

A GENEROUS CHRISTIAN

The term “liberal” is not a flattering word in the brotherhood (does not view the NT as a binding pattern).

But there is a sense in which it is good to be “liberal” – generosity & willingness to help those in need.

One thing Paul did on his 3rd preaching tour was take up a collection from the churches of Galatia, Macedonia & Achaia for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Paul’s letters to the Corinthians contain instructions concerning this collection.

1 Cor. 16:1-4 – Paul tells them how to collect the funds, & to have the collection ready when he came.

2 Cor. 9:1-5 – Paul expresses concern that the work they began was not yet finished.

He informs them that he used their willingness to participate as an example to the churches in Macedonia.

Now men from those churches will be traveling with Paul to Corinth, & if the church is not ready with its collection – they & Paul will be ashamed.

In making his appeal (2 Cor 8, 9), Paul says several things about generosity & liberality in giving that are true of all generous Christian.

I. A Generous Christian Gives Self To God

2 Cor 8:1-5 – Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy & their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, & beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift & the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but **they first gave themselves to the Lord**, & then to us by the will of God.

Their giving was more than Paul expected because it was more than he believed they were able to give.

It seems Paul even tried to talk them out of giving so much, but they insisted.

How were they willing to give out of their poverty? **They** *first gave themselves to the Lord.*

They denied themselves; they didn't consider their money as their own, but as God's endowment to them.

So when they learned that their giving was the will of God, they gave freely.

There isn't much a Christian can do until he gives himself to the Lord.

Every Christian who has a generous spirit has become that way by first *giving himself or herself to the Lord.*

II. A Generous Christian Has A Willing Mind

2 Cor 8:12 – For if there is first **a willing mind**, it is accepted according to what one has, & not according to what he does not have.

Here, Paul put their minds at ease that a certain amount of money was required from them; they are only required to do what they are able to do.

God is not glorified by a forced offering from a grudging giver; **He** blesses the cheerful giver (**9:6-7**).

A generous Christian is NOT one who gives because he thinks he has to in order to complete the Sunday service (as one of the five acts of worship), but because he is willing to.

However, willingness should result in action – **Jesus'** willingness to complete God's plan caused Him to leave heaven & make the ultimate sacrifice for us.

2 Cor 8:8-11 – ***I speak not by commandment***, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. 10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began & were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now ***you also must complete the doing of it***; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.

III. A Generous Christian Realizes He/She Is Not Alone

2 Cor 8:13-14 – For *I do not mean that others should be eased & you burdened*; 14 but by an equality, that now at this time *your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack* — that there may be equality.

It was not up to the church in Corinth to relieve all the poor saints in Jerusalem, other churches were involved too, & that would help to ease the burden of their duty.

A generous Christian also realizes that one day he may need a gift, so he wants to be as generous toward others as he would like for them to be with him.

IV. A Generous Christian Inspires Others To Give

2 Cor 9:2 – for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; & *your zeal has stirred up the majority*.

Paul used Corinth as an example to other churches – their zeal for the work stirred up other churches to be involved

A generous Christian is a double blessing, not only is he giving to help those in need, he is also inspiring others follow his example.

V. A Generous Christian Responds Liberally To Need

2 Cor 9:10-11 – Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, & bread for food, supply & multiply the seed you have sown & increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while *you are enriched in everything for all liberality*, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 *For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints*, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,

The generosity of the Corinthian church was not done to be seen & admired (**Matt 6:1**), but to help Christians in need.

Appeals to this church are made all the time for us to give to different causes & charities, but THIS is our example of the benevolent work of the church.

But as individual Christians, we too should be ready & responsive to the needs of others, & especially to household of faith (**Gal. 6:10**).

A generous Christian realizes that good intentions do not meet needs; good intentions must be put into action.

Jas 2:14-16 – What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked & destitute of daily food, 16 & one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed & filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

VI. A Generous Christian Brings Glory To God

2 Cor 9:12-15 – For *the administration of this service* not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also *is abounding through many thanksgivings to God*, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, *they glorify God* for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, & for your liberal sharing with them & all men, 14 & by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

One purpose of the church is to bring glory to God (**Eph 3:20-21**), & one way this is done is through benevolence.

The generosity of Christians & churches in our country has aided the cause of Christ in the Philippines (**John 13:35**).

CLOSING

2 Cor 9:15 – Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Cor 8:9 – For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

It was the giving of God’s only Son, which motivated the Corinthians to give in the manner they gave.

Jesus gave His life freely, willingly, generously & sacrificially to purchase our eternal redemption.

In view of this great gift, how willing & generous ought we to be in our giving to the cause of Christ & the work of His church?

Luke 12:48 – For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; & to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Heb 13:16 – But do not forget to do good & to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
