

Devotion 2 The Gift of Giving

Monday, Week 1

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches . . . Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:1, 4)

Pastor Cusson tells the story of when they had a garage sale. They had placed a great deal of themselves on that garage driveway. You see, they were moving, and they knew they had to travel as light as possible. One family came by with three young children. The older sister (about 8 years old) really liked an educational toy that their daughter had loved and for which they had paid a price they didn't think they could afford at the time. On seeing the price tag of \$5, the young couple—reminding Brad of when they were younger and could afford only so much—said, “No,” to their daughter. So Brad gave the toy away to the little girl. What a joy it was, Brad says, that he could give this little girl the toy which his daughter had so enjoyed and to assure her parents it was “okay.”

And so it went that day. Brad says that he probably gave more stuff away to kids than he sold. But Brad says, “It was a gift to *me*. Do you know what I mean? Towards the end of the day, a very dear neighbor came by—one who had done many things for us through the years for which I never felt I had found a proper way to show my appreciation—and asked how much I wanted for my tool box that had fit onto the back of my truck. I cannot tell you the great joy I experienced as I lifted that thing up and took it to his garage, telling him how I could finally express my thanks to him for his wonderful friendship and kindness to us through the years. Once again, it was a gift to *me*.” I can relate to Brad's feelings here. Can you?

In the Bible verses for today's devotion—and throughout this section of God's Word—Christian giving (joyful, willing, proportional, first-fruits, and sacrificial) is pictured as a wonderful gift which God gives to us, His people. The Macedonian Christians certainly experienced it that way, for we are told that “*entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*”

We shouldn't be surprised by their desire to be generous. Even those who are not Christians recognize the good feelings experienced by those who give to others. But to *plead* for the *privilege* to give—not waiting for the appeal to come in the mail or the plea to come from the pulpit—but instead to seek out opportunities to help build the kingdom, and then to deny your own wants to make it happen—that is the gift of Christian giving. “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” —and where your heart is, there goes your treasure. The Macedonians gave out of the gratitude of their hearts, where they stored all that Christ had given to them. They didn't give for earthly goodness, but for eternal consequences: so that others might have life in Jesus! This is now our privilege in our ministry expansion stewardship campaign—the privilege of giving God's gifts to this generation and to the generations who will follow!

Yet, our sinful nature would deny all these things and would keep us from the blessing of Christian giving. Thanks be to God! He sends us the Holy Spirit and through His Word works in us His will in this area of our lives—to work within us the gift of Christian giving.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for working in us the gift of Christian giving. Send us Your Holy Spirit in extra measure that we might live and grow in this gift. Amen!