

2 Corinthians 8:1-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 August 2024

[0:00] Take your Bibles, go with me to the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 8. 2 Corinthians chapter 8. We will be getting into the 8th chapter this morning. We will be starting in verse 1, making our way through verse 12.

2 Corinthians chapter 8, verses 1 through 12. The book of 2 Corinthians has within its text many kind of sub-series, if you will.

We have been looking at the book of 2 Corinthians and how Paul is encouraging the church to live authentically in their faith and the community that God has placed them in. He is not so much rebuking an error or correcting a problem.

He has dealt with that in 1 Corinthians. We have read at the end of the 7th chapter that those problems were resolved. The church was living in a repentant manner, desiring to be pleasing unto the Lord.

And so he transitions in the 8th chapter into the 9th chapter, about halfway through or the majority of the 9th chapter, we will kind of figure in with what we see this morning.

[1:01] So there will be a series within this series of three sermons. We have already seen one of those sub-series, and that would be starting in the 2nd chapter and going through into the very first verse of the 7th chapter, and that would be living out our ministry, living in a ministry assignment and how God has called and equipped us.

Many of you know, and I have shared this with you as a pastor before, that one of the things that I very seldom, if ever, have preached on in 18 years of ministry is giving. I never preach on giving. And the reason I don't, I'm not one of those who ever has a series on tithing. I remember when I first came into the ministry that there were all these promotional activities, these tithing sermon series and all these things that would come to pastors, and you would probably be surprised at the resources that get provided to pastors.

And here are some things that you can preach. Here's how to increase giving to your church. My matter of conviction in that matter has always been, and now I will just go ahead and just be transparent with you, the budget reports for this church are in the back table back there because they have a business meeting coming up.

So we live a very transparent life here that you can take that and review it. We want you to see it. Prior to the Lord calling me here, he called me to a church that operated on a \$0 budget. That is, if the offering wasn't good that week, then I didn't get paid.

[2:12] Okay, that's essentially how it was. It was based on how much they paid you. It was based on how much was given. I was paid week to week. So that you understand the motives is not just the bottom line. My conviction has always been that if the heart of the individual is right, then the wallet is sure to follow.

I have never, not that I've ever had anything wrong with those who preach giving sermons. We can look throughout history, and we can see individuals such as D.L. Moody, who had no shame in asking people to give and raised a number of funds for individuals.

Or we can go to Hudson Taylor, who never once asked for any money that was given to him, and he went by faith and by faith alone. We can look, and these are contemporaries at the same time. We can look at people like George Mueller, who would, he would provide financial reports, but the financial reports that he was providing were from two years ago, so that no one ever knew of his needs, and he completely trusted in the Lord by prayer and by prayer alone.

There have been great men and women who have both not failed to ask nor failed to wait and to pray and to trust the Lord, and we're not saying that one of them is right and one of them is wrong. But my conviction has always been that the grand scheme of the matter is the matter of the heart. So as far as pastoral ministry goes, I'm more concerned about hitting you in the heart than I am hitting you in the wallet. Because if I hit the wallet but we don't hit the heart, then you may give and

then you may leave.

[3 : 33] And that's just the simple reality of it. No matter how much you give, it's not going to secure where you are eternally. But starting this morning, we'll be preaching for the next three Sundays on giving.

Because I've also been the pastor who said that if it's in the text, I will preach the text. And the reason I confine myself to book-by-book preaching is so that I would encourage and even encounter scriptures that are challenging both to me and to you, and we can see the full revelation of the Word of God.

Giving is something that is spoken of very clearly in the New Testament. And we will see it here. We will see as Paul encourages the church at Corinth, we will see how he relates to the churches in Macedonia, which encounter a circle of churches, a number of churches.

We will see that it is spoken over and over again in the writings of Paul. Paul was one of those who had no problem with asking people to give, and we will see kind of why and how and what manner it is given to us.

So for the next, starting this Sunday, the next two Sundays, we will be looking at the giving of the saints. Because if we're going to be biblically accurate, to live out an authentic faith, to live out an authentic relationship with Christ, then giving is a part of that.

[4 : 51] Because what happens in the heart inevitably is shown through the wallet and through our lives. It is not confined to monetary giving. So don't cue me out.

We will see that this morning. The first thing that I want you to see when we look at the first 12 verses is that this giving is a grace-filled opportunity. I don't always give you my title first, and I'm giving it to you first this morning so that as we read the text, you will see the repetition of this word grace.

