

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Principles for Giving – Part III.*"

On Sunday mornings we've been discussing giving...and we've reached our last sermon.

As we talked about in the previous sermons, the New Testament doesn't command giving a tithe, but it does command giving; therefore, the obvious question is...

"How do we know how much to give?"

Even though the NT doesn't tell us how much to give, it gives us principles to help us decide. We've been looking at those principles – which I left on your bulletin – and we'll see the last one this morning.

Most of the principles are in **2 Cor 8 and 9**, b/c these chapters provide the richest, most detailed teaching on giving in the New Testament.

Let me briefly remind you of the context...

Paul wanted the Corinthians to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He motivated them to do so by telling them about the Macedonians...b/c they're such a great example of giving.

Just as the Macedonians served as a great example to the Corinthians, they serve as a great example to us.

Take a look at **2 Cor 8:1** to briefly review...

2 Cor 8:1a We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 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.

Even though the Macedonians were **in a severe test of affliction** while experiencing **extreme poverty**, they still found a way to produce **a wealth of generosity on their part!** And it says they even gave this much with an **abundance of joy**.

Look at **verse 3**...

2 Cor 8:3a For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

The words **beyond their means**, mean they gave more than they could afford. Because they were so poor they didn't have the money, but they gave anyway.

For this morning, notice the words **of their own accord**...and this brings us to the last principle for New Testament giving...

LESSON 1: THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS GIVING (PART VII) WILLINGLY

If you want to see how willingly the Macedonians gave, look at **verse 4**...

2 Cor 8:4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

The Macedonians [**begged Paul and his companions**] **earnestly** to be able to give.

How many times have you heard of Christians begging to be able to give?

They called being able to give a **favor**, or some bibles say privilege. The Greek word for **favor** – or privilege – is *charis*, the same word translated “grace” elsewhere in Scripture.

If you look back at **verse 1** it says **the grace of God** allowed them to give. Now it’s as though they’re asking for more grace – or more **favor** – to be able give more.

The Greek word for **taking part** is *koinonia*, which is often translated as “fellowship.” The word means, “*strong association, community, or participation.*”

The Macedonians wanted such strong fellowship w/ the Jerusalem believers they:

- **[took] part in [their] relief...**
- or participated in their suffering...
- or associated w/ them...

Through their giving.

Whenever we give we’re also associating w/ others and **taking part in [relieving]** the burdens or suffering they’re experiencing.

Look at **verse 5**...

2 Cor 8:5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Since Paul is speaking, the words **not as we expected**, mean the Macedonians gave even more than Paul and his companions anticipated.

The word **first** isn’t referring to time or chronology, but priority. They gave themselves **first** to God, and that led to their generosity.

In other words, their giving was related to their relationship with the Lord...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: GIVING REFLECTS OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LORD.

Consider this...ⁱ

- Jesus talked about money more than He talked about anything except the kingdom of God.
- He talked about money more than He talked about heaven and hell...combined.
- There are 39 parables, and 11 of them are about money...which is almost one-third.
- In the Gospels, 1 out of 10 verses – 288 total – is about money.

The reason I mention this is since Jesus said so much about money...what we do w/ money says much about what we think about Jesus.

And this account w/ the Macedonians is a good example!

The verse says:

- Their giving was an outpouring of their relationships with the Lord.
- They gave the way they did BECAUSE of their relationships with the Lord.

Similarly:

- Our giving is an outpouring of our relationships w/ the Lord.
- We give the way we do, b/c of our relationships w/ the Lord.

We know this from previous sermons. Jesus said...

Matt 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

His point is what we do w/ money is a window into our hearts, and reveals what we value.

You've heard it said if you want to know what's important to people, look at their calendar and their checkbook, b/c then you see what they do w/ their time and money.

Skip to **verse 7**...

2 Cor 8:7 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.

The **act of grace** Paul's referring to is giving. He says they excel in these other areas and he wants them to excel in giving too.

Look at the beginning of the next verse...

2 Cor 8:8a I SAY THIS NOT AS A COMMAND,

Pause right here...

What is **this**?

That they abound in giving as he said in the verse 7.

This is interesting!

Paul was an apostle, which means he had the authority to command them to give. We can tell from the previous verses that he really wanted them to give...that's been the main point.

But right when it sounded like he was about to command them, he pulls back and says he's NOT commanding them!

Why's that?

He wanted them giving willingly.ⁱⁱ

Paul says he's testing the Corinthians' **love** – whether it's **genuine** and sincere – by comparing it w/ the **earnestness** – or willingness – of [the Macedonians].

He used the **earnestness of others** – in this case the Macedonians – as an example to the Corinthians to encourage them to give...and by extension to encourage us to give.

