

Christian Giving

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- [0 : 0 0] Thanks, Alan. Good morning, everyone. Good to see you this morning. I want to share with you the lyrics of a song that I heard not long ago. It goes like this. Money, money, money, money, money, money.
- Money, money, money, money, money. Money, money, money, money, money. Money, money, money, money, money. Money, money, money, money, money.
- Money, money, money, money, money. Those are, seriously, the opening lines of the 1973 hit song aptly entitled The Love of Money, which is, in fact, a theme song to the popular American TV reality show, which one?
- You don't know? The Apprentice. You know, with Donald Trump, who used to be in TV, now he's moved on to comedy. See? But it's no surprise that that show, The Apprentice, is what the show is all about, money, and what people will do to make money, all the ridiculous things they'll be willing to do to make money.
- But, of course, we don't need to watch a TV show to see that. It's all around us, isn't it? We see every day the things that people will do to make money.
- [1 : 2 2] Money is what fuels our society. It's what gets people out of bed in the mornings. It's what people spend much of their time thinking about how to make more money. And it's what many of us spend a lot of time worrying about, not having enough money.
- And so it is part of just living in this world, and it's what fuels the society, and it's what people think about often during the week. And so you would hope coming to church on Sunday is a little bit of a break from having to think about money.
- We get to think about holier and more transcendent things. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you this morning. That's exactly what I plan to spend the next 30 minutes talking about. Money, money, money.
- And the reason is not because I want to, but it's because that's what Paul spends the next two chapters in 2 Corinthians writing about. And this, in fact, 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 is the longest single extended teaching about money in the whole Bible.
- Because now you see that Paul's reestablished his relationship with the Corinthians, where we've seen over the last seven chapters in this letter. He moves on to what he really wanted to ask them for in the first place, and that is their money.
- [2 : 3 6] And now you're going, oh, okay, now I see. Right, that's typical, isn't it? Paul's now showing his true colors. He's just another one of those money-grabbing preachers at the end of the day.
- And it might seem that way. If you consider how much of the space in this letter Paul talks about money, it might seem that actually that's all he's out to get, just the Corinthians money, like many of the other prosperity teachers and false teachers of that day were trying to do.
- And it might seem that way until you realize Paul isn't saying any of this for his own benefit. And for one, he's actually raising money for the poor churches in Jerusalem, who at the time were suffering persecution for their faith in Christ.

But more importantly, as you read these chapters, what you find out is the main reason Paul insists on the Corinthians to give money is for their own benefit.

Not for Paul's benefit, or not even primarily for the Jerusalem church's benefit, but for their own benefit. What we learn in these chapters is such an important truth, that Christian giving is actually something that the giver benefits from more than they know.

[3 : 47] And over the next two weeks, we're going to see why. Why the way we, each of us, use our money, far from being something we want to avoid talking about at church, is actually a central part of our spiritual growth as Christians.

Christians. And that's true no matter how much you have, whether you have a lot or whether you have a little. Jesus spoke about money quite a lot. And Paul spends a large amount of time speaking about money because it is in fact central to living as Christians.

And there are three main ideas about money that I want us to see this morning from this passage. Three reasons why Paul was so insistent that the Corinthians be giving of their money. So let's have a look at each of those in turn.

Firstly, the first reason, he wants them to see that their love is genuine. That's what he says. In other words, Christian giving is the true test of Christian living.

Christian giving is the true test of Christian living. So verse 8, have a look at that. He says, I'm not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

[4 : 57] Now, he's not commanding them because, not because they don't have to give, but because he wants them to give for the right reasons. He doesn't want them just to give out of compulsion, out of a religious duty, reluctantly.

It says elsewhere, God loves a cheerful giver. But that's why he's not commanding them. Not because it's not important. Because, you see, what he's saying in that verse there, verse 8, is that their willingness to give money is an indicator of the reality of their love for God and for their neighbor.

Which indicates how far they've come as Christians. Because that's really what Jesus said, the summary of everything that God expects and wants from the people that he made, the law, the summary of all that law, is love God and love your neighbor.

