

Principles for Biblical Giving
1 Cor 16:1-5; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9
Reading: Colossians 4:7-18 (me?)

Bethany Baptist Church
19, January, 2017

...pray...

This morning, we are on a *short break* between *Deuteronomy* & my next major *preaching project*!

I want to take a *breath* for a few Sundays & *review* our ministry (this morning), consider a *reminder* of our mission (hear from *David Platt*; next Sunday), and a hear a report from our ministry-partner, the **SSBC** (*Tracy Guppy*; Mar 5).

Today I want to review the *significant focus* of our most recent *congregational meeting* (Jan 29) – the *presentation & approval* of our **2017 budget**. But first let me *rewind*.

I came to you *last August* to share that we were dealing w/ some *financial concerns*. Our *income* was *less* than our *spending*; i.e. *offerings* were *low*.

We talked about that *frankly* & I reminded you that the **NT** is clear about our *responsibilities* to support our church.

I am *thankful to report* that *giving* improved in the last **five** months of **2016**.

We still ended-up in the **red** for the year, but the *margin* was *far less* than indicated at *mid-year*.

Still, we prepared a **2017 budget** with the goal of *reducing spending* while still reflecting some *optimism*. As result, our **2017 plan** is about \$10K less than **2016**.

Giving has *significantly* improved for the first 7 *weeks* of the year (average weekly *giving* has *exceeded* the budget's weekly targets). **PTL!**

But...

Although *our church family's* total giving is up, we have *individuals* who are still *enjoying* the ministry **w/o** *giving* to the ministry. *...pause...*

So this morning I want to *review* an extended theme that starts in **1 Corinthians** & ends in **2 Cor** that yields *several principles for Christian giving*.

Turn w/ me first to 1 Cor 16:1-5.

By the middle of the **first century**, Christians in the *birthplace of the faith* were in trouble: the *saints in Jerusalem* were suffering from *persecution & famine*.

The *Apostle Paul* organized a *relief offering* among several *gentile churches* in the Roman Empire regions of *Galatia & Macedonia & Achaia*. One of those churches was the congregation in *Corinth*.

Paul had **2 goals**: *relieve suffering & thus strengthen ties between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians*.

But his project was *behind schedule*: the initial enthusiasm had *waned*.

At least a *year* had gone by, and it was time for Paul to *reboot* the *offering*!

So Paul reminds the Corinthians of **8 guidelines for giving your offering**.

Giving is *commanded*.

Giving is to be *consistent*.

Thus, giving is to be *planned*.

Giving is to be *proportional*.

Your giving is to be *generous*.

Sometimes giving is to be *sacrificial*!

Giving is to be *voluntary*.

Giving is an expression of your *worship*.

(Repeat the **8 key terms**...)

1. Giving is *commanded* (1 Cor 16:1):

- a. The NT commands us to *support* the ministries of our church.
 - i. *Exciting ministries* like supporting missionaries in India or Russia. Or sending a team to the *Haiti Home of Hope*.
 - ii. *Visible ministries* like caring for the *building* or paying the *preacher!*
 - iii. *Mundane ministries* like keeping the *heat on & water running!*

- b. Note carefully Paul's *directive tone* to the saints in Corinth regarding this *offering* being arranged for the needy in Jerusalem: *Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also* (v.1).
 - i. It's that word "*directed,*" along w/ the *clear instructive tone* of the Apostle's writing in the *first couple of verses*.
 - ii. Paul's *instructions* are intended for several churches (*Galatia*, as well as *Macedonia & Achaia* – were *Corinth* is located)...
 - iii. And look esp. at **v.2** – "*each one of you.*" The instructions for giving are to be *taken to heart* by every *member* of every *church*.

- c. Simply stated, you are under an *obligation* to provide **financial nurture** for your local church as the place where you receive *spiritual nurture*. In **Gal 6:6** you read: *The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.* In Paul's vocab & currency, "*good things*" would certainly include *financial support*.

So the *first principle* of NT giving is that it's **not** an *option*, it's an *expectation*, it's an *obligation*...it's a *command!* ☺

2. Giving is to be **consistent**. You don't give just when you *feel like it*...
 - a. Paul commanded believers to give *regularly* (2): *On the **first day of every week** let each one of you put aside and save...*
 - b. That's really *practical* isn't it? The church leadership's ability to *plan & manage the expenses* of our ministry is aided by your *dependable giving, month in & month out*.
 - c. Your ability to be a **consistent giver** is aided by the next principle, which is still found in **v.2**...

3. Giving is to be **planned**.
 - a. Maybe you've heard the saying: *Aim for **nothing** and you'll hit it every time...?* The point is, of course, that *planning* leads to *success*.
 - b. With that in mind, Paul has some advice to help you give your offering *consistently*:
 - i. *Plan* your giving ahead of time.
 - ii. Paul's "*first day of every week*" instruction in v.2 is an example of a *simple & consistent* giving plan.
 - iii. I don't think these verses *mandate* weekly giving; perhaps every **two** weeks or **monthly** works better for your family's finances...
 1. In our household, the *plan* is to give the *first Sunday* after every *payday*.
 - iv. Regardless of what pattern works best for you, this *detail* **does** point towards having a *plan* for a *consistent schedule* of giving.

So the **second & third principles of giving** work together: *give consistently* because you *give w/ a plan*.

4. Giving is to be *proportional*.

- a. Now Paul begins to explore the unavoidable question of “*how much...*”
- b. **Read v.2** – The answer begins to take shape as he specifies, “*as he may prosper*”
- c. That little word “*as*” is the *key* – it’s an expression of *proportion* or *ratio*. Your giving is to be *in proportion to (percentage of) your personal prosperity*.
- d. We *don’t* all have the same income; we *can’t* all give the same. But we are directed to give *in proportion (as we prosper)* to the *financial means* the Lord has given us.
- e. Okay, so *what’s the right percentage...?* Is it **10%**? That’s a *fine* place to start, but to be *truthful* that number is *not* in the **NT**. No specific number is! You are simply *commanded* to give *in proportion* to your *income*. For those w/ very *limited* incomes the *proportion* will likely be less than those w/ very *large (multiple)* incomes.
 - i. So there are issues of *common sense & Christian conscience/integrity* built into this principle of *proportional giving*.
 - ii. But again, both the *poor & the rich* are directed to *give... consistently & proportionately*.

5. Giving is to be *generous*.

- a. *Several months* after Paul articulates *these giving principles*, he writes the Corinthians *again*. There have been *big problems* in their congregation & this *offering* had been put on the *back burner*. Paul wants to *light a fire* under the Corinthian givers!
- b. Let's consider his words as we turn a *few pages* & **FF** a *few months* to **2 Cor 8 & 9...** We're going to see some more *giving* truths we need to *hold in tension*.
 - i. *First*, turn w/ me to **2 Cor 8:12-13. V.12** - You give from what you *have* (*as you have prospered*), not what you *don't*. So, **v.13** – You aren't asked to *impoverish* yourself by your gifts.
 - ii. Yet, now let's read **9:5**. Each one's offering is expected to be *bountiful* (2X), *bountiful giving* undiminished by *coveting*.
 - iii. Then, famously, these words in **v.6...** (**follow in your NT as I remind you of them**).
- c. Although *proportional giving* is **not** intended to cause you constant financial *hardship*, it is supposed to be *generous* – *bountiful*.
- d. So this principle of *generosity* presents another *wisdom & conscience* issue. Let me share a few *guidelines* to encourage your *generosity*.
 - i. *First: you can't out-give God* (2X). → *He who did not spare His own Son, will He not also w/ Him freely give us all things* (Rm8).
 - ii. *Second: when in doubt, err on the side of generosity!* ☺

So the norm is that our giving is *proportional*, but also *generous*.

6. *And sometimes, our giving is even to be **sacrificial!***

- a. Do you recall the incident captured in the Gospels (e.g. Lk 21), in which Jesus & His friends were in the *Treasury* and Jesus pointed out the *offering* of a *poor widow* – just **2 little coins**, but it was all she *had...*
 - i. Did Jesus *stop* her & say, “Now **dear**, you are too poor to put that in the plate. Just put your pennies back in your purse! Let the rich people do all the heavy lifting here!”
 - ii. He *let* her give & He **commended** her giving.
- b. The norm is that your giving be *within your means* (that relates to the ideas of *generous*, but *proportional*).
- c. But **sometimes**, like that *widow* in the *treasury*, we feel compelled to give *beyond* our normal means. To *stretch....*
- d. This level of *sacrificial financial giving* isn't *commanded*, but it is **commended**.
 - i. Paul pointed out that the saints in *Macedonia*, though *poor*, were eager to give *beyond all expectation*; **turn to 8:1-4.**
(hold)
 1. These verses start the section in **2 Cor** in which Paul returns to the *collection* of that *offering*, begun over a *year* earlier.
 2. He starts w/ a *motivating example* of *sacrificial giving* by the Corinthians' *neighbors to the north*. ...**read...**

- e. Paul's *vocabulary* is **rich** w/ the colors of this *sacrificial gift*; don't miss his *striking contrasts*:
- i. **V.1** - *grace of God*. ("Grace" - Gr. χάρις → *gift*; the *grace of God* is the example for *every good gift!*)
 - ii. **V.2** - *great ordeal of affliction vs. abundance of joy; deep poverty, vs. overflowed, wealth of liberality*
 - iii. **V.3** - *according to their ability vs. beyond their ability; of their own accord*
 - iv. **V.4** - *begging us, urging us, the favor of participation*
 - v. **V.5** – *not as we expected..* The implication is: *but far more!*

Your giving is to be always **proportional**, always **generous**, & sometimes **sacrificial**.

7. Giving is to be **voluntary**.

- a. In **8:7-8**. Here is another truth to be held in *tension*. Giving is *commanded* & yet it is *voluntary*.
- b. Paul *directs* God's people to give (1 Cor 15), but he won't *command* every detail of your offering!
- c. What do you *do* with that? I think *you know...* ☺ But to *encourage you*, let's skip down a few verses & read **9:6,7...**
 - i. *God loves a cheerful giver...and...*
 - ii. *Each one must do just as he has purposed in heart.*
- d. So here is another opportunity for *personal wisdom & conscience!* But you read **v.6**, right? Which do you want to be – *a sparing reaper* or a **bountiful reaper...? Sow accordingly...!**

8. *Final truth:* Your giving is an act of **worship**. In these *Corinthian* chapters Paul has tied *giving your offering* to *giving your worship*.
- a. *Giving* is a part of *formal worship* & an evidence of *heart worship*.
 - b. In **1 Cor 16:2** (where we began), the Apostle directed the *collection of offerings* to be an aspect of the church's "*formal worship*."
 - i. What I mean by "*formal worship*" is the times the church *gets together & worships* in the **NT's prescribed manner**.
 - ii. Here, each Christian's offering is to be collected on the *Lord's Day* – the *first day* of the week; the *day* the **NT** congregations met to *worship together*.
 - iii. So when you *meet* on Sunday, you collect an *offering*.
 - c. But *first*, I think, your *giving* is an act of "*heart-worship*" (*lifestyle worship, every-day worship, spirit & truth worship*).
 - i. Just listen as I read again Paul's description of the giving of the *poor saints in Macedonia*... **Read 2:8:3-5**
 - ii. *Biblical giving* is the *overflow* of a *worshiping heart*; one which *gives itself first to the Lord...by the will of God*.

Your giving is an act of worship – your gifts reflect your surrender to God!

I need to be *plain*: our weekly offerings are *way up*, but we still have individuals whose giving remains *way down*.

What does that *signify*? We have people struggling with a *lack of love*, a *lack of thankfulness*, a *lack of worship*, a *lack of trust*; perhaps who *struggle with greed* (NT = idolatry).

Some might *object*:

“*But I serve in the church – can’t that count instead?*” **No**... In 1 Corinthians Paul calls us to *use our spiritual gifts and* to cheerfully *give our offerings*. If you are Christian you are called to *give & serve*.

“*I truly am on a limited income; I can’t give 10% and still pay my bills.*” Again, you aren’t required to give **10%**, but you do need to give in *proportion* to what you receive, *as you are able*. Maybe it’s just **2%** every week, but I doubt it’s just **\$2 every week!** ...*pause*...

While *studying* these truths, I read something *intriguing*:

God made all of creation to give! The sun gives *light*, the earth yields its *fruit*, all of *created order* gives its *testimony* that there **is** a *Mighty & Wise Creator!*

God *gives*; we are made *in His image* and so we were made to *give*.

And then... in Adam & Eve we *fell* and sin made us **takers** instead of *givers*, **selfish** instead of *generous*, **stubborn** instead of *obedient*.

Then *true to form*, **God gave**. God gave us *His Son*. His *incredible* gift.

And Jesus *died*, bearing our sins, to give His people the *gift of forgiveness & eternal life*.

Through *trust in Christ*, you can be made *new*: *giving, generous & obedient*.

Be like those *Macedonians* (2 Cor 8): *give yourself to God’s work; give yourself to your church*...

But first of all...*give yourself to Christ. ...pray*...