Skip to **chapter 9** and look at **verse 5**...

2 Cor 9:5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised so that it may be READY AS A WILLING GIFT, NOT AS AN EXACTION.

The Corinthians promised some time back that they would give...but they hadn't given yet. It's much easier to talk about giving than actually give.

Paul reminded them of their promise by sending some Christians ahead to get the gift, but notice he still said he wanted it to be **a willing gift [and] not an exaction**...not something he had to force out of them.

Look at **verse 7**...

2 Cor 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

We looked at part of this verse previously.

What we haven't looked at are the words **not reluctantly or under compulsion**.

- The words **not reluctantly** refer to the attitude when giving.
- The words **under compulsion** refer to the conditions when giving.

Let's briefly talk about each...

The Greek word for **reluctantly** literally means, “With grief, sorrow, or sadness.”

Picture people giving:

- Through clenched teeth
- Very painfully
- The gift must be pried from their hands

Have you ever had someone give you something unwillingly?

You could tell it was hurting them. The look on their face said, *“I don’t want to give this to you, but I’m going to b/c:*

- *It’s your birthday...*
- *Or your graduation...*
- *Or I feel like I owe you...*
- *Or b/c my parents are making me*

We don’t like receiving gifts like this, and God doesn’t either.

The words **under compulsion** refer to external pressure and coercion. We’re not supposed to give:

- Based on the demands of others...
- Or b/c someone legalistically said, “You have to do this...”

When giving is done this way it resembles taxation more than worship.

The words not **under compulsion** are very clear...which is why it’s disappointing that they’re disobeyed so frequently.

We almost can’t help but think of televangelists – and some church leaders – who say almost anything to get people to give. They will

- Manipulate
- Guilt
- Shame
- Lie
- Make ridiculous promises
- You name it

To squeeze one more dollar out of people.

You can tell they don’t have the people’s best interests in mind:

- They aren’t trying to help them grow in their relationships w/ the Lord.
- Instead, they’re motivated by greed and covetousness.

Warren Wiersbe said, *“During my years of ministry I have endured many offering appeals. I have listened to pathetic tales about unbelievable needs. I have forced myself to laugh at old jokes that*

were supposed to make it easier for me to part with my money. I have been scolded, shamed, and almost threatened, and I must confess that none of these approaches has ever stirred me to give more than I planned to give. In fact, more than once I gave less because I was so disgusted with the worldly approach.” ⁱⁱⁱ

Mark Twain said, “*I was so sickened by the long appeal that I took a bill out of the plate.*”

This is why we don’t pass the plate here. We don’t want you taking money out of it 😊.

I’m kidding.

We don’t pass the plate b/c the Bible says people aren’t supposed to give **under compulsion**.

And to give glory to God, He’s always taken very good care of us. I can’t think of one leadership meeting that ever involved concern over where we’re at financially.

After listening to all this, we’re almost forced to ask...

“If God wanted His people giving willingly, why did He command them to give under the Mosaic Law?”

The simple answer is the tithe should be thought of as a tax.

On top of that, God still wanted His people giving willingly...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (PART 1) GOD ALSO DESIRED GIVING WILLINGLY.

Please turn to **Exo 25:2**...we won’t turn back to 2 Cor 8.

I’m going to read a lot of verses and go through them quickly so you catch the theme.

Here’s the context for the first verse...

God wanted the people to build the tabernacle for Him to dwell in. Since the Mosaic Law was instituted in **Exo 24**, and we’re in **Exo 25**, the people are under the Law in this chapter; therefore, we might expect Moses to say, “Every man must give a tithe so the tabernacle can be built.”

Instead, look at **verse 2**...

Exo 25:2 Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man WHOSE HEART MOVES HIM you shall receive the contribution for me.”

No mention of a tithe!

Even after the Law was instituted, God still wanted them giving willingly.

Skip to **Exo 35:4**...

Exo 35:4 Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “This is the thing that the Lord has commanded. *Give a tithe*...

Nope...

Exo 35:5 Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. **WHOEVER IS OF A GENEROUS HEART, LET HIM BRING THE LORD'S CONTRIBUTION: gold, silver, and bronze.**

God appealed to their generosity, which is to say He wanted them giving willingly.

A few verses later...

Exo 35:21 They came, everyone whose **HEART STIRRED HIM, AND EVERYONE WHOSE SPIRIT MOVED HIM**, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. **22** So they came, both men and women. **ALL WHO WERE OF A WILLING HEART** brought [all this wealth] to the Lord...**26** All the women **WHOSE HEARTS STIRRED THEM**...**29** All...the people of Israel, **WHOSE HEART MOVED THEM** to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it **AS A FREEWILL OFFERING TO THE LORD.**

The words **heart stirred him...spirit moved him...willing heart...freewill offering** are all ways to describe the willing giving God wanted...even under the Law.