And Paul is saying, okay, well, let's see how much you love God. Put your money where your mouth is, essentially. And he uses another group of Christians, a group of more mature Christians, as an example for these Corinthians and an example for us as well.

And they were the Macedonians. Macedonian Christians were a group of Christians in a church that was more northwards of Corinth. And look at what he says about them.

[6 : 10] Have a look in your Bibles from verse 1 of 2 Corinthians 8. And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given to the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability, entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in the service to the Lord's people.

And they exceeded our expectations. Okay, so notice a few things about these Macedonians. The example of the Macedonians Paul uses, because it's a powerful example, not because of how much they gave.

Paul doesn't even mention an amount. The example of the Macedonians is powerful, because they gave even when they couldn't afford it. They gave even when they didn't have much themselves.

Which, financially speaking, doesn't make sense. It's not something your financial advisor would say is a prudent course of action. It's strange behavior to give away money when you don't actually have much yourself.

[7 : 21] But it gets even stranger, the behavior of these Macedonian Christians, because not only were they willing to give of their money, but look at verse 4, they pleaded for the privilege to give.

Literally, the word is begged. They begged the apostles for them to be able to give towards this collection for the Jerusalem churches. And do you see the irony there, by the way?

Okay, normally, we know, we live in South Africa. Normally, people beg to get money. The Macedonians were begging to give money. The question is why?

It's such strange behavior. It's so alien to the way we think about money. Why would they do that? Why would they be so keen to give their money away like that? Were they trying to prove a point?

Did they want to get in Paul's good books? Were they, you know, maybe after a major tax break? Is that why they were willing to give away so much money? Well, no. We're told what caused them to give away so much of their money.

[8 : 21] In verse 2, read it again. Again, this is the reason. Their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

That was the reason they gave. And that's a weird way of putting it, actually, if you think about it. Their joy and their poverty welled up into generosity. What does that mean?

How can poverty overflow into generosity? You'd expect riches to overflow into generosity, not poverty. That's a weird way of saying it.

But it's important to understand what he means when he says they're overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up into generosity. And the best way I can think of describing it, what Paul's getting at here, is by using the illustration of a beer.

I'm sorry. It's a dodgy illustration to use from a pulpit. But I think it's the best way of understanding what this means. Because a beer, if you've ever poured a beer or had a beer, if you've ever been a bartender, you've been taught how to pour a beer properly.

[9 : 23] The beer has, in the beer glass, it's got the head, right, the foamy bit at the top. And then it's got the liquid, the main bit. And different beers, depending on how they've been poured, have different size heads.

Some have a small head. Some have a big head. But the question is, what causes the beer to spill over and overflow out of the glass, like you see on those spur adverts, you know, when you've got the free beer with your Goody Burger.

And typically, they make it overflow a bit because it looks, I don't know, it looks better that way. But what causes the beer to overflow? It's not the amount of froth it has. It's actually how fizzy the beer is, how much carbon dioxide it has, because that's what's actually pushing the froth up and making it overflow.

Not the size of the head. So now I want you to imagine for a second that the head is the amount of wealth that a local church has, right? And different churches have different amounts of wealth, different amounts of financial resources they can use.

But that's not what causes it to overflow, to leave the glass. What causes it to overflow is the fizz. And the fizz, in this case, for the Macedonians, is their joy.

[10 : 36] They didn't have much foamy bits, but they had a lot of fizz. And that's what caused the foam to overflow out the top. Do you see what Paul's getting at here? Both their joy, even despite their poverty, even despite the little amount they had, overflowed because they were so joyful in the Lord.

Because of their extreme excitement in and love for God. They were willing to give despite not having much. Not because they were compelled to.

They had no need for fundraisers in the Macedonian churches. They didn't need cake sales. They gave because of their joy in God. To put it another way, their love for God in the vertical was such that it overflowed into them practically loving others on the horizontal.

And that's what love for God does. Our love for God in the vertical affects our relationships in the horizontal with other people. And it overflows.

