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## OPENING COMMENT

The sermon series title above may be enough to cause our hearts to become callous and our eyes to roll. The thought of someone, anyone, let alone the church, telling us what to do with our resources can be rather off-putting. Yet, thousands of verses throughout scripture talk about how should view and use money as well as the pitfalls surrounding loving it too much. If Scripture is not shy in talking about how we use our resources, then neither should we. We should approach these texts with soft hearts and willing spirits, not to be coerced into giving, but in an effort to find ourselves faithful to God's teaching.

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## READ THE TEXT: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,<sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

<sup>8</sup> I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this



work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. How does Paul frame the exemplary character of the Macedonian Church? (vs. 1)
2. What are the four descriptions Paul uses for the Macedonian church? (vs. 2)
3. Paul sees their generosity as a result of what? (vs. 2)
4. Paul qualifies the Macedonian generosity in verse 3. What are these qualifications?
5. What is the Macedonian motivation for such radical generosity? (vs. 4)
6. What is Paul's charge to Titus in the Corinthian context? (vs. 6)
7. Paul sees generosity as a proof of something. What is it? (vs. 8)
8. Why should the Corinthians be generous? (vs. 9-10)
9. What does Paul mean by "readiness" and how does this concept play into our generosity? (vs. 11-12)
10. What is the overarching principle Paul applies to the requirements around generosity? (vs. 13-15)

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Why is it important to see and outflow of generosity as a "gift of grace"?
2. Paul holds up the Macedonians as an example of what generosity should look like. What in this tangible example stands as counter cultural and counter intuitive?
3. How does the order in verse five inform our generosity?
4. Paul suggests that we should excel at faith, speech, knowledge, love, and generosity. How does placing generosity in this group challenge our perspective on its importance?
5. How might we make ourselves "ready" to share of our abundance?
6. How does Paul's idea of fairness couch our understanding of radical generosity?
7. Where do we need to be more generous (as a group, as individual families, as individuals)?
8. How does our radical, joyful, sacrificial generosity, rooted in a proper understanding of the gospel, act as a witness to our unbelieving friends and neighbors?



9. Are you close enough with some unbelievers that they would actually be aware of this radical generosity? If not, how might we begin to develop those relationships as a group?

## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Exodus 16 – Story of Manna, which Paul draws on here to end his argument. The Israelites were given what they needed for each day.
2. Psalm 112 – the righteous man is a generous man.
3. Acts 2:42-47 – radical generosity displayed by the early church in Jerusalem.
4. Acts 4:32-37 – Another picture of radical generosity.
5. Acts 5:1-11 – A picture of false generosity and the dire consequences.
6. 2 Corinthians 9:5-15 – Paul doubles down on the need for generosity.

## CONCLUSION

Paul's conclusion is rather simple: since Christ was so generous with us, we should be known for our generosity. We are recipients of unfathomable grace. No matter our current circumstances, we should be known as people of radical generosity because in it we reflect the grace we have received. This generosity is not a call to impoverishment, but to a readiness to give of what has been given to us, so that we can support each other in our need, and so honor the name of Christ. In so doing, we declare that we trust God when He says that he will give us what we need.

## SHARE & PRAY

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## LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

