

"Prove Your Love" - 2 Corinthians 8

Well good evening, shall we turn in our Bibles to (2 Corinthians 8). Father we thank you for this time that we can gather together. Lord that we can settle down and anticipate Lord, You speaking to us. Father we ask that You would open our hearts that we might receive, and that God, that You would grow us up in You. We thank You, Lord for all of the things that You have done. Lord, be with the kids and just minister to their hearts tonight, put a hedge around this building and around our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

There is a cute little story that I shared before but one that I think is kind of unique and to the point. It was about a farmer who was blessed one evening to have two calves born. And he was so excited that he called his pastor and said "Pastor, Pastor come on over I want you to dedicate these two calves." So the pastor came over and he said "Well John, which one is the Lord's?" He said, "Well I have not really made a decision yet, Reverend why don't you just bless both of them in Jesus' name?" And so being a good old country preacher he did a blessing on these two calves. About four or five months later the pastor received a phone call and the pastor said, "What can I do for you?" He said, "Well Pastor, I just want to let you know that your calf died." And sometimes we do the very same thing, but often times it is the Lord that suffers; because we were selfish.

Paul now gets into (chapters 8 and 9) and they are tied together, concerning the importance of 'giving'. And yes, we are going to talk about tithing tonight, but it is more than that. We are going to take a look at the whole heart of Paul's attitude towards 'a life of giving'. And the only way that I can overcome

'selfishness': is that I need to learn that God has given me a life that I need to live. And my life should be lived for others. And I believe that God will take care of all of my needs tonight. And through my life, God wants to change a world. And God is going to use this instrument in a way that will be pleasing to Him. As we read this morning, "**Being pleasing to the Lord in all that we do.**" (2 Corinthians 8:5) And God also is going to use not only my body, my mind, but my finances to do the work of the ministry.

And so Paul is having a problem here with the church because they made a commitment and they have not followed through. And so he compares them to the church of Macedonia that would Philippi and some of the other churches, and how they give out of their abundance even though that they were poor. The Corinthians had made promises and it had been a year since they had followed through. And so the first thing I come to realize is that when you have carnality, often times you have churches that do not give. So when people are being blessed 'spiritually', then God begins to open their heart their minds to everything that has to do with spirituality.

I read a report, actually I heard this report, I think Chuck said it, "That if every church would give then every church in the world would be paid off, and every hungry person would be fed." That is a pretty interesting statement. But God has to have a living person, a spiritual man to be able to do His work. So tonight we want to take a look at what Paul is now defining as carnality in these Corinthians lives. And he is seeking to bring them up to a commitment. Now often times we make a commitment and we do not follow through. I believe that to be successful you need to finish what you start. And I believe to be successful in Christianity you need to finish the very thing that you made a commitment to do. That no matter what happens to you, you are not going to walk away from the Lord, "**...where can we go? Thou hast the answers to eternal life?**" (John 6:68) And so if I desire to be successful (and probably

99% of the people are not willing to be faithful all the way through) but when you are faithful in every area of your life, then God begins to do some wonderful things in and through your life. And so the major problem Paul was having was this church. And so we want to pick up tonight in chapter 8 verse 1, the church of Jerusalem was suffering there had been a famine in the land. Paul was now collecting money to take back to the church in Jerusalem. He had of couple angles I believe that he was working on: One: was he believed that if the gentiles could give to the Jewish Christians, that God would bring the unity together. And secondly: that Paul was saying that the gentiles in some ways were indebted to the Jews, because it was through the Jewish nation that Christ came. And there we find that because they went astray God opened the doors to the church. So Paul is seeking to bring unity, and Paul is seeking to bring responsibility. And God wanted to work in Jerusalem to help the brothers, and God was teaching them how to look at the needs of other people. So if I don't see the needs of other people, then how can I say the love of God dwells in me? Because I am not willing to look, I need to learn to look. And so he says **"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; (And so the key is the church of Macedonia.) how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the richness of their liberality."** (2 Corinthians 8:1-2) And so underline **"great trial of affliction"**. They were in a desperate moment of affliction. And then we see the **"abundant joy of their deep poverty"**. And so they were in deep, deep poverty, in other words, they could not make it at all financially. And so this church, the church of Macedonia was going through a difficult time like all the other churches. And yet it is interesting that this church, the church of Philippi was named basically 'that church of joy'. Out of all the Bible books, the church of Philadelphia is that one church that brought Paul more joy than any other church. And they had least amount of problems within that church. And I do believe it was because they were givers; not only financially but in every aspect of their life, that they were