What you notice is a real emphasis on the people themselves – their **hearts**, their **spirits** – versus being compelled to give – by some outward or external source...like the priests or the Law itself.

Turn two books to the right to **Deut 15:10**.

Listen to how they were to give to the poor...

Deut 15:10 You shall give to [the poor] **FREELY**, and your heart shall **NOT BE GRUDGING** when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

This is practically the language of **2 Cor 9:7**: give **freely** and not [**begrudgingly**].

Last verse. Look one chapter to the right to **Deut 16:10**...

Deut 16:10 Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of A **FREEWILL OFFERING** from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you.

Again, the emphasis on giving willingly.

Listen to the way Solomon described the giving that results in blessing...

Pro 11:24 One gives FREELY, yet grows all the richer; another withholds (or is reluctant) what he should give, and only suffers want.

Giving willingly is elevated, while stinginess is condemned.

What I'd like to do now is give you an example of giving unwillingly so we can learn from it and avoid doing it ourselves.

Please turn to **Gen 28:20**.

Let me give you the context for these verses before we read them...

In the previous chapter, Jacob tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright. Jacob's mother, Rebekah, told him to flee b/c Esau wanted to kill him. He must leave his family behind, not knowing when – or if – he'll see them again. He's on his way to live w/ his uncle, Laban, who's the only person who can match Jacob's manipulateness.

This is a very low point in Jacob's life.

During the night God spoke to him in a dream and made him many wonderful promises. But look what happened when Jacob woke up...

Gen 28:20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I WILL GIVE A FULL TENTH TO YOU."

A full tenth! Not even a partial tenth!

I read this and picture God saying, "*Wow, I can't believe it. You're giving me a full tithe!*"

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (PART II) JACOB DEMONSTRATES GIVING UNWILLINGLY.

Jacob hasn't become Israel yet, which means he's still "heel grabber"...versus "God prevails."

As Jacob, he tries to manipulate everyone and everything in his life...including God...whom he tries to bargain with.

He says if God will:

- *Be with me*
- *Keep me safe*
- *Give me food*
- *Give me clothing*
- *Bring me home safely*

Then He will be my God.

This implies if God didn't do these things, then He wouldn't be his God.

But:

- We don't make God our God b/c of what He'll do for us.
- We make God our God b/c of who He is and what He's already done for us.

The point I want you to notice is it's all very conditional. You can tell Jacob is giving unwillingly...only if God does these things for him.

One reason this example is so important is...

It demonstrates how we can be tempted to give!

We're tempted to tell God:

- *If you'll do this for me, I'll do this for you.*
- *If you'll give me...*
 - *This raise...*
 - *This bonus...*
 - *This car...*
 - *This boat...*
 - *This house...*
- *Then I'LL GIVE YOU this amount.*

We look like Jacob.

It's all very conditional...and it's a form of giving unwillingly.

And when giving is done unwillingly think of what God can and can't bless:

- When giving is done unwillingly or out of compulsion, God can still bless the gift, which is to say He can still use the money for His purposes. He doesn't look at it and say, "This was given w/ a terrible attitude, so I can't do anything with it."
- But can God bless the giver? Can God really bless us:
 - When we give unwillingly with hearts in the wrong place?
 - When we give out of obligation...versus out of worship.

I'd like to show you another example. Please turn to the left to **Gen 14:18**.

The context is Abraham's nephew Lot was captured and Abraham rescued him. In the process, Abraham defeated four kings and came into the possession of a considerable amount of wealth and plunder.

When he returned from the battle, he met Melchizedek.

Look at **verse 18**...

Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And [Melchizedek] blessed [Abraham] and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram GAVE HIM A TENTH OF EVERYTHING.

This brings us to the last part of Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (PART III) ABRAHAM DEMONSTRATES GIVING WILLINGLY.

In a recent sermon I discussed the "Principle of First Mention." The idea is the first-time words are used in the Bible it reveals the truest meaning of the word.

Although some of your Bibles might say **tenth**, this is the Hebrew word for tithe, and this is the first time it's used.

So here's the question...

Why would this account reveal the truest meaning of the word tithe?

Let me give you another question to help illustrate the answer...

What book in the Bible comes to mind when you think of giving a tithe?

Probably not Genesis.

Probably Leviticus...the book of the law that commands giving a tithe.

And that's precisely why this account reveals the truest meaning of the word!

