

Giving Proves the Genuineness of Your Love

Small Group Follow-up Study for 2 Corinthians 8:8-9

RE-READ

[8] I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. [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 by his poverty might become rich.

RECAP

Our giving is a window into our hearts. Take the story of Cain and Abel for instance. Bruce Waltke makes a very big deal about details we might be quick to overlook. He says that “whereas Abel’s gift is qualified by [the word] ‘firstborn,’ the parallel ‘firstfruits’ does not modify Cain’s.” Likewise, “Abel [is] also [said to have] offered the “fat” ... This tastiest and best burning part of the offering represented the best. ... Cain’s sacrifice, however, lacks a parallel to “fat.” ... Rabbinic exegesis picked up these clues ... and then exaggerated them, maintaining that Cain brought produce of the poorest quality.”

The fat of the firstborn versus some generic grain offering: that speaks to the heart, doesn’t it? And it explains why God regarded Abel and his offering and didn’t regard Cain and the offering that he brought. Bottom line: Cain’s heart wasn’t in it. His heart toward God wasn’t a heart of love; it was a heart of duty and obligation at best—which, of course, raises the question for us, “What is our heart like toward God?” Do we give of our best to the Master? How about to one another? Paul says quite explicitly in our text that giving is a test of the genuineness of our love. How do we fare on that test?

Consider the giving of the Macedonians: they gave according to their means and beyond their means.

Consider the giving of our Lord Jesus Christ: though he was rich yet for our sake he became poor.

RESPOND

1. What caught your attention from Sunday’s sermon? What are you still thinking about/mulling over? What questions did Sunday’s sermon raise that remain unanswered in your mind?
2. Why did Paul not command the Corinthians to give to the relief of the poor saints in Jerusalem? How should this inform our attempts to raise funds for worthwhile causes?
3. Based on their giving, how would you characterize the love of the Macedonians? How would you characterize the love of our Lord Jesus Christ?
4. In what ways did our Lord become poor for our sakes? How has our Lord’s poverty made us rich?
5. Looking back over the last year or so, would you say your financial situation has been more like that of the Macedonians or the Corinthians? Now think about your giving pattern. Does it more closely resemble the Macedonians’ or the Corinthians’? If your giving has been like that of the Macedonians, list the things that motivate your generosity. If your giving has been more like that of the Corinthians, list the things that tend to get in the way of more generous giving.
6. How does knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ free us up to give?
7. Given our discussion tonight, what sort of things should we be praying for our church?