able to understand the faith and the trust in God. And so he declares here, **"How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."** (2 Corinthians 8:2) In other words, they were liberal with what they had, willing to give even to the point of hurt.

Now you remember David and the great story of the life of David, when he numbered the children of Israel; and God told him not to do it. And the reason why was he was to trust not in chariots, nor in horses, nor in the armies but he was to trust in the living God. But David violated the word of God. He numbered the children of Israel; and you remember that God came and began to bring a curse on the children of Israel and thousands were dying because of David's sin. And David took off because Nathan said **"Get down to the threshing field where you can buy a piece of property and buy it and make a sacrifice."** And so he came to this owner that had this piece of property. The death angel was on his way into Jerusalem, all the way. **"He said let me buy your piece of property."** And the man said **"Now David, you are the king of Israel I will give it to you."** And David said **"No I will not give unto the Lord except it cost me."** David would not take that which it does not cost. (2 Samuel 24) So the first thing I need to understand about giving in my marriage, giving in my single life, giving of my finances: Is that true giving will hurt. It will cost me something if I desire to save this marriage; it will cost me to die to myself. If I want to get the kids back, it is going to cost me to reevaluate my life. And so that deep poverty and David said, **"I will not give unto the Lord except it cost me."** And David once again made that area of his life so real.

Jesus, one day, you remember in the book of Matthew was sitting at the tax collector. And he told the boys, the disciples, to come over He wanted to show them something. He said I want you to look at that women, that widow and

there she had thrown into the offering a quarter of a cent, 2 mites, worth about 1/8th of a cent. And it wasn't how much she gave; it was how much it cost her. And Jesus wrote her name in the word of God, that she gave everything that she had (Luke 21:2-4). So God is not concerned about how much I give Him, He is concerned about the cost of what it does, and how much I honor Him within my life. And so great poverty, deep affliction, and once again Jesus watches not what they gave but He watched how they gave which is so important within their life. And he says here in verse 3, **"For to their power I bear record yea beyond their power they were willing of themselves."** (2 Corinthians 8:3) And so he is still speaking of the church of Macedonia; he says to their power, to the greatness of their church they gave. And I am a witness to tell you that they gave of themselves.

And I think that is the key. If I want to be a giver...now, I have been blessed with a great Mom. My Mom is unbelievable. She would always give things away. She would give everything away. I mean, she will feed you and take you out to dinner and give you everything in the house before she takes care of the boys. But my mom was a great giver; so I grew up understanding the importance of learning to give. And through the years I enjoyed giving more than anything else in my life. And so it is fun being able to help other churches, it is fun to be able to help other people. And so we had some extra computers so we called the pastors in the community and we invited them to come take them for free. Because we want to give to them we want to be a blessing. Well here he is saying, **"For to their power I bear record yea beyond their power they were willing of themselves."** (2 Corinthians 8:3) It was not forced upon them. They were not sad in their giving they were not bummed because they had to give to help another church. But they gave of themselves unto the Lord, so now anything else is secondary within their lives. **"Praying for us with much begging that we would receive the gift."** (2 Corinthians 8:4) Now Paul basically is saying that he did not want to receive anymore from

the church of Philadelphia or from Macedonian brothers. It would be like you receiving something from someone who is extremely poor. And you would say "No, no." And they would say "Please, please." And you realize that if you do not take it you are going to bum them out big time. And so you take it, well that's what he's saying here, **"Praying us with much begging that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."** (2 Corinthians 8:4) And the word 'fellowship': is *Koinonia in the Greek*, which is that brotherly love, the fellowship. Pray that the fellowship would happen.