- If we look at the word tithe in Leviticus, it's commanded.
- But when we look at the word here in in Genesis, it's five hundred years before the Law was given...revealing the giving God wanted:
 - Giving willingly apart from the law.
 - Abraham **gave as he decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion.**

- It's as though he gave as a NT believer...in the OT.

Here's something interesting to consider...

Melchizedek was a king and priest. He blessed Abraham, and out of thankfulness – b/c there was no law at the time commanding him to do so – Abraham gave to Melchizedek in response.

Jesus is a King and Priest too: the King of Kings and Great High Priest. Considering how much more He's blessed us than Melchizedek blessed Abraham, how much more willingly should we give out of thankfulness?

And this brings us to Lesson 4....

LESSON 4: THANKFULNESS PRODUCES BETTER GIVING THAN LAW.

Let me read two interesting accounts that reveal how much better willing giving is than law giving.

The context for the first account is Moses asked the people to give for the construction of the tabernacle. Listen to what happened...

Exo 36:3 [The builders of the temple] received from Moses all the contribution that the people...had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. THEY STILL KEPT BRINGING HIM FREEWILL OFFERINGS every morning. 5 [The builders] said to Moses, "The people bring MUCH MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR DOING THE WORK THAT THE LORD HAS COMMANDED US TO DO." 6 So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing.

The people gave so willingly Moses had to tell them to stop! Imagine that.

So there was a command, but it was a command to stop giving!

Centuries later, when David asked the people to give for the construction of the temple, listen to what he said...

1 Chr 29:5b (NKJV) Who then is WILLING to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" 6 Then the [people] offered WILLINGLY...9 Then the people REJOICED (we've got joyful giving too), for they had offered WILLINGLY, because with a loyal heart they had offered WILLINGLY to the Lord; and King David also REJOICED greatly. 10 Therefore David blessed the Lord...14 "But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so WILLINGLY as this?...17b As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have WILLINGLY offered all these things; and now with JOY I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer WILLINGLY to You.

Again, this echoes **2 Cor 9:7**: they gave **willingly** and **joyfully**...not **reluctantly or under compulsion**.

This is the account I mentioned a week or two ago with the people giving hundreds of thousands of pounds of gold and silver to build the temple.

And here's the thing...

The Law can never produce this.

Only thankful hearts can, b/c they're hearts that have been moved to give as an act of worship.

This is another reason it's so sad when televangelists or church leaders try to get people to give out of obligation.

What they should do is preach Christ!

Then people will be thankful and they'll have hearts that want to give.

To state it plainly:

- Our motivation to give should not come from obedience to a command, but appreciation for Christ's work.
- Anyone who truly understands what Christ has done for them will be moved to give out of thankfulness.

Each week this is how I've been trying to encourage you to give: by focusing on what Christ has given you.

So let me conclude – not just this sermon, but this series on giving – with this lesson...

LESSON 5: JESUS WILLINGLY GAVE MORE THAN A TITHE.

Jesus gave Himself completely for us.

Let me illustrate this by showing you something in **Lev 1**. Turn two books to the right.

This chapter is about the burnt offering, which is a tremendous picture of Christ.

The key verse is **Leviticus 1:4**. Let's break it into three parts, each part reminding us of what Christ did for us:

1. First, look at the words **He** (this is the priest) **shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering** – This communicated the transmission of the sin to the animal, like our sins are transmitted to Christ. Think of **Isaiah 53:6** **The LORD has laid on (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.**

2. Second, the words **and it shall be accepted for him** – “him” is the sinner. This is substitutionary atonement. The animal died in the sinner’s place...like Christ died in our place.
3. **to make atonement for him** – Like Jesus made atonement for our sins.

Three times – in verses 9, 13, and 17 – it says **the priest shall burn ALL OF IT on the altar, as a burnt offering...with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.**

Paul applied this imagery to Jesus...

Eph 5:2 Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Burnt offerings were completely consumed, and Jesus is the true and greater Burnt Offering. We’re talking about willingly giving and Jesus willingly gave Himself to be completely consumed for our sins.

His radical act of self-giving is the only thing that can consistently move us to give as we’ve discussed in these sermons: sacrificially, joyfully, and willingly.

Let’s pray.

ⁱ <https://wealthwithpurpose.com/god-money/why-does-the-bible-mention-money-so-often/>
https://www.answers.com/Q/How_many_times_did_Jesus_talk_about_money

ⁱⁱ And how did he go about accomplishing that?

Look at the rest of the verse...

2 Cor 8:8b but to prove by THE EARNESTNESS OF OTHERS that your love also is genuine.

The word **prove** means test, which is how it’s translated in some Bibles.

This is fitting, b/c as we talked about two weeks ago, just as the manna was as a test for Israel, money is a test for us.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe p. 656 – 2 Cor 8 commentary.