Our joy for God overflows into those horizontal relationships. And here's why. Think about love itself. If you love someone, that love will be seen in you doing things for that person, I hope.

[11 : 56] So a husband who loves his wife will not just say that to her. He will show it by serving her and helping her and meeting her needs.

In fact, he delights in that. If he truly loves his wife. He wants to serve her. Because that is the natural outflow of genuine love.

Thing is, with God, God has no needs. God does not need anything from us. And so where will our love for God that overflows into a desire to serve him, where will that actually flow?

Well, it flows out into the service of God's people. Because he doesn't need anything from us. But they do. And so love for God in the vertical will always overflow into serving God's people in the horizontal.

Which means, and that's what Paul's getting at here. When he tells the Corinthians in verse 8 that you're giving tests the amount of your love for God and for others. And so one of the best ways to check how much you really love God is not, as charismatic churches will tell you, how warm and fuzzy you feel inside.

[13 : 10] No. One of the best ways to check how much you love God is by looking at your spending patterns. That's what Paul is saying. The Corinthians giving was a test of the sincerity of their love.

Both for them to test how much they loved God, as well as for others to see how much they loved God. And the same applies to us. To evaluate ourselves and our own love for God.

Any of us can say we love God. But how much of that supposed love is overflowing into serving his people? That's the first reason Paul is so insistent on the Corinthians to give money.

The second reason is because he's trying to give the Corinthians what they want anyway. In other words, giving is a way we grow in godliness. That's the second reason I want us to see this morning.

Giving is a way we grow in godliness. Now, if you're a Christian, I'm going to assume you want godliness. You desire godliness if you're a Christian. You desire to be more like Jesus.

[14 : 11] If you don't want to be more like Jesus, I don't think you're really a Christian. Because Jesus, we know, is the best human being that has ever lived. And could ever be.

He's the model human being. Of what God intends for us all to be. And he came to earth to die for your sins. Precisely so that you can be like him.

And have a place in God's family forever. If you put your trust in what he did for you on the cross. And that is the gospel. And it is the greatest news that we've ever heard. That the true human that we should have all been.

And no one before Jesus has been able to be. Has now come. And not only has he come to show us what God wants to make us into. He died to take us in so that we can actually be that.

So we can grow in Christlikeness. And we can be in God's family forever. And so if you believe that. Which is what defines you as a Christian. If you believe that gospel.

[15 : 09] Then becoming more like Christ should be right at the top of your priority list in life. It really should. In fact it should be right at the top. Not like number 10 or number 13.

After all of your other concerns in life. Becoming like Christ needs to be the top priority for Christians. That goes without saying. But what this passage teaches us.

Is that giving money to God's people. To God's church. To continue God's work on earth. As a outflow of love for God.

That is actually. A way to help you grow. In Christlikeness. Giving helps you to become more like Jesus. For the simple fact that Jesus himself is a giver.

And if you want to become more like Jesus. By definition. You must become a giver too. So look at verse 9. Paul expresses this. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 10] In fact that word grace in the original also means gift. It's the same word. You know the grace or the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though he was rich. Yet for your sake he became poor.

So that you through his poverty. Might become rich. So Jesus is the ultimate example of giving. Yeah. Even.

He's an even better example than the Macedonians. Because he gave up. All of his riches. And he was. Really really rich. And I'm not. You know.

Not Donald Trump rich. He was. Owned the universe rich. Right. And he gave up all his riches. The glory of heaven. And his status.

And his comforts. To become human. And to become literally poor. He was a poor man. Do you know that? Jesus was a poor man. He owned probably less than the average resident of Kailica.

[17 : 09] If you think about it. And he made a meager living as a carpenter. Probably just sustaining himself. And helping his family. And he died without an estate. With nothing but the clothes on his back.

Which he. The Romans. Took and gambled for. And so he. He lived a poor man. And he died a poor man. But he did that. He. He went to the cross.

He came. To earth. And. And was incarnate. As a human being. And went through all the suffering. And pain of being a human. In this broken world. And then went to the cross.