So they instantly gave and they saw the church so much bigger. And they bonded because of their giving. And joy in sharing the finances and are sharing your life with them. So it is bigger than just giving, it is embracing the church in Jerusalem. It is seeking to help the brothers and sisters over in Jerusalem. In other words, when you get out of yourself, you are able to see a bigger world around your life. **"And this they did not as we hoped but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God."** (2 Corinthians 8:5) So they gave them self, and then they gave them self to the will of God. And then they gave them self to Paul and the boys. And that's the order that you want prioritize your desire within your heart.

If you do not keep this priority, then you will be bitter, and you will be resentful, and you will begin to cause major problems within your life. You will become someone who is constantly feeling ripped off. But when you give yourself to God; and God lays it upon your heart then you give it to God, you do not give it to man. And in my giving I need to learn to give it to God. In the 'consecration offering' I was to give the whole sacrifice unto the Lord. There I was to lay that animal upon the burnt offering, and walk away from it. Not walk back and take a leg, and not walk back and take a rib. In other words, I was consecrating my whole life unto the Lord, that consecration offering. **"And this they did, not**

as we hoped, but first gave their own self to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” (2 Corinthians 8:5) So they gave them self, and it is much easier to give your substance.

You remember in Lydia’s case, I love this story that Paul speaks about in Philippi; and there were not ten Jews in the community so they could not have a synagogue. But they met at the river according to the law, that if there were ten men you could have a synagogue, if there is any less, go down to the river and meet. So Paul now is teaching there at the river these women and a few men. And Lydia was a wealthy, wealthy woman she had two homes in Thyatira, another one there in Philippi, she was in the business of trade, she was a very wealthy women. She gave her heart to God; and the Bible says **“And God opened her heart.”** (Acts 16:11-15) And then down a few other chapters it begins to say **“And God opened her heart and then God opened her home.”** You see I’ll never open my home, never open my checkbook, and never open my life unless God has my heart. And so it is more than just giving; God desires that I would give myself to Him, that I would open my heart and then when my heart is opened, then once again God has an open door into my life. And so Lydia once again makes it easy. If I have a hard time giving up my substance, if I have a hard time letting go and getting rid of things, often times it is because I’m extremely selfish. But if God gave them to me, and my heart is right before God, and God is laying it on my heart to do certain things - I need to be obedient.

“Insomuch that we desire Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.” And so he is speaking again here to the church, **“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and in utterance...”** He is now speaking to the church of Corinth. **“And as much as we desired Titus** (Paul sent Titus over to the Corinthian church.) **he has begun with him, he is going to finish the grace of God. Therefore,**

(pointing back to the church of Macedonia) **you abounded in every thing, you had faith, you had utterance** (and I believe that is that gift of tongues) **you had the gift of knowledge, and in all diligence, and your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.**" (Now that's the key.) (2 Corinthians 8:6-7) Paul was saying "As a church you have the gift of the Holy Spirit, you can speak in tongues, you have the gift of knowledge, you have the gift of wisdom, you are able to administrate in just wonderful ways, and as far as loving me I have been loved by you." But someone like John said to the church in Revelation, **"I have one thing against you,** (to the church of Ephesus) **you have left your first love.**" (Revelation 2:4) And here Paul was saying "You guys in Corinth have done a wonderful thing, but there is one thing that you lack, you need to follow the church of Macedonia." You need to give yourself to God. You need to learn even in the pain and agony of your life that you need to be up front with your commitments before God.

