

The Stewardship of Jesus Christ

By Rev. John Blount

Scripture Focus: 2 Corinthians 8:7-11

Key Verse:

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. 2 Corinthians 8:9

Theme:

Jesus Christ is the standard for all stewards to pattern their stewardship after.

Theology Driven Ministry Core Competency:

Biblical Thinking: Gain the knowledge and skill necessary to pursue a vital Christian life that glorifies God.

Desired Learner Response:

The goal of this lesson is that the student understand and apply the motive of love for the glory of God, demonstrated in the sacrificial giving of Jesus Christ, that so moved the churches of Macedonia and Corinth to act with great liberality in their giving. This understanding is a fulfillment of the TDM Core Competency of Biblical Thinking.

Stewardship Dictionary: The following four terms must be clearly defined in order to accurately communicate this TDM Stewardship series. Many definitions for these terms exist, but the definitions provided below are intended whenever the four words are used in this series. The pastor will also use the definitions for each word as he preaches. Take time to make your class very familiar with these terms and definitions.

Generosity: Eagerly giving myself to others for God's glory.

Stewardship: Utilizing all God has entrusted to me, in accord with God's Word, and for His glory.

Tithe: Returning 10% of my monetary increase to God, through my church, as an expression of worship.

Offering: The expression of a generous heart, beyond the tithe.

Outline:

- I. The believer's abundance (8:7)
- II. How did Jesus give? (8:8-9)
 - A. The degree
 - B. The motive
 - C. The accomplishment
- III. The fulfillment of generous desire (8:10-11)

Background:

Paul, the Apostle and founder of the church at Corinth, in his second canonical epistle to that church, is writing his children in the faith primarily to prepare them for his upcoming visit and to make arrangements for the collection of an offering they had committed to give a year prior to the timing of this letter. He is enthused about the willingness of the Corinthians to participate in meeting the needs of the saints at Jerusalem, so much so that he has shared about Corinth's willingness with the church in Macedonia. Corinth's commitment and promised generosity enthused Macedonia so much that they gave liberally and sacrificially, with glad heartedness, even beyond their material means and far beyond Paul's expectations, begging to be allowed to participate in blessing their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Now, in this letter to Corinth, Paul shares with his readers the testimony of Macedonia in order to encourage Corinth to complete what they had so gladly begun and committed to do previously. To prepare the church at Corinth for his arrival and the collection, Paul dispatches Titus to go ahead of him, carrying this letter, in order that

arrangements would be made in advance to ensure a joyous time of fellowship and giving when Paul arrived there.

In his instruction and exhortation to Corinth, Paul refers his readers to the Lord Jesus Christ, citing His assuming of mortal life and enduring of physical death as the chief example of giving that, in Paul's mind, established the standard and the basis for all Christian giving and generosity.

Lesson:

2 Corinthians 8:7-11 *But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. (8) I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. (9) 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. (10) 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. (11) But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.*

I. The Believer's Abundance (8:7)

Paul is writing to a church that has abundance. He says, "as you abound in everything." In Paul's mind, these people had much more than mere material abundance. Their prime assets were spiritual in nature and they had them in abundance. These spiritual riches were:

- **faith:** a conviction about the truth of God and His gospel that forms and motivates one's actions
- **utterance:** speaking / teaching / preaching the scriptures and the gospel
- **knowledge:** spiritual thinking and understanding, based in truth and founded on Christ
- **earnestness:** diligence to carry out and act in accordance with what one knows about God and the gospel
- **love** (agape): the condition of the heart that expresses itself in sacrificial giving for the benefit others

Corinth abounded in these spiritual assets. Beyond their material worth, they were a very rich church spiritually. God's grace was abounding in them. They were recipients of much from God...and they knew it.

Paul assumes this when he says... "see that you abound in *this gracious work* also." This church understood that their good works were derived solely from God...by His grace. They were not rich because of who they were, or where they were, or what they had accomplished. They acknowledged that their richness was the fruit of God, the product of God's Spirit in them. Paul intends to build on this foundation with "gold, silver, precious stones"... by encouraging them to abound in the grace of generosity also.

He builds his argument upon their foundational and fundamental knowledge of the grace of God in Christ: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." This church understood that they were saved by grace, through Christ, and that their salvation was not of their own doing, but was the work of their gracious, generous God. Paul appeals to grace in the matter of generosity because he knows that they know they were saved by grace.

Every believer in Jesus Christ has been graced by God and made rich in spiritual abundance. Indeed, every believer has received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, all believers, everywhere, have been made rich in spiritual assets by God's grace. We are rich in Jesus Christ!

II. How Did Jesus Give? (8:8-9)

From the perspective of gracious enrichment, Paul reminds his children in the Lord to be Christian, to be Christ-like, in the grace of giving. He uses the generosity of Christ (His stewardship) to guide his readers in how they are to give. Jesus is the pattern for how all believers are to give, and this is what we want to

communicate in this lesson to every Christian...that they be like Christ in every aspect of their life, including generosity.

In order to accomplish our goal we will undertake a thorough exposition of 2 Corinthians 8:9 and seek to answer the question...

How did Jesus give?

A. Paul begins to answer the question by addressing the degree of Christ's giving:

"That though He was rich":

No one has ever been rich like Jesus is rich. He is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead, co-equal with God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth, every knee will bow to Him, and everything now serves Him. Jesus owns everything.

Ask & Discuss

When we say that Jesus owns everything we lose sight of what that actually means. Name some specific things that Jesus owns:

- The expanse of space we call the universe, including the hundreds of billions of galaxies that contain hundreds of billions of stars in each, and the forces that keep them all in place and moving in their assigned paths.
- The air we breathe
- The water we drink
- The plants that make the air we breathe
- The atoms (and their particles of energy) that make up all matter
- All chemicals
- All government
- All knowledge and information
- All businesses
- All currency, precious metals, and every means of exchange
- All economies
- All languages
- Food, and the minerals, soils, seeds, and energy needed to produce it
- And this list is infinite...

Jesus is rich beyond our ability to comprehend.

Paul uses Christ's richness in order to describe the degree of His giving...

...though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor:

The language Paul uses here to describe Christ's poverty is not a mere reduction in relative net worth. No, it is the staggering fact that Christ became poor like a crouching, cringing beggar is poor (*ptochos: to crouch, beggarly, cringingly*). This is stunning. The instant Christ took on flesh, He became utterly impoverished. Though retaining His attributes as God, Christ limited Himself to the confines of a body, dwelling in space and time, and took on all of the attributes of manhood, except sinfulness. In a manner, the infinite One became finite, the Immortal became mortal, the Beloved became the despised, the Creator became creature, the Authority came under authority, the Exalted became the condemned. He who owns everything, owned nothing.

- Jesus was born to a peasant couple, in a cattle pen, in a tiny poor village
- Jesus was raised by a working man, in a working trade, producing goods by the sweat of His brow
- Jesus experienced the death of His earthly father (Joseph) and the ensuing responsibility of family support
- Jesus had one under garment and a cloak to wear

- Jesus had no home, no house, during His ministry years
- Jesus was abandoned by His siblings and mocked in His hometown during His ministry
- Jesus was subjected to temptation (hunger, pride, worldly prestige)
- Jesus was betrayed or abandoned by His closest friends
- Jesus was harassed for three years by people He created and had authority over
- Jesus was arrested, tried, insulted, lied about, slapped, whipped, beaten, pierced, spat upon, mocked, abused, and then nailed to a cross...where He was further attacked and mocked by His own creations
- Jesus was forsaken by God the Father, on the cross, as He became sin for us

In answering the question, “How did Jesus give?” Paul’s first answer is: When Jesus took on flesh He became infinitely poor...He gave not out of His wealth...He gave His wealth... by giving Himself.

Paul describes Christ’s giving in his letter to the Philippians...

Philippians 2:5-8 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Conclusion: The degree of Christ’s giving is His all; Jesus gave everything.

B. Paul’s second answer to the question, “How did Jesus give?” deals with Christ’s motive for giving.

Paul says ...*though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor:*

To understand Christ’s motive, we must answer the question “How, for my sake, did Jesus give?”

The Father of Glory, before the foundation of the world, determined that He would display His glory by being gracious to you. Not for your glory, and not because of your goodness, but for His glory and the display of His goodness, He has acted graciously toward you. Jesus acted for the sake of the glory of God, but in the process, He also acted for your sake.

Jesus acted for you because God the Father had given you to Jesus...

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 *So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, (22) whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, (23) and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

Ephesians 1:3-10 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (4) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love (5) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (7) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (8) which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight (9) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (10) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.*

For your sake, for your eternal good, and for the sake of all who believe, Jesus Christ gave Himself. You are the recipient of the giving of Jesus and are immeasurably benefited by it. Christ’s giving of Himself for your

sin bought your redemption. It was for your sake that He did this, but His motive was far greater than just rescuing you. Christ's motive was His love of God. It was God the Father's plan and will that God the Son do this...why?... *to the praise of His glorious grace* (Ephesians 1:6). It is the Father's will that all things in heaven and on earth be "summed up" (lit. gathered into one) in Christ, in the massive display of the power, authority, ability, justice, holiness, righteousness, goodness, forgiveness, and wisdom of God. Christ's giving was for your sake because it was for the glory of God.

Conclusion: The motive for Christ's giving was, for our sake, because of His love for the glory of God.

C. Paul's third answer to the question "How did Jesus give?" deals with what His giving accomplished:

Paul says... *"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.**"*

God has made His enemies rich. He has turned their hearts to Him, so that they no longer hate Him and rebel against Him; rather, they love Him, adore Him and worship Him; and they desire to live and give themselves for Him! O what a display of glory this is!

How have you become rich in Christ?

- You have been made holy and acceptable to God.
- You have a new heart on which is written the law of God and the love of God.
- You have an abundant life.
- You have fellowship with the family of God.
- You have spiritual gifts for employment in God's service.
- You have joy in the midst of sorrow, peace in the midst of storms, and hope in the midst of despair.
- You have a glorious inheritance in Heaven.
- You have a future that is eternal in the heavens with God.
- You have the presence of God the Holy Spirit dwelling in you.
- And above all this, you have actual and everlasting fellowship with God!

All believers in Christ are rich beyond measure, even though they may be poor by the world's standard. They are rich in promises, and those promises are secured by God Himself.

For what purposes have you been made rich in Christ?

2 Corinthians 9:8-15 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; (9) as it is written, "He scattered abroad, He gave to the poor, his righteousness endures forever." (10) Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; (11) you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. (12) *For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. (13) Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, (14) while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. (15) Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

The purpose of your richness in Christ is the further display of the glory of God and the worship of God. Arising from His abundance of grace and His indescribable, inexpressible, unspeakable gift, God's people praise Him for the joy of giving and for the supply of their want. This happens as we steward all the richness that God has given to us, with generosity and righteousness, by meeting the needs of others, who in turn give thanks to God. God's indescribable gift is Himself, given to us, for His glory and for our joy. This truly is an inexpressible gift!

What did Jesus accomplish in His giving?

God the Father, through God the Son, has enriched God's children immeasurably by meeting their spiritual need (righteousness) and supplying their physical need through the giving of others. Those givers, made glad in Christ's giving, reap the joy of stewarding the resources (spiritual and physical) God has entrusted to them for the furtherance of His Kingdom and the glory of His name. Their joy then overflows in the meeting of the needs of others, who then give glory to God for His creating such generous hearts in those who have given. They all, in experiencing the generosity of God in grace, are grown in grace so that they explode with liberality and prayer and thanksgiving and rejoicing over His grace in them all. Thus, God is all in all in the Church, and His people display Him gloriously to the world.

Conclusion: Christ's giving accomplishes perpetual glory to God in the world and gladness in His children.

TIME OUT...IT IS TIME TO SHOUT...GLORY TO GOD!!

III. The Fulfillment of Generous Desire (8:10-11)

Paul concludes this section of his argument by urging the church to fulfill their generous desires...

(10) 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. (11) But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

In Paul's mind he is not imposing a burden on the believers at Corinth. To the contrary, he is exhorting them to act in their own best interest because he believes that God uniquely graces those who are graciously generous. We just saw this in Paul's third answer (above), but we need to look at it from another angle to see why Paul says that generosity is good for his readers.

2 Corinthians 9:10-11 *Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; (11) you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.*

It must be understood that in the forefront of Paul's mind he is NOT thinking about material seed. Rather, he is thinking about spiritual seed, which is far more valuable. To Paul, the supplying of food is a given. He knows God is going to supply his (and Corinth's) physical needs. What he is really interested in is that his readers understand that God sows seeds of righteousness in the lives of His children in order to reap a harvest of righteousness in them (us). In that reaping, we are enriched; we are those that rejoice at the time of the ingathering of the crop of God's righteousness in our lives, the yield of the spiritual seed He gives us when we are generous sowers of spiritual seed in the lives of others. Therefore, Paul is urging his readers on to joy by exhorting them to complete what they had been so eager to do a year earlier. His reasoning is that if their eagerness was by grace, then their fulfilling of their desire by actual giving will be by further grace, and God will reap a harvest of glad liberality and thanksgiving in their lives...and they will reap a righteous harvest of joy...all for God's glory.

This is the mystery of grace giving, of generosity in the life of a Christian. What should produce in us (according to our natural / carnal self) angst, and fear, and stinginess is actually the means of bringing us (our spiritual / righteous / God-centered self) great joy. A believer's giving to God defies the logic of the carnal mind and radically transforms the heart, mind and life of the child of God. Thanks be unto God for His inexpressible, unexplainable gift!

Summary & Application:

In his referring the Corinthian believers to the generosity of Jesus Christ, Paul established the standard of giving they (and all Christians) are to pattern their giving after:

- Jesus gave not out of His wealth but His all...He gave Himself.
- Jesus' motive for giving was His love for the glory of God.

- Jesus' accomplishment in giving was the glad praise of the recipients, to God, for His grace in them.

This is the pattern for all Christian giving: we are to be living sacrifices, given as worship to God and for His glory, such that the recipients of our giving praise God for His grace in us that supplies their need. This is a far cry from merely giving some money to the church. This is biblical stewardship!

Matthew Henry was overwhelmed by the revelation of this standard of giving. He expressed his thoughts about Christ's example this way:

“From what riches, blessed Lord, to what poverty didst Thou descend for our sakes! And to what riches hast Thou advanced us to, through Thy poverty! After this, can we refuse Thee anything? No, Lord. Do with us, and what Thou givest us, whatever Thou pleasest. It is our happiness to be fully at Thy disposal.”

Jesus is the Steward of stewards. We must emulate Him in order to fulfill our purpose for being and to fully live a life of abundance. This is what you have been saved for! This is your joy! *Will you have this generous mind which was also in Christ Jesus?*