

Stewardship Devotional 2025

First.Things.First.

Prioritizing God Above All Else



NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Context

Paul refers to a collection for the saints in Jerusalem in several of his letters: 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. This collection spanned years and was an important part of his ministry. Paul asked the churches in Achaia, Macedonia, and Galatia to give to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea) were generous but not wealthy; the church in Corinth was wealthy but hadn't fulfilled their promise to give. Paul felt a deep concern for those suffering in Jerusalem: they had to contend with periodic famine and persecution, and Paul's heart broke for their circumstances.

Charitable giving had deep roots in Jewish theology as well as in Jesus' teaching. Paul leaned into those twin principles to urge the churches to give. Paul wanted to encourage the believers in Jerusalem by meeting their need. Paul also believed that this collection would display unity in the gospel across the Christian community.

Paul mentions Titus in connection with the collection. Who was he? Titus was a faithful servant of the Lord, a Gentile believer, who was an early church leader and trusted companion of Paul. Titus and Paul traveled widely to start churches, encourage believers, and proclaim the gospel. Paul trusted Titus and fellow apostles to bring Paul's letters to the churches and to collect the funds to take to Jerusalem.



Opening Prayer

Gracious God, as I reflect on your word, open
my heart and mind to what you want me to
know and how to apply it to my life.

Amen.



Monday

II Corinthians 8:1-7

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you.

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you— so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

- How does God's grace prompt giving?
- What does it mean to give yourself first to the Lord?



Tuesday

II Corinthians 8:8-15

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have.

I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

- What does it mean to be eager to give?
- Do you consider how God uses you to create a fair balance between need and abundance?



Wednesday

II Corinthians 8:16-24

But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord.

With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.

We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you.

As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

- What does it mean to undertake this collection for the glory of the Lord?
- In this passage, Paul assures the audience that those handling the collection are honorable, trustworthy, and devoted to God. How is our giving a statement of faith in our church community and leaders and the direction we are headed as a congregation?



Thursday

II Corinthians 9:1-5

Now it is not necessary for me to write you about the ministry to the saints, for I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—in this undertaking.

So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

- How do you keep the giving of a promised gift joyful and voluntary, rather than feeling like a debt owed?



Friday

II Corinthians 9:6-7

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- In contrast to the Old Testament laws of tithing, Paul does not proscribe giving rules or give guidance on amounts. Rather, it is up to each person to determine whether and how much to give. How does that freedom change your gift?



Saturday

II Corinthians 9:10-15

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

As it is written, “He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

- This collection was intended for two purposes: to meet practical needs and to serve a spiritual purpose. When you're giving, do you consider the spiritual purpose of your gift? What does your gift reveal about your relationship with God?



Closing Prayer

Holy God, help us to put you first in every area
of our lives. May we worship you
wholeheartedly, and guide our actions and
decisions to reflect our joyful trust in you.

Amen.



Notes





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