And he says in verse 8, **"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."** (2 Corinthians 8:8) In other words 'forwardness' is basically a word that means: that they made the commitment. It was their idea to give to the church of Jerusalem. They came up with all the details but they were beginning to fall behind in all these things. And Paul says 'prove the sincerity of your love'. Now that one verse I would like to take out of the Bible if I could, because God is saying "That if you can talk it you need to live it." If you make a commitment you need to follow through with that commitment. If you say you are a Christian then you need to act like a Christian; in other words 'prove the sincerity of your heart'. The word 'sincerity' comes from a *Greek* word that means: without wax. It means that there is no mixture whatsoever, that there is absolutely 'sincerity' within your life. And Paul was now "laying-it-on" to this church, "Listen you have said it, you have been promising for a year, and I have been waiting now I want to see it." Do what you say you are going to do, **"Be doers of the word and**

not hearers only.” (James 1:22). It was their idea, it was their ability but they chose to get into the gifts rather than to have a bigger vision. And that is the danger of Calvary Chapels, where we all of a sudden see what God is doing among us, but we do not see what God is doing any place else. We need to see what God is doing here, but we need to have a heart towards the world. And when I begin to turn inwardly, things begin to fall apart in a very dangerous way. So the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love, Macedonia was willing to give. Corinth you are weak and feeble in this area, and God is going to work in your life, it is time to “put-up”.

“For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). So he is speaking of the incarnation, he is speaking once again of Him leaving the throne of God. And he is setting the example to these men and women there in Corinth, that if Jesus Christ would leave the throne, if He would give up the glory and leave His Father, for the children and for us, then we ought to be doing the very same thing. So the example is the church of Macedonia was giving things up. And Jesus Christ gave up the glory to come to minister to us, that He might make us rich before Him. **“And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.”** (2 Corinthians 8:10). And this is where they made a promise a year before; you made a promise and now you are unwilling to fulfill the commitment.

I think is best that you try not to make commitments unless you can keep them. I think one of the great tragedies of raising children is all the promises we make as parents, I did it, and you do it. And when things come up, it breaks their heart. I think we need to learn to say ‘Lord willing, this and that’, (like the book of James teaches us) because sometimes God turns and goes a different direction. But if I always promise and never deliver, if I am not consistent within

my life, if I do not do certain things, then often times it is because I am extremely selfish within my life. God has saved my life; God has filled me with His Holy Spirit so I need to be a great administrator. I need to learn how to do things the right way and I cannot blame Satan because I am disorganized. If I am going to make commitments I need to keep them. My yes needs to be yes, my nay needs to be nay (Matthew 5:37A). But I should not say one thing and do another thing and that is what he is saying here. Once again, he is saying a year ago you made this commitment you have done nothing so far but you have been talking about it. **"Now therefore perform the doing of it;** (Paul now begins to really put the vice upon their life.) **"Now therefore** (the therefore points back) **perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which as ye have."** (2 Corinthians 8:11). In other words, there was willingness; "You got excited, you told me that you made a commitment that we could count on you taking money back to the church there in Jerusalem. You said you wanted to help these brothers and sisters and they are looking for your help. I did not ask you to make that commitment but you made that commitment now there needs to be a performance to finish that commitment."

The church in Macedonia they did not need to be exhorted, and when they could not give, they did give because they understood that if they did give, God would give back to them a hundred times. And so you see the church of Corinth is carnal because they would not give, the church of Philadelphia was blessed because they did give. And so I need to understand the importance. **"Now, therefore, perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will so there may be a performance also out of that which as ye have."** (2 Corinthians 8:11) So, do it, do not talk about it. And be doers of the word, and happy are you if you do them. **"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according that he has not."** (2 Corinthians 8:12). So God is looking for a willing mind; now if you don't

want to give, don't give, if you want to give then give. God would rather have you not give then to gripe about giving. So if you are going to give, anyplace you ever go it needs to be with what, a cheerful heart. You need to be hilarious about your giving, laugh about it. But if you are walking around the house, "I cannot believe this, I cannot believe this, I have to give." And once again, that is not what He wants. God desires that you would understand that this area of giving is between you and God. It is the willingness of the mind, the willingness of the heart, and understanding that God has done something in your life and you believe in the work of God. So people who give they believe in what God is doing in and through their life in a very powerful way. But it's my choice, and if I do it, then I want what I do, to count. And if I gripe, and if I complain, and if I murmur, then there is my reward.