Giving, the giving of the saints, is a grace-filled opportunity. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm asking you to join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God, found in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, starting in verse 1, and we will read down to verse 12, and then we will pray.

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

For I testify that according to their ability and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation and the support of the saints.

[6 : 07] And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. So we urge Titus, that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all the earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

I'm not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 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 through his poverty might become rich.

I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago, not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness of desire, or to desire it, so there may also be the completion of it by your ability.

For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day.

[7 : 21] God, we're so thankful for your word. We pray, O Lord, as we have read your word and heard your word, now that you would speak to us through it. Lord, we pray that you would move by the power of it into our hearts and minds for your glory and honor, and we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. We see this morning that the giving of the saints is a grace-filled opportunity. This is not a matter of legalism.

We'll see that very clearly in our text. This is not a matter of command, but rather it is a grace-filled opportunity that presents itself to the saints. It is very becoming of the saints to accept that opportunity and to walk faithfully in it.

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, now that the admonitions and the corrections have been taken care of, now that the church has repented and they are living in a repentant manner, again,

following the example, Paul did not write in 1 Corinthians primarily about the giving. He does mention it in the 16th chapter, but his main focus was to get the heart of the individual right. If you remember, the city of Corinth was a prosperous city.

[8 : 26] It was the city in which there was great trade that is taking place. It was a conglomerate of nations and individuals. It was a very important port as far as Roman trade routes went. And with this abundance also came great opportunity.

But Paul was not so primarily concerned about how much they could give as about who they were before Christ. So he dealt with the heart of the matter first, issues that needed to be dealt with, matters that needed to be repented of.

He dealt with who they were in Christ. Now that we find in the end of the 7th chapter, they are living out a repentant life of faith. Paul now moves on to the giving of the church for the cause of the saints, as we will see.

If you remember and you go back into the book of Acts, you will see that this collection was a particular collection in which more than likely there was a great famine among the Judean people. And the churches of the Judean people in the land of Israel really were suffering because not only was there a famine, it was predicted in Antioch as a prophet stood up and declared that the famine was coming.

[9 : 31] And it was then that the church at Antioch began that they would send out two people to take the collection for the saints. The Christian Jews were dealt a very particular blow because of this famine, because their faith in Christ was costing them something economically.

And then all of a sudden, when a famine comes upon the land, they are dealt a double blow of economic hardship. It is then that Paul and others began to go around to the Gentile churches and began to speak to the Gentile churches about the spiritual debt that they owe to the Jewish churches and they are taking up to aid this.

Now, I just want to highlight this one particular thing because in context, we want to make sure that we have this right. This is giving to other believers. This is giving to support other believers, which is very consistent with scripture and the bearing of one another's burdens and the carrying of one another's loads.

This is meeting the needs of other brothers and sisters in Christ, which cannot be met otherwise and in another fashion. This is, as we will see later on, not to make it hard on one, but to promote equality across them.

Now, this is not a Marxist ideology or something like that, though it has been used for that because God is not really that concerned about the fact that we need to have it. He's not trying to make everyone equal, but this is about fulfilling the commandment to love one another in a biblical fashion.

[10 : 52] It's a good way of saying there's nothing wrong with the Lord blessing you by your hard work and you having a little financial gain, but what happens is when that financial gain becomes our Lord and Master and we serve it more than we do the Savior.

And it is how we use these resources that God so abundantly pours out upon us. And I promise you, this is the first sermon I've ever preached on giving, so you may hear a bunch of it. I don't know. Maybe 18 years of it is built up and you're about to hear all of it.

Who knows? But anyway, it's how the Lord has blessed us and what we do in relationship to Him for others. And Paul says, first of all, that our giving, this grace-filled opportunity that presents itself, let me just go ahead and say right here, this may be a good place to be accountable as the pastor of this church to this church.

I will share it as a business meeting also. This past Sunday evening, I had to go to our treasurer later on in a week and tell her what I've done. But this past Sunday evening, I had a call from another pastor's family.

It was actually the pastor's wife who called and there was a need in the church there. And there was a need. They were trying to minister and this church was without the financial resources. And they said, this lady really, she needs help. She needs a hot water heater.

[12 : 03] Do you think you could talk to the church? I said, no, I'm just going to go ahead and tell you to get it. The church will pay for it. So church, thank you for paying for that hot water heater you knew nothing about because we had the opportunity.

