

The Example of Faith Promise

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

After waiting a year for the Corinthian church to fulfill their promise regarding their missions offering to relieve the famine in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-3); Paul writes 2 Corinthians to challenge them.

In order to effectively get the message into their hearts, he begins with an example of what the Macedonian churches had done. Remember, the Macedonians had participated in the same offering because of the report they had received from Paul about the promise from the church at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 9:1-5)

Why did Paul choose the Macedonians as an example? Why not the Romans or the Galatians? The answer to this question is clear when we consider some things said about at least two of the Macedonian churches: Philippi and Thessalonica.

Paul said to the church at Philippi, “Not withstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction” (Phil. 4:14). The word “communicate” here does not mean verbal communication, but the sharing of material provision.

In Verses 15-16 he makes a shocking statement, “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.” By this time Paul had won countless people to Christ and started many churches, but only this church had a burden for him and his missionary ministry.

Some very large churches have mission programs dwarfed by the mission programs of some very small congregations. Please remember that the outstanding characteristic of the Philippian church was its

burden for missions, and that burden was demonstrated by their giving!

The second Macedonian church is the church of Thessalonica. Notice that in Phil. 4:15-16, we learned that the Philippians had supported Paul’s ministry in planting this church. What kind of church had it become?

The answer to this question is easily found in 1 Thess. 1:8, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not speak anything.”

Every place Paul went, he heard of their faith and saw evidence of the Gospel being preached because of them. Undoubtedly, they had sent forth Gospel preaching missionaries all over the area covered by Paul. Here was a church with a burden to obey the Great Commission.

Always remember that a great church is not measured by its seating capacity, but rather by its sending capacity!

It is now clear to us why Paul singled out the Macedonians as an example in giving to missions.

We Must Give to Missions By Following the Macedonian Example

1. Because of the Preciousness of Their Example (8:2)

Their example was precious because they refused to let two great problems keep them from their giving.

A. They gave during a trial of great affliction.

- These people knew what it meant to suffer for Christ. 1 Thess. 2:14-15; 3:3-4; and 2 Thess. 1:5-6

- Perhaps the greatest times of blessing are during the greatest times of suffering or trials.
- Affliction builds strong Christians. It drives us to our knees and causes us to trust God in a much more meaningful way.
- The affliction of the Thessalonians did not affect their giving, except to make it more liberal.
- It's a shame how trouble sometimes affects the average believer. Often, the first thing they stop doing during difficult times is giving to God. The opposite should be true.

B. They gave out of deep poverty.

- This is not just being poor... it is extreme poverty!
- We all agree that when economic hard times come, it is easy to be obsessed with our own situation and not think very much about others.
- The Macedonians had the opposite reaction and that is what made their example so precious. Even in deep poverty, their hearts were toward God and others.
- *"They were able to get out of the thimble of themselves and into the ocean of others."*
- What is normally the first thing we do when there isn't enough money..? We cut back or eliminate non-essentials!
- Here's the rub: The first thing we cut out of our budgets is whatever we assign the lowest priority. This is the thing that *we love the least!*

"Our giving record is a good indicator of our spiritual heart"

- According to the Bible, there are four levels of giving:
 1. Below Tithe: this is stealing from God. (Malachi 3:10)

2. Tithing: (10%) It is giving back to God what is His, and is done in simple obedience to God. Tithing is an eternal principle because it is a form of worship. This money is for the administration of the local church.
 3. Offerings: This is giving for special occasions & needs and is above or in addition to our tithe.
 4. Faith Promise Missions: This is a voluntary offering for missions. It is done out of faith.
- If we embrace the principle that everything we have belongs to God anyway, then Biblical giving will not be a challenge.

Read: I Chronicles 29:11-14

2. Because of the Pattern of Their Example (8:3)

The pattern was 2-fold

A. They gave according to their power. (Giving by Reason)

- You can't give something that you don't have (vs. 11-12); therefore this is giving by *reason*.
- Giving to your power is the giving of what you have, which might be sacrificial and may or may not require faith.
- You look in your wallet or bank account, see the money and give it.

B. They gave beyond their power. (Giving by Revelation)

- They gave what they had, but then had a holy dissatisfaction with that level.
- They asked God to enable them to do more than what they were able.

- God answered their prayer, and they were able to give “*beyond their power*”.
- How can that work for me?
 - God can increase your income.
 - God can decrease your expenses.
 - God can increase your faith.

Illustration: Widow Woman in 1 Kings 17:8-16

- It was within her power to give the first cake, but not within her power to do more.
- She put God first in her little, and God showed her a miracle. She gave *beyond her power* as God multiplied the meal and oil.
- Principle Applied: *Many times God will give through you what He will not give to you.* He simply wants us to be a trusted channel.
- He wants us to be faithful and obedient in the *first things* before He trusts us with greater things.
- When the Macedonians gave beyond their power, they gave by faith in God’s power. That is Faith-giving!

3. Because of the Purpose of Their Example (8:4)

A. The offering was for people who were different than themselves.

- The Macedonians were Gentile believers who the Jews called “dirty dogs”.
- The feeling was mutual as there was no love lost from the Gentiles toward the Jews. BUT... there was a powerful love for Christ at their core and they pleaded with Paul to let them help in the mission offering to the church in Jerusalem.

Principle: “*We don’t know or love the heathen in Africa, South America or the Philippines, but we give because we love the Lord.*”

B. The offering was totally for others.

- The offering was not for their local church
- No money received in this offering was used for any local church project. It all went to the need of missions.
- The purest possible exercise of the principle of Faith Promise giving is for evangelizing the world, not for local church stewardship programs.

4. Because of the Power of Their Example (8:5)

What was it that motivated these people to give as they did in spite of such adverse circumstances? What drove them? What caused the fire for missions to burn in their souls?

Whatever it was, every Bible-believer in every church should get hold of it. Every preacher, every church member, every missionary, every teenager, and yes even every child at an age of understanding.

A. They first gave themselves to the Lord.

- *The right kind of giving begins with the right kind of heart!*
- The first essential to Faith Promise giving is total dedication to Christ.
- God doesn’t need your money. He is not bankrupt!
- What God does need is Your Heart!
- Prov. 23:26 – “*Son give me thine heart*”

B. They gave themselves to the will of God.

- God doesn't need or want the offerings of an undedicated Christian. He can give some other person, who is truly surrendered and committed, the faith to give much more.
- Faith Promise missions giving is a spiritual offering. No one should make a promise until they are yielded to the Saviour.
- The person who grumbles and resents giving to God is a person who is not spiritual. Money is not the problem... it is a much more serious matter.

Conclusion: The first essential to faith promise giving is total dedication to Christ. God does not really need our money. He is not bankrupt. What God wants and needs is our hearts. God can give to the totally surrendered and dedicated Christian the faith to give far more than an uncommitted Christian would ever give, regardless of his financial status.