



Pastor Rock Dillaman

The Right Side of Giving

Sermon Transcript from June 3, 2018

Well if you've been with us the last month or so then you know that this weekend is *Expanded Influence NexGen Pledge Weekend* at ACAC. After we spend time together in the word of God studying his life-changing truth, at the conclusion of this service we're going to begin to receive your financial faith commitments to the ministry vision that God has graciously entrusted to us. I say we're going to begin because if you're not ready to do that today you will have opportunity to do that throughout the remainder of the month of June and then we will be announcing the totals in July.

This is something we've never done before in my 34 years here. So before we get to the teaching of the word, to set the stage, let me remind you of several things.

A Sacred, Sanctifying and Subversive Event

What we're going to do here today is a sacred event. And I say that because anything that has its beginning in God's revelation and has its goal the glory of God being revealed in people's lives is sacred. What we're going to do here today has its beginning in God revealing his will to us and has as its goal lives changed for his glory.

In addition to being a sacred event what we're going to do here today will be something of a symbolic event and God places great emphasis upon symbolism. That's what baptism and communion are all about. As you stand today to make your commitment it will symbolize your love for God, your desire to see his kingdom come, and his will be done. It will symbolize our desire to align our hearts with God's heart. It will symbolize our willingness to walk in faith and believe God for things that we have not yet seen. It will symbolize our confidence that God rewards those who seek him and trust him.

In addition, today is going to be our sanctifying event. That's a word that we don't use every day, but Scripture uses it quite frequently. When God talks about something being sanctified He talks about people who are being set apart so that he can restore them and make them whole again. This will be a sanctifying event because it will set us apart from the value systems of the world. It will deepen our commitment to the God who is working our spiritual, recovery, and setting us free.

It's also going to be a spiritually subversive event. It's going to be an act of spiritual warfare. As men and women stand to indicate their commitments, they are also indicating their rejection of the prevailing idols and idolatry of American culture, and specifically selfishness and materialism. It will represent our conscious rejection of demonic fear that hinders God's people, and our commitment to increasing the momentum of God's kingdom in this broken world.

A Privilege and Investment

I also want to remind you that what we're going to do here today is a privilege. The act of responding to God in faith is an honor. It's an honor reserved for those who have already received Jesus by faith. It's an



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honor reserved for those who have been transformed by God's grace and who are privileged to play host to God's Holy Spirit every moment of their lives.

Finally, what we do here today will be the beginning of a very wise investment. I say that because the returns on your investment will not be determined by the American economy or the prevailing interest rates. The return on investment will be