So I want to give an acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord. So in my marriage I want God to honor my marriage. I want my marriage to be pleasing before God, to have the 'Fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22-23), that we would come to trust God and worship God together. With my children I desire the very same thing. With my finances I desire to be a good steward, not to be irresponsible but to be extremely responsible in the managing of the money that God gives to me, because one day I am going to give an account for it. So the first thing I need to understand is before the law was ever written, Abraham gave. And before the law was even written, Jacob gave. So it has nothing to do with the law, it has everything to do with the goodness and the grace of God in and throughout your life. For there must be a willing mind, **"It is accepted according to that a man has and not according to that he has not."** (2 Corinthians 8:12) And so, **"For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye be burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, and their abundance may also be supplied for your want, that there may be a balance."** (2 Corinthians 8:13-14). Now all he's saying is very simple: Right now the church of Jerusalem is suffering and you

guys are blessed; you are speaking in tongues, you are prophesying, God is moving among you, you are having a great revival in your city, things are moving this church over here is dying. So if we are really the body of Christ then why don't you help them out? Because there could come a time in your life that they are being blessed and you are strapped financially, and then they will help you. So God is looking for the balance; sometimes he has brought a blessing into our life and that blessing is to help other people. Sometimes God has blessed other ministries and their help is to help us. And so though we have different denominations we have 'one God' and 'one Lord' and they are the family. And so we have helped other people out; we have been blessed, we have helped other people get buildings and so on. And it is an exciting thing to see how God can do that. And the reason why, is if we ever had trouble then once again because we are givers, then they would give back because that is just the way works. So I would rather be on the giving end then on the critical end. I would rather be someone who gets hurt because of our giving, then to be cynical within my life. I would rather have God make a decision and then for me to say "Well I do not really trust so-and-so." Because God is going to look upon our lives in just a very powerful way, and God is looking for the balance, and once again it is going to come back on you. So it's either your blessings and their hurt, or your hurt and their blessings. **"As it is written, He that has gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."** (2 Corinthian 8:15).

Now what was that about? Manna, you remember there in Exodus in chapter 16, that if you were going to gather the manna, you had to do it when? Early in the morning, and you could gather it six days a week but you could not gather it on the seventh day, because that was holy. And if you went out and tried to gather it and tried to hold on to it overnight, the Bible said "That it turned to worms and stunk." I kind of like that personally, because that means as you are walking by the tent, and it really smelled, you would know that they were what?

Greedy, and greedy people do stink. There is nothing worse than someone who is greedy, they always want. But God laid it, they He would provide equally to all people. It had to be humanly gathered, it was divinely supplied. And God knew what He was doing, He made them get up and go get it, if you didn't, you would not eat. And of course there was manna pancakes, manna biscuits, manna pudding, manna everything, and sandwiches, and they got tired of the manna. And so they desired meat, and God gave them the meat to the leanness of their own soul. And the story very simply is: That if God says manna, you are never going to be satisfied with anything except manna; you might think you will but you will not. So it is finding the will of God, and doing the will of God within your life. But He brings this in as it is written in Exodus, **"...He that has gathered much has nothing over; and he that gather little had no lack."** In other words, it supplied their needs for that day. If they were a large family, it took care of them, if they were a small family, and it took care of them. If they were deceitful, then it would turn to worms and it would begin to stink; and so once again God was trying to teach them a balance.

"But thanks be to God, which hath put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you." (2 Corinthians 8:16-17). Titus was kind of bold he said "I am going to go and talk to these guys, I am going to tell them what it is like." And Paul is saying "Good Titus go for it." But Titus had a desire to exhort them because Titus wanted the very best within their life; and so the burden.

And then in verse 18, **"He has sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; (we have no idea who that is) and not that only, but who also has chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory the same Lord, and the declaration of your ready mind:"** (2 Corinthians 8:18-

19). Now in verse 19, **“And not that only but who also was chosen...”** Paul said listen, “Among the churches choose men that can travel with me, men that you trust in a very powerful way that they will watch us, watch over the money and make sure that your money gets to where it is going. And so the churches picked out certain men, they were gifted in administration and gifted with the love of Jesus Christ. And they traveled with Paul and their responsibility was holding onto the money and making sure that it did not get spent for any other reason. So that is one of the key reasons why we have an accountant on staff, and we want that accountability. And that’s why we have three to four people counting the money; everything is double checked because there is a ‘stewardship’ to what is going on. That is why I do not know if you give or if you don’t give; and the reason why I chose to do this, so I would not look to you in one way or not look at you another way. In other words, the giving is before you and God. But when you give, and Paul was saying “We had this administration among us.” So when you touch God’s money, when you begin to fool around with the money that belongs to God you need to be extremely careful. **“And not that only, but who also have chosen the churches to travel with us of this grace,...** (The grace would be: the giving or the money. This grace that we received, the money that is going to Jerusalem, these men are going to travel with us.) **...which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord,...”** (So the administration of the glory of God) So there is a great verse for those of you who have the ‘gift of administration’. Sometimes administrators can be really pained, and they don’t have a lot of love it seems like. But here he is saying ‘that administration by the glory of God’, in other words, God has appointed you for one responsibility, to make things work great and desperately we need that here. We desire not to waste money or to do things twice, we desire to administrate everything we do for the glory of God. So we want the bathrooms clean, we want the church clean, we want toilet paper for the toilets there for second and third service. And we want everything for second service to be like first service, and everything to be at third service to

be like first service. In other words, we want to give the very best until the very end. So the standard is not my standard it is God's standard. And we want the kids to have the very best and we want you to have the very best worship. And so by doing this it pleases God, to administrate.

"Avoiding this, that no man shall blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:" (2 Corinthians 8:20) And we find that Billy Graham has been faithful; and he has always given the money to others, that he would (once again) 'that he would not be accused of anything'. And that is why if you come to me and say "Here is my tithe." I would just say "Hey, in the wooden box." I do not want to take your tithe. Because I do not want you going home thinking "Well I wonder if he put it in his pocket?" And I do not want the responsibility, nor the temptation, so there is that little wooden box right there. It is not that I am being rude, but I do not want any of my pastors to touch the money. And so none of my pastors have a key or none of my pastors touch the money; it's done by certain men in the fellowship. So we can give ourselves to the teaching of the word and to the spiritual things of life.

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." (2 Corinthians 8:21) And I like that; we do this for God but guess what? We also do it for you. And we want you to look around and see that we have taken care of what you have given, so your tithes and your offerings have built this church. And it's your giving that has maintained this church; and that is important to understand, that we do this in the sight of God and in the sight of man. And this is where people say "I do it to God." No, this is one area that certain men need to be aware of.

"And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have often times proved diligent in many things..." (2 Corinthians 8:22). So there were a group of men who had the responsibility and who had the calling of God, that

they were diligent they had done this before. And that is so cool. Like doing Harvest, we do it every single year and we have gotten pretty good at it. But I remember when we first started it, it was a joke. But through the years we have perfected the work that God has given us to do. I remember when I first started teaching, I taught on dragons and there are dragons in the Bible and I could not believe it. I was so excited, I was six months old and I was teaching the Bible. And after the service this little old lady came up to me and said "Pastor Steve that is not dragons, that is Dagon." I said "Oh!" And through the years I have gotten a little bit better...I think. You know...the day that you arrive, you're out. The day that you cannot improve, you're gone. The day that Kevin and I just hop-up on the stage and 'just do it', we're are out of here.

So God is looking for a labor of love, for a readiness of mind, and for a willingness of heart. That God desires I do this thing before men and before God. And people say to me constantly "Doesn't bother you that you are in a glass bowl?" Not at all, I really do not care; in fact I like it personally. Because what it does is it holds me accountable: I am in Starbuck and listening to music, bopping to some jazz and all of a sudden someone taps me and says, "Well Pastor Steve I did not know you drink coffee?" Well once in awhile I do, but here I am. But it is amazing, how all of a sudden...I was in the airport the other day and this gal looked at me, and I kind of looked at her and then she said, "Oh Pastor Steve..." And I thought... "Thank you Jesus I was not looking any other way at her." It just keeps you really, really honest...you know. Going down the street in South Bay checking things out you know, they know you, they know who I am. When I eat, someone hears my voice and they get up and they say, "Aren't you Steve Mays?" And I say, yes. "Well we listen to you all the time." I mean we talk real soft now when I take my wife out to dinner, because I have given myself away. It bothers a lot of people, but it doesn't bother me because my life is open and it needs to be open that way. **"And we have sent with them our brother, who has often time proven diligent..."** (2 Corinthians

