

## 1 DNA 8 Be generous (Value)

We are good at being generous – we can see that with our reaction to Christmas Hampers, Shoe Box appeals, hospitality and other acts of kindness like visiting people when they are in need. So it is tempting to gloss over this. But Jesus speaks about generosity especially about money in quite significant ways. We want to be serious and be doers of the word not just listeners. This is not just about money it is also about gifts and money. It is important to exam ourselves and let the Holy Spirit minister to us. It s quite challenging – we don't want just a passive reaction to the word we need to be real. It is important that generosity I seen as an essential aspect of our Christianity.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-9** <sup>1</sup>And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup>In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup>they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the LORD's people. <sup>5</sup>And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the LORD, and then by the will of God also to us. <sup>6</sup>So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. <sup>7</sup>But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. <sup>8</sup>I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our LORD Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

The context of this letter from Paul is that he is writing this to the Greek church while he is in Macedonia. He is seeking to give direction in areas they could do better. In the one area of generosity he is holding up the Macedonian church as an example.

### 1.1 Joyful Generosity

In V1-V2 it is so arresting ! The church is going through a very tough time – affliction and severe poverty affect them. In this place of experiencing hard times and great suffering they have many reasons to moan. But their reaction defies logic – their reaction is an abundance of joy ! – not moaning at all just overflowing in joy. You would not think that misery, hardship and poverty were ever a recipe for anything but more suffering,. But joy is the magic ingredient that turns all these ingredients into generosity.

We may think that generosity come out of being rich – but the source was joy in Jesus. How do we know they were joyfully giving ? They were giving out of their own free will – it wasn't a burden a duty – nor was it a tick in the box – it was an active choice to give.

Biblical generosity comes from a desire to bless people. What is our generosity like? What does it look like ?Is it joyful ? It can just be a tick in the box exercise – a standing order we never think about and which is hard to engage with.

The attitude in which we give is important – what is in the heart ? Sometime we want to be told what to do – but true heartfelt joyful giving doesn't work like that. It looks different. Joyful generosity results in giving glory to God. Promise here that the person be generous will be blessed – you will see the increase in the harvest of your righteousness. A self propelling cycle of blessing. How are we doing in this ? Are we seeing the fruit of joy in our life? What's our heart behind that generosity is it joy ? or a tick list? It can be so counter intuitive to give when we have so little.

## 1.2 Generosity is faith filled

The Macedonian church are faithfully 'begging earnestly' for the favour of being able to give. They were desperate to join in. The scriptures are full of this prompting (Phi 4:19, Matt 54.11, Matt 6:31) | 2 Cor 5 we are to live by faith. Filled with faith God will provide. They gave beyond their means. They may have been ostracised through their faith, socially, they were having real trouble making ends meet. Remember the widows mite. – Jesus said she gave more.

We can squirm here – the giving described here is sacrificial but it will look different for everybody. Generosity effects our choices - of what we spend our time, money and other resources on. It forces us to look at ourselves - we are sometimes dumbing down the need for generosity – but this generosity of the Macedonians is raising the bar.

Is your giving beyond or below or within your means ? How do we grow in this? We can be empowered by the fact that they gave themselves first to the Lord. This makes sense as we commune with Him, in prayer and the word, when we meet Jesus – out of that comes a response to God's own generosity towards us. John Piper exhorts us into lavish giving and open homes which we do without fear. This is challenging stuff. Where do we believe that our needs will be met ? Self reliance or God reliance? Do we trust God or ourselves ?

## 1.3 Grace fuelled people

This can all sound heavy and condemning the word is hard because we can't do this in our own strength. It is the product of a regenerative heart – radical generosity is a grace gift. In verse 1 of our text – we want you to know about the grace of God. This unlocks the potential for joyful generosity purposed by God. A meditation and revelation that God's grace to us is so lavish that brings a grace fuelled response for us that impacts our bank balances and our diaries. When we meditate on Grace it shows in our life. By his poverty we grow rich. Freely chose sacrificial generosity so we can boast of our peace and security in our relationship with God. This is rocket fuel for radical generosity. It demands a response from us – diary time ? opening our homes to others ? more generous giving of money ?