To die for your sins. So that you can rise from the dead. Like he did. And so. Become rich. Beyond your wildest dreams. I don't think. We realize. Just how rich.

We will be in the new creation. One day. As God's people. I mean. You think. Prince Harry. And Prince William. Are rich. Because they're the grandchildren.

[18 : 03] Of the Queen of England. We will inherit. The whole earth. Because we are the children. Of the King of the universe. Right. That is. Serious riches.

Right there. But we've got to wait. For that inheritance. It is coming though. The whole earth. In the new creation. After our resurrection. But even now.

While we await that inheritance. We are rich. Right now. Because of our relationship with God. That we have. Right now. And that is true riches. Which makes. The wealth. Even of the new creation.

Fade in comparison. You know. What. What Christians are excited about. Is not that. We will. We will manage. And own. And rule the earth. One day. But that. We will be with God.

In an. Untainted. Uninterrupted. Perfect relationship. And that is true riches. And we have that even now. If you have a relationship. With the King.

[18 : 58] Who owns everything. You don't need to own much. In this life. Right. And so don't feel bad. If you don't own much. In the society. This world will tell you. That your status. And your importance.

Depends on what you own. That is not true. It depends on your relationship. With God. God. And the status. He gives you. Because of his son.

And being in Christ. And being a citizen. Of heaven. And being in his kingdom. That is the only thing. That really matters. And if that is you. It doesn't matter. How much puny. Worldly wealth.

You have right now. Because you. Already know. The one who owns it all. But the point is. We can have. All of those riches. Both presently. In our relationship.

With God. And future. When we. Inherit the earth. And we can have that. Because of. Jesus's willingness. To give us what he had.

[19 : 52] If he wasn't willing to give. If he wasn't a giver. Then we would never have any of that. Because giving. Is part of who Jesus is. It's part of his DNA. As Jesus.

It's what makes him. Who he is. Is his willingness to give. Of what he had. God. And the simple fact. Therefore. Is.

If we are unwilling. To give of what we have. Then I don't think. We are that serious. About becoming like Jesus. And so that's the second reason. Paul insisted.

For the Corinthians. To give. Then the final reason. And this is a major one. For Paul. Is that he wanted. The other churches. To see that the Corinthians. Were part of. Them. In other words.

Giving is a way. That God unifies. His church. Giving is a way. That God. Unifies. His church. So have a look. At verse 24.

[20 : 48] Therefore. Show these men. The proof. Of your love. And. The reason. For our pride. In you. So that the churches. Can see it. The churches. Can see it.

That was the motivation. Paul wanted. Other churches. And I think. Especially the Jewish churches. In Israel. To see that the Corinthians. Were now part of them. Because.

Think of. Who Paul was. He was the apostle. To the Gentiles. And as you read. His letters. You realize. One of his main goals. In life. In his whole. Life. As apostle.

To the Gentiles. Was to show. That the Gentiles. Had come into God's covenant. People. That was a huge. Mind shift. For both the Jews. And the Gentiles. To understand. That.

Up until this point. God had made a. A covenant. With the Jews. Alone. They were his people. But now. Because they had actually. Turned their back on God. And also. Because it was God's plan.

[21 : 41] Right from the beginning. The Gentiles. All tribes. And tongues. And nations. Were being. Incorporated. Into Israel. God's true people. And the Gentiles. Were now becoming. Part of that. Too.

As Paul's writing. So that was his. One of his major goals. To help people see that. And so this situation. Is a big deal for him. Getting the Gentiles. To make a collection. For the Jewish Christians.

And that. That would. For him. Be the ultimate sign. That the church is now unified. It would be his crowning achievement. To see practically. The Gentiles and the Jews. Coming together. In mutual.

Kingdom work. And that's also why. He references. An example. From the Old Testament. In verse 15. I wonder if you picked up. That that verse. That he mentions. That he quotes.

Was from our Old Testament reading. From Exodus. Jesus. And he quotes that verse. To the Corinthians. To explain to them. What's actually going on. And how. How it is actually. Just the same. As what was going on.

[22 : 34] In the desert. In the wilderness. All those. Centuries before. And it's. So it's from Exodus. It's the story. Of how God provided. For the Israelites. In the desert. With manna from heaven.

And. And Paul quoting that. In the Corinthian situation. Is now saying. That God is still. In exactly the same way. Providing for the Israelites. But not through. Manna from heaven. He's doing it through. The Gentiles now.

But also. Look at how Paul uses. That quote. Because we learn something. Very important. Here. Another thing. About Christian giving. So. Look in your Bibles. From verse 13. Our desire.

Is not that others. Might be relieved. While you are hard pressed. But that. There might be equality. At the present time. Your plenty. Will supply what they need. So that in turn. Their plenty. Will supply what you need.

The goal is equality. As it is written. And this is the quote. From Exodus. The one who gathered much. Did not have too much. And the one who gathered little. Did not have too little. Okay. So what he's saying here.

[23 : 30] Is he doesn't want. The Corinthians. Just to swap places. With the poor Jewish churches. He doesn't want the Corinthians. Now to be in poverty. To get others out of poverty. What's the point of that? Rather.

What he's saying. Is he wants the Corinthians. To give of their surplus. What they have over and above. What they need. So that those now. In need. Will be able to do the same.

When they have surplus. Because that is how God. Intends for his church. To work. And he always has. Even in the Exodus. God's people. Who had little.

Never had too little. And God's people. Who had much. Never had too much. That is God's intent. For his people. That is the pattern. Of God's church. Throughout the ages.

And we see it in the early church. In Acts as well. If we turn to Acts. You look at. You don't have to turn there now. But at home. Have a look at Acts chapter 2. The early church. Not everyone had the same.

[24 : 22] Amount of wealth. It wasn't communism. Don't think that the church. Was communist. Was communist. And the Bible is promoting. A communist system. It's not.

There was still private ownership. In the early church. And yet. Despite that. Those who had little. Never had too little. And those who had much. Never had too much. And that's what God.

Always intends. For his church. That pattern that he set. In the exodus. In the wilderness. But you know what? That. Will never happen. If those who have much.

In the church. Keep their surplus. To themselves. Then God's intent. Will never. Be realized. God intends. The surplus. Of his people.

That he has given. To be used. For the needs. Of his people. And in the Corinthians. Case. God allowed. The. Jews.

[25 : 18] The. The. The. Jews who had become. Christians. In Jerusalem. He allowed them. To have less. And he allowed. The Corinthians. To have more. It was all his money. Anyway. And he decides. Who has less.

And who has more. And he allowed. The Corinthians. To have more. And the Jewish churches. To have less. In order. To give the Corinthians. An opportunity. To be generous. With their surplus. And show that they were.

Part of God's people. And involved in God's work. That's what's really going on here. That. That. And that's why Paul is so excited. God was actually. Unifying his church.

By deliberately giving. Some people. More than others. In his church. More than he allows. And he still works. In exactly the same way. Today. He gives some.

In his church. More. Than he allows others. To have. And that is his intent. But you see. God wants. All his people. To have enough. Right.

[26 : 15] From the exodus. If you're in God's. People. And he is your father. He promises. To provide. For his children. Children. Just like any father. That wants to provide.

For their children. All of their needs. He wants all of his people. To have enough. But he doesn't give us. All the same amount. Why? Well. So that through the surplus. Of some.

God will provide. For the needs of others. And in doing so. Unify his people. And at the same time. Provide for all their needs. That's God's plan. And especially. Provide for the needs.

Of those blessing you. With word ministry. And other forms of ministry. Who don't have surplus. Because of the work they do. They are supported. Only through the surplus. Of others. And so some Christians.

Have been given more. Because they are specifically. Called. To the ministry of giving. The ministry of stewardship. Is that you? Maybe. This morning. If you're a Christian.

[27 : 10] Are you called. To the ministry of giving. Well how do you tell? Well there's an easy way to tell. You look at your bank balance. And if you have more. Than you need.

Realize that's God's money. And he gave you the ability. To make it. And he gave you the opportunities. To make it. And he's giving you the privilege. To be able to steward it. For a while. And we'll see next week.

If you do a good job of that. He'll probably give you more. But don't ever think. That it's yours. Don't ever think. That that money in your bank account. Is yours. God is entrusting it to you.

He's entrusting that surplus. For his purposes. For his purposes. Because that is how. That surplus. Is how God. Now. Provides for the needs of the saints. And grows his church.

And provides his church. With what they need. And that is the big mind shift. That we all need. In our thinking about money. Because we live in a world. Where our financial surplus. Defines how important we are.

[28 : 08] And that's why we want to keep it to ourselves. Whatever that surplus is. We. Society. You don't realize it. But society. Especially in a capitalist world. Ranks people.

According to the surplus. They have financially. And it's a world. We live in. Where you're encouraged. In fact. You're expected. To use your financial surplus.

For your happiness. And for your future financial security. And maybe that of your immediate family. That is the norm. That is what is expected. For you to do with your finances.

And your surplus. But you know what that thinking actually is? It's idolatry. It's nothing less. Than idolatry. Idolatry. Means.

Looking to anything other than God. To give you or your family. The happiness or security. Or status. That you should be finding in God alone. And to use any surplus.

[29 : 04] That he has given you. Only for your security. And enjoyment. Is saying to him. Not only that you don't recognize. It's his money. Money. Also. It's saying that he's not good enough. To give you the security.

And joy. That your money can give you. And that's idolatry. And that idolatry. Is what stops people. From using God's money. For God's glory. And it stops the church. From growing.

And it stops the church. From being effective. And it insults God. And it's something we all need to repent of. No matter how little or much we have. Because we're all guilty of it. And that's what Paul wants the Corinthians to realize here.

But we don't have much more time. We're going to pick this up next week. And it's a bit more of an encouraging passage. Next week. But let's wrap this up for now. Let's apply what we've learned in this chapter.

Chapter 8. What does this all mean for how we use our money practically day to day? Well I would summarize the Bible's teaching on money like this. Number one. Christians.

[30 : 03] Whether rich or poor. Should give all that they readily. Easily. And comfortably can. And then they should prove their trust and joy in God.

By giving something more. Like the Macedonians did. Number two. Christians should give based on what they have. Not on what they don't have.

And that's what Paul says in verse 12. For if the willingness is there. The gift is acceptable according to what one has. Not according to what one does not have.

Those who have more should be giving more. And those who have less. Shouldn't feel obligated to give as much. They should still give something. But it doesn't have to be big.

You don't have to compare yourself to the giving of those who have more than you. God doesn't expect you to give as much as them. Because he hasn't given you that much to give. And notice Paul when he encourages the Corinthians to give.

[30 : 58] He doesn't talk about percentages. He doesn't say you must give X percent of your income. So you can tick the box and then not think about it again. He talks about giving according to what you have. That is why by the way.

And I'm going to say this categorically. The idea of a tithe. Is unhelpful to New Testament Christians. There's no such thing as a tithe anywhere in the New Testament.

That was an Old Testament idea. That we've adopted. Because we need a percentage for some reason. And we've adopted this idea of the 10% tithe from the Old Testament.

And even by the way. That's not correct. Because that. That 10% that God demanded of Israelites in the Old Testament. Was just one of three different offerings.

That they were expected to make towards God's work. Which if you add them all up. Add up to 23 and a third percent. By the way. So if you want to tithe. That's the percentage you should be aiming for.

[31 : 52] But that's not the case. In the New Testament. The idea is that everything you have in the New Testament. As Christians.

Is the Lord's anyway. He's given that to you. And whatever surplus the Lord gives you. Should be invested somehow in the kingdom. No matter what the percentage is. Maybe 10% is a good place to start.

As a crutch. But as you strengthen in the grace of giving. And the ability to give. And by the way. Another thing we learn in this passage. Is that the ability to give.

Is a gift from God. That's how the Macedonians are referred to. God's gift to them. Was the ability to give. Even when they didn't have a lot. And it's a wonderful blessing.

To be able to do that. And we should pray that God. Opens our hearts. And opens our wallets. To be willing to give more. So that we don't become idolaters. And worship our money rather than God.

[32 : 47] But. So what I'm saying is. 10% might be a good place to start. But. As you strengthen in. In the grace of giving. You should be looking to throw that crutch away. And then the sky is the limit. So those are two practical points.

Then the final two practical points. I just want to mention quickly. In passing. We didn't have time to get into this. We'll talk more about it. In our growth groups. This week. When we study this passage. More in depth. Please do. Make an effort to be at growth group.

And if you're not at a growth group. You can look in the notices. And we'd love to have you join one. But Paul's whole point. In verse 16 to 24. Is the third. Practical.

Takeaway. And that is that giving. Should be carefully managed. And that applies to us. Too. As well as the Corinthians. In how. We give. And in the methods.

That we use to give. We treat God's money. With care. And accountability. Especially. How that money is managed. In the local church. Is a very important thing. And Alan. Our treasurer. Is.

[33 : 45] Skilled at that. And he makes sure. That the money is. Accounted for. And it's transparent. And it's managed well. That's why he's given you. The financial statements. To take home. And look at. But then. The fourth.

Practical thing. And with this. I'm going to end. We learn. As well. That giving. Should be planned. Ahead of time. And commitments. To give. Should be kept. So look at verse 11.

Paul says. Now finish the work. So that your eager. Willingness to do it. May be matched. By your completion of it. According to. Your means. It's a very nice way. Of saying. Can you please do.

What you said you'd do. So. And the reason. Paul's saying this. Is because he knew. The human tendency. All of our tendency. Is to go back. On what we decide. To do in a moment.

Of conviction. Am I right? We feel bad. In a moment of conviction. You might be. You know. Feeling. Right now. As you've been listening. To this. Passage. You might feel. That you need.

[34 : 39] To up your giving. We'll wait a few days. You'll conveniently forget. And that's just our tendency. We make a commitment. We make a commitment.

To step up. And do what God's calling us to do. And then. The world gets in the way. And that kind of gets shelved. And we forget. We made that commitment. Well a great way. To make sure. That doesn't happen. Is to set up.

A direct debit. Of a regular amount. Each month. And then put. Any in the bag. That's extra. As and when. You know. The bag. That comes around us. And it shouldn't be. Your main place of giving.

That should be. Your act of worship. Giving over and above. Anyway. So those are the four. Practicals that we can get. From this passage. I'm going to stop there. As I say.

We're going to pick this up. Next week. And we're going to see more. About what God promises. And the comfort he gives. To those who. Who give. To his church. And we'll also.

[35 : 32] By the way. Next Sunday. Have our annual vestry meeting. Where Alan and myself. Will be talking about. Things that we need. Money for. So that is a perfect. Opportunity. For you to put into practice. What you've heard.

Today. So please be there. If you consider this church. Your home. But for now. I think we need to pray. That God helps us. Think more biblically. About the money we have. And how best to use it.

For his glory. Let's pray. Yes Lord. Father. You are our provider. Of all that we have. Help us to recognize. That nothing we own. Is our own.

But it is yours. Because we belong to you. Help us Lord. To have the attitude. Of the Macedonian churches. That our love for you. Would be seen. In practical ways. And practically.

In how we give of ourselves. And our resources. To your people. And to your church. For the building up. Of the work. Of the kingdom. On earth. And Lord.

[36 : 26] Would you help us. At St. Mark's. Not only to be generous. As individual Christians. Each and every one of us. No matter how much we have. But help us to be wise. Both in how we give.

And how we use the money. That you've given us. To use for your glory. So that this church. Would grow. So that we would reach. More and more people. In this community. With the saving. News of Jesus Christ.

That they would also. Enter your kingdom. Through. Our giving. Of your. Resources. To your work. Amen. Loosen. To your people.

I hope. I hope. I hope.