8:22) And boy, guys and gals do not be afraid to be exhorted; God wants you to be good at what you do. The only way that you become successful, is that you learn to be humbled before the Lord. **"...but they were proven diligent, (they were faithful brethren in many things) but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you."** (2 Corinthians 8:22). And Paul is just saying "Hey man, we got a group of guys that are willing to go down and risk their lives to hold onto the money, to take it down to the church because of a commitment you made."

"Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner... (I like that, Paul is just saying "Back off on Titus.") **...he is my brother, he is my partner and my fellow helper concerning you: Or our brother being inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and of the glory of Christ."** (2 Corinthians 8:23). So what he is saying "Is listen, Titus is coming down to your church, don't mess with him. And the brothers are coming down to collect, don't mess with them, because you made a commitment, now you are going to finish it." So Paul is just saying "Bam!" So what is the story here? Well if you do not want to follow through, don't make a commitment; but if you make a commitment to 'your own hurt', you follow it through. **"Wherefore show you to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and our boasting on your behalf."** (2 Corinthians 8:24) And Paul just says listen, "I have been boasting for a year, I have been telling people how great you guys are: you are speaking in tongues, and you have the gift of this, and that gift, and the gift of knowledge and all the different gifts in your life. I have boasted how great you were but there is one area that 'you are weak'. It is in that inability to give financially to a church that is hurting. So you can take all your gifts and throw them away, because you do not love the way God wants you to love. How can you look at a church that is absolutely hurting and you are so blessed, and do not care." Paul said "I will not have that among us. We are blessed we will give; if they are blessed they will give. We have a group of men, we are going

down to see you, we are coming with Titus; and listen it is time for you to 'put up'. You said it, let us do it."

So don't get mad at Paul. Don't feel awkward tonight. I just think that if you promise your kids, you ought to do it. And if you promise your wife you are going to take her out to dinner you ought to do it. Or don't promise her and just surprise her. I quit promising my wife. Because people die on my days off, and it is a bummer...I wish you...if you could just die on other days. But it seems like I do most of my funerals on my day off. And so I finally came to Gail and said "Listen I am going to make a new plan here. I am just going to surprise you. I will call you and we will be ready in an hour, we're going to go out." And it has been wonderful for us, because I make these plans and all of a sudden there is all kinds of problems. And I cannot seem to get away from it. So I have learned how to do it in just a simpler way, I surprise her. I don't want to break her heart, I don't want to break your heart. And God is saying "If you committed, and you said you're going to do it, you better do it, to your own hurt."

Closing Prayer:

Well Father we thank You, for Your goodness and for Your grace, and for this whole chapter and the ability to give of that which You have given to us. And Lord it does make sense that when a church is so blessed in their giving that it is a spiritual church. And we find the church of Philadelphia was one of the great, great churches there in the Macedonia area, how they gave and how Paul had nothing bad to say about that church. And when we read the book of Philippi, of Philippians we just see over and over again how blessed they were. No strong exhortation to them. But when we come to a carnal church like the church of Corinth, that they held back and they allowed sin to be occupying their lives and there were all types of problems within them, it makes sense that they were not givers. Father you desire that we would be spiritually correct; and in our spiritual life we would learn to be obedient. For You said **"It is more blessed**

to give than it is to receive.” (Acts 20:35) So You gave Your very best; You left the throne, You came and gave to us, those are the marching orders of our church. So God, make us compassionate and make us sensitive. And Father thank You, for the men and the women that You have raised around us to be the administrators, to hold the things of God precious. And Father we will thank You, and we will praise You. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.