

**September 16, 2014**

## **A Guide to Giving**

2 Corinthians 8:12 (NASB), ***“For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.”***

Our mission team returned home last night from Romania around 10pm. Most of us were very tired by the time we got home in fact we were not very good company for the man who graciously came and picked us up from the airport in our church van. I tried very hard to stay awake but just could not and succumbed to the overwhelming temptation to nap on the way home.

The team did an outstanding job while in Romania and I was proud of every single one of them (Cheri Adams, Jessica Rains, Cheryl Ivy, Sharon Chapman, Misty Peterson, Sari Cobb, Morgan Cobb, Megan Cook, Bertha McMillan, Tammy Workman and Dean Trujillo) and their self sacrifice and hard work. They gave selflessly of themselves in so many ways before and during the trip. As I mentioned in a post the other day; serving the Lord is rarely convenient and it is also not an option for the Christ follower but it sure was fun with this group.

The same can be said about the issue of giving in today's church. Over the weekend as we were riding the long train from Brasov to Budapest we had ample amounts of time to talk. During this ride I had the pleasure of having a very fruitful conversation with a sister about this very issue. One thing stuck out to me as she shared some of her concerns with me. She and another sister shared of the necessity of giving as an act of *humility* and as a *discipline*. Both told of those they know and of themselves and the sacrifices that they make in order to be *able* to give to the Lord. Unfortunately in the church today very few people practice the spiritual discipline of giving as they should.

In today's verse the Apostle Paul discusses the issue of giving in the church and in this verse he gives us three very important points to consider about giving. The first is that we are to have a willing mind when it comes to giving. In verse 12 it says, ***“For if the readiness is present...”*** If you are truly a Christ follower then you are to be ready and in fact eager to give to the church. It doesn't matter what you give because God is not concerned with the amount what He is concerned with is the heart attitude that we have when we give.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul writes, ***“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*** In Mark 12:41-44 we see the account of the woman who came into the treasury of the temple and gave all that she had which was only ***“two small copper coins”*** into the treasury. This we learn only amounted to one cent! This was in comparison to the rich who came and gave much more than this poor woman and in the process made a big production of giving as well.

The second point that Paul makes in 2 Corinthians 8:12 is that we are to give according to our ability to give. Verse 12 says, ***“it is acceptable according to what a person has...”*** Whatever you have, whatever you earn that is what you are to give out of. In the

New Testament there are no set amounts or percentages that are given. What then is being implied is that if one has been blessed with much then they are to give much; if one has not been blessed with much then they are only to give a little but we are all to give. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, ***“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*** In other words whatever we have we are not to be stingy with the Lord, whether that is a little or a lot.

The final point that Paul makes about giving is that we are *not* to give of what we do not have. Verse 12 says, ***“not according to what he does not have.”*** We as Christians are not to go into debt or give to the point where we place ourselves in serious financial jeopardy. We are never asked by God to impoverish ourselves or to ignore our responsibilities. We are though to redirect our spending priorities if we find that we are not able to give because we have too many financial obligations elsewhere. I know far too many Christians (myself included) who have refused to give yet seem to find the money for a vacation or some sort of new toy.

We are to count giving as a great joy and privilege not a drudgery or as something that is to be avoided. When we were in Romania we had the great pleasure of serving alongside our brother Ninel Lazar. I have never met a more selfless person in my entire life. Ninel gives of himself and his resources and never seems to give his own needs much thought. He serves the Lord often to the point of exhaustion and always with a pleasantness and joy. Ninel is the model of Christian giving not only financially but also physically and spiritually.