And then I went to Miss Lynn later on and said, you're probably going to get a receipt. If you don't mind, help me out with that opportunity. So it is good to be able to do that. There are some matters we don't need to really take a vote on, right?

Because there are opportunities that present themselves to us. So we see this here, that this is an opportunity. And Paul says, this opportunity is taken, first of all, when we are motivated by surrender.

When we are motivated by surrender, what moves us to give? Not just of our financial resources, but of ourselves. It is this aspect of surrender.

Look at what he says. Now, brethren, again, writing to the church, right? This is a matter for the church. This isn't a matter for the world. This isn't a matter, the world does a good enough job convincing one another to give so they feel better, right?

[13:06] They do. But we're not here to try to make ourselves feel better. We're just here trying to be biblical. What it says now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which was given in the churches of Macedonia.

So now Paul is going to set forward another church or a group of churches, really. There are a number of churches in the Macedonian region. And he's setting forward these churches, some of them you would know about, the church at Ephesus, the church at Philippi, you know the book of Philippians, the book of Ephesians.

You know some of these churches. And he wants to put forward these churches as an example to the church at Corinth. Not to make them feel bad, but just to encourage them that they have the opportunity and they ought to take the opportunity.

And he puts these churches forward. Look at what it says. Look at the description of these churches. that in a great ordeal of affliction and their abundance of joy and their deep poverty. Here's how he describes the church. They are churches in a great ordeal of affliction with abundant joy and in deep poverty. So surely the joy the churches experience are not a result of their circumstances.

[14:12] And I'm preaching to the pastor for just a minute here. Right? Every now and then I get mad. Every now and then I can get upset. Every now and then I can have bad days just like everyone else. And look at what it says. It says that they are in a great ordeal of affliction.

Now first of all, affliction just doesn't sound good. The word in itself does not describe a circumstance that anyone wants. But if you read your history, you will find that these Macedonian churches were being persecuted for their faith.

There were a lot of things that are going on. You remember the city of Ephesus, right? We just got out of the book of Ephesians. It is there that the princess Diana had her temple and great is Diana of the Ephesians, right?

And you remember the city was in an uproar and they were casting people out and they were stoning people and taking people before the mobs and all this stuff. They were literally being persecuted for their faith.

In the middle of this affliction, it said they had abundant joy. So they were joyous in affliction. You say, well, that's good because at least they had the joy of the Lord in their hearts, right? But they had no money in their wallets because he said they were also in a deep state of poverty.

[15:12] So now we see that giving is not technically defined by circumstances or resources, right? It is not what position we are in being comfortable or what possessions we have, that is having an abundance.

They are being afflicted and they are impoverished, but they have joy. And they have this abundant joy which led them, the scripture says, that with the wealth they gave liberally.

It says, in the wealth of their liberality. And look at what he says. He said, these churches begged us for the opportunity to give. I mean, what a wonderful testimony.

These churches who are being persecuted, these churches who are suffering economically, hear of brothers and sisters in Christ in the Judean lands, in the land of Israel, who are walking in the same trials and tribulations as they are.

They're not around them, but they hear of them. These are people of different ethnicities. These are people of different cultures. These are people of different families. And they're looking at them and they're saying, but their persecution is just like ours.

[16:17] Their economic is just like ours. They're suffering just like us. God, would you let us? And they say, Paul, please let us give. This is coming as a result, not of Paul's commands.

We'll get to that later, but look at what it says. As a result of their surrender. Because what does he say? He says, they were begging us to do this because they first, it says in verse 5, and this is not as we expected.

Paul said, we didn't expect this. We were going there to see how we could help them, but this is how it happened. But they first gave themselves to the Lord. Do you see that? They first gave themselves to the Lord.

Friend, listen to me. If you do not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then biblical giving is not for you. This is a matter for the church.

This is a matter for the believers. In the heyday of the church in England, not the official church, but the church that was in the European countries, when Joseph Parker was preaching on one corner and Charles Spurgeon was preaching on another corner and the churches were packed full, the pews, the offering and the giving of the churches, the pews had gates on them and there was a key that went to that gate and you got the gate, you could literally lock your pew so that no one could get your seat.

[17:36] Don't say amen there. Don't get excited, right? No one could take your seat because you literally gave to the church by renting your pew. So the more affluent you were, the closer you could get to the show.

