless we show evidences.

Christian apologetics is not merely an academic subject. It should be thoughtout and practiced in the rough and tumble life of the present generation.

Paul was concerned for the Christian message in his day.

Tactfully, graciously, and lovingly, He reminds them that now is the time to act, you promised, you intended, you were willing, you declared, now is the time that you must perform.

Paul sent men of integrity to administer the gift.

The church depends upon the liberality of you in your generation. They gave themselves. This will loosen purse strings. Heaven or Hell rides upon your gifts for many.

There are two seas in Palestine. Both are fed by the River Jordan.

If you went along side one of those seas, you would find children playing by the banks, trees growing, life is apparent everywhere.

The other sea is avoided. No signs of growth of vegetation, nothing but barrenness.

What is the difference between the two? There is no difference in the water supply, same river supplies both.

Difference - for every drop of water that goes into Sea of Galilee another drop goes out.

What it receives it gives; it takes in, it gives out. All around blossoming fruit.

Other sea - jealously hoards it resources and refuses to give out a single drop. It ~~loses~~ everything it takes in. And its name is Dead Sea.

To give is to live.

To hoard is to die.



The inspiration of giving unto the grace of God. There is a story out of the Life of Hudson Taylor. He said on his birthday morning his own little girl brought in her hand a most mysterious looking arrangement. So mysterious that Hudson Taylor did not know what it was. She said I brought you a birthday present. He took it, looked at it, a matchbox, knitting needle in one end, a pin in the other - somehow fastened with cotton - well darling, what is this? Oh Father, dear, I knew it was what you would like, it is a missionary ship.

There is the whole philosophy of Christian giving. The heart of the child knew full well the love of her Father's heart. She knew he longed for a ship for missions.

The years passed and there came a day when the girl had grown to womanhood, and once again she came to her father in China on his birthday.

She said Father dear, I have brought you something for your birthday. He said, what is it. I want to introduce to you the first Chinese woman that God has used, me to lead to Christ.

The potentiality of that Chinese convert lay in that matchbox, knitting needle and pin.

There is the plan of Christian giving - what does God want? What is His heart set upon?