Believe it or not, so many people wanted to hear these great preachers preach that they tried to get towards the front. They had no microphones, they had no air conditioning, you know, there's a lot less people bodies in front of you up here and they would try to get to the front of the building.

So the more economically privileged you were, the greater room you had. It was those pastors who kind of shook that up and said they were going to quit doing that. Moody himself was one of the first ones in America that quit doing that and the reason is because when he wanted to bring people to church when he was over here in the States, he wanted to bring people to church when he came to Christ, he had to rent out his own pew and he would rent out two pews and fill it full of street kids because they couldn't come to church, they couldn't afford to go to church any other way and he himself would fall asleep and people in the church would mock him and make fun of him because he was falling asleep during the service but little did they know he had been up all morning already held church service at a rented out tavern and then brought all these people and put them in the pews which he himself had paid for by fixing other people's shoes.

When Moody Church was started, they didn't have doors and gates on their pews because they wanted it to be for everyone because the reality is there were a lot of people that filled those European churches that when those well-known pastors died, the churches became empty. giving is a church matter.

[19:09] He says that they first gave themselves to the Lord. Where do you start in the biblical giving? Well, it is motivated by surrender and the first surrender you have is you surrender yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Until you know Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, this whole aspect of giving just seems legalistic. This whole method of giving just seems insane. But he says they gave themselves to the Lord and then he says they move a little further because they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

So we see here they surrendered themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and they gave themselves to the church. He says to us by the will of God.

It is people saying here I am. What can I do? How can I serve? How can I give? How can I? And it is for this reason that they had surrendered of themselves.

They began to beg for the opportunity to give and they gave it says with liberality. And then Paul shifts to the church at Corinth and he says but you now we know of everything that is wrong with the church but look at what he says he has good with the church but just as you abound in everything.

[20:18] They had a lot of spiritual shortcomings but they had a lot of financial and earthly abundances as you abound in everything in faith and utterance and knowledge and all earnestness and in love which we inspired in you.

See that you abound in this gracious there's that word again work also. What is he encouraging them to do? To surrender all. I surrender all.

All means all. And we are motivated in our giving to take this grace filled opportunity first and foremost by surrender. Number two it is modeled by the Savior.

We are motivated by surrender and the reason we are motivated by surrender is because it is modeled by the very Savior which we surrender to. He says in verse 9 for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ there's that word again right?

Grace, grace, grace, grace giving is a grace filled opportunity for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich let's stop right here for just a minute.

[21 : 23] If there is a testimony and an apologetic in scripture for the glorious position of the pre-incarnate Christ that is a good way of saying that before Jesus became flesh he already existed and he existed in a glorious state.

If there is an apologetic for that that is a defense not an apology I'm not saying I'm sorry it is giving a defense. If there is a defense for that it is this verse because Paul says that though he was rich and I would challenge you to open up your scripture and find me one single instance when Jesus Christ walked the face of the earth in flesh and blood for 33 plus years if he was ever rich.

He was born in a manger he was born to a carpenter he was his parents brought the lowest of acceptable sacrifices he never once he said he never had a home he never had a bed he laid his head upon a stone he had no place that he could ever go he wore the plainest of clothings they were only radiant white when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration there was never a time the Bible says in the book of Isaiah that he had no stately form that man would look oh look how handsome he is but he was one that people would turn their face from they declared that he could be no more than 50 years old when we know without a doubt that he was not even 30 he was but 30 years old he was well aged for his age right he lived a rough life he did not live an easy life so if there was a time when he was rich it had to be before he was born of the flesh and we called him Emmanuel and Paul says that though he was rich so here's a testimony and you didn't want that theology but I gave it to you anyway of the glorious position of the pre-incarnate Christ that there was a time in history when he was rich and he laid aside those riches to become as we are it is not like he was a king that got off of his palace on the earth so that he could go serve his humble servants upon the world no he is the king of kings and lord of lords that from the very moment he walked among us he walked among us as a poor man as one without anything else and depended upon the people with him the bible tells us there were many women who provided for him along the way from their resources he was dependent upon people to provide for him it tells us that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so when we read of his humanity and we read of everything about him in scripture not just in the new testament but even those passages in the book of Isaiah when we read just how humble of an estate in which he lived we are reminded that he did it for us that for your sake he lived this way for my sake he lived this way why?

he became poor so that through his poverty you might become rich that you through his poverty might become rich here is the model of the savior friend listen to me in his earthly estate there was none poor but in his eternal state there is none richer and there never will be the very thing I always I love to say it when I get to the book of revelations the one thing that man covets above all other things is gold and they use it for asphalt in heaven the one thing that man desires to gain and the one thing everything that man pushes for everything that man desires everything that man longs for he created it right he created the gold he created the diamonds he's created the silver the bible tells us in the book of Job that they go to the depths of the earth and man dig out what God created in the depth of it everything that he created is greater than that he keeps it all in the palm of his hand he said it holds the world in the palm of his hands he holds everything together he is the king of kings and lord of lords there is none richer there never ever will be one richer but there became one none poorer than he so that he could do it for us so that as we are adopted into his family as his children his riches begin to enrich us so no matter what your humble estate is on this earth be sure my friend in Christ you are enriched like none other that is it may be a struggle here but it is all glory there and it really doesn't matter eternally what it looks like here what matters is eternally what it looks like there there will be a day that in Christ if you know him as your savior the one thing you might not ever have here will be under your feet there the one thing that you might not ever possess here will be in an abundant supply there and you won't need it at all it doesn't matter

I've said it before it tells us he's going and building many abodes I know some of you King James fans and it says mansion you say oh but I'm getting a mansion right but the word mansion just means dwelling place and I'm saying okay well what if that dwelling place is a broom closet a broom closet in heaven is better than a mansion on earth and so I'm sure that's quite the broom closet I'll be content to live in a broom closet as long as I'm there because it says there's no dark there so I'm

never going to be there I don't need to sleep there I don't ever need to be there I don't think I'll have any possessions there because I'm throwing it all at the feet of the Savior I don't want a mansion there I just want the Savior there see the riches we have are those that are possessed by our Savior he became poor so that we might become rich and all he asked us to do is to follow that same example it's to quit holding on so strongly to the things around us to realizing that it is not this estate of this world that is what matters most but what we have there that as the Bible says that neither moth nor rust will ever destroy we see that it is modeled by the Savior number three this grace filled opportunity is not only motivated by surrender it is not only modeled by the Savior it is a measure of our sincerity giving is a measure of our sincerity and this is where I want you to read what Paul says he says I'm not speaking this as a command so understand this is not a legalistic command there's a great question are we ever commanded in scripture in the New [27 : 14] Testament to give a tithe is the tithe repeated in the New Testament well Paul says I'm not giving you a command the fulfillment of that is there by the way when we get to the Old Testament remember the tithe was the minimum not the maximum and so that was just where you started that's not where you stopped and we don't have to get into all that that's for another time in another text but here we understand that Paul says I'm not speaking by way of command but he says in verse 10 I give my opinion in this matter and why is he saying this Paul is speaking to them and he's writing for us the very word of God and he says that it measures their sincerity here because it says that the sincerity of your love the earnestness of others and the sincerity of your love that people will see how sincere your love for the Savior is based upon your giving and not just the giving financially so well if I give a lot that means I love a lot no that's not what he's saying he goes down to verse 10 he says that they were the first to desire to do it so that is to say this let's get our historical background when the need for the believers in Israel came to the surface and the Jewish or the Christian Jews I don't like to say Jewish

Christians because then we're putting Jews in the adjective position and that is defining the Christian and no race nor color nor nor existence nor no personal pronoun or anything like that should ever define Christianity so it is a Christian Jew that's what defines the Jew the Jew doesn't define the Christian so to make sure we have it in our proper order there so the Christian Jews when the Christian Jews began to be in want and it began to be expressed among all the churches the church at Corinth said hey we'll give we're in a prosperous city everybody was probably looking at it we would say that's a mega city mega church maybe and they said we'll give we'll give we'll give and Paul said over a year ago they said they would give but the problem is is though they said they had desired to do it though they had expressed a willingness to do it a year had passed and guess what they hadn't done it and what Paul is saying is we're going to measure your sincerity here because it does not matter what you say you want to do what really matters is what you do I have a quote that is written in my office on a sticky note and it's taped to the back of the wall Erwin Lutzer who's pastor emeritus of Moody church said Satan is not bothered by your good intentions it does not bother Satan about what you say you would like to do what bothers him is what you actually do right it is not the desiring of something that is the measure of our sincerity but it is the actual doing of it it is the rubber meeting the road so to say it is actually when we do what we said we were going to do and this is exactly what he says he says you desire to do it you've been saying you desire to do it and now he says in verse 11 but now finish doing it also so that just as there was a readiness to desire to do it there may be also a completion of it see friend listen to me what we actually do measures the sincerity of our faith James says it this way faith without works is dead you can say that you have faith and you can look at your brother who is unclothed and say go be warm and tell him in faith to be warm and he walks away and you walk away and he's just as cold as ever it's only when you give him the clothes to warm him will he be warm because faith without works is dead we're not saved by our works but friend I can promise you that our works will testify to the sincerity of our faith it always will it is a measure of our sincerity those who say they love the Savior and they love him with all of their heart with all their soul with all of their mind this is why I've said over and over again for years that if we can get the heart right we can get the wallet right because when the heart has its matter set upon the Savior and the heart looks at the model of the Savior and the heart looks at the commands of Scripture then all of a sudden the wallet begins to follow it is a measure of sincerity find me someone sincerely in love with the Savior and I'll find you someone you never have to preach a sermon about giving to it's just a reality and the greatest and that's not all counting numbers and it's

not doing the business and all those things and it's not about that and we'll see in just a minute I'll bring it to a conclusion for you you'll never find someone who sincerely loves the Savior that you have to beg to give to others rather you will find them begging for the opportunity to give to others now just in case you think this is all about dollar bills let's go to the fourth and final one right this is more than substance this is more than substance substance is defined as those physical things which you possess and you can give and it's more than dollar bills it's more than what is there it's more than substance because some of you say well I just can't give you know pastor I give my tithes or I give as the Lord leads and I'm not here to tell you how to give and you say pastor I'd love to give I just can't do it right now financially I'm in a position where I can't and you're saying well pastor does that mean I don't love my

Savior you know right now I'm walking through this very difficult season and and economically it's not good because you know price of everything is going up I mean you know they charge more for a case of water now than they've ever done you understand all you got to do is look around right and everything is going up everything's going up and he's just a pastor I don't I'd love to give I wish I could do this well friend listen to me it's more than substance look at what the word of God says in verse 11 when Paul says but now finish doing it also just as there was the readiness to desire it so there may also be the completion look at look at it of it by your ability he says by your ability Paul is not saying that you ought to give above and beyond your ability to give now he does say that the churches in Macedonia gave above their ability they long to give above their ability but that's not to command the scripture right he says by your ability that is he limits it to the scope of being able to do it and then he goes in verse 12 he says for if the readiness is present it is acceptable according to what a person has not according to what he does not have so there we find out we don't need to say well

I would give this if I had it the question is how much do we give that we do have right it is by our ability we are reminded that when Christ stood in the temple and he watched how the people gave into the treasury he didn't watch what the people gave into the treasury remember he had his disciples and he saw the widow who put in the two miles he said this woman surely she gave more than anyone else why because he was watching how she gave she gave out of her poverty they gave out of their riches sure there were people who dropped much more into the box there than she did but it is more than substance it is being able to give according to our ability and taking the grace-filled opportunity that is before us and saying Lord I may wish that I could give more but I am able to give this and it is that ability and it is that willingness to take what God has given you and as scripture says when he entrusts us with a little and we do much with it then he will entrust us with more and then he will entrust us with more and then he will entrust us with more by the way that principle will find itself again in the ninth chapter as we wrap this up because as we go according to our ability then our abilities begin to increase and our opportunities begin to increase and as our opportunities begin to increase then the praise for his glory begins to increase because friend listen to me one thing we will notice in this giving of the saints is that giving is a grace filled opportunity and is grace filled because it is an overflow of the grace that we find in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and ultimately is because it has nothing to do with us it gives all glory now you'll have to stay with me through this and I'm not going to give you all three of them today you'll have to stay with me in the end giving really is just one way that we proclaim the glorious wonder of our Lord and Savior to those who are watching it's just one way it's a grand testimony this is why Jesus says give to him who asks why because it gives you an opportunity to be a testimony to the Savior giving it's a grace filled opportunity the question is are we taking it or are we just saying that we will if it ever comes let's pray

[35 : 55] Lord we thank you for this day Lord so thankful for every opportunity you give us thankful for the opportunity we have to read your word with one another thankful for the opportunity we have to fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ or now we pray as we come to this time of decision Lord that you would speak to our hearts and minds Lord help us to know where we stand with you first and foremost may you deal with matters of the heart Lord after you've dealt with the heart will you continue to deal with the individual you deal with me will you deal with each and every one of us for your glory and your praise we ask it all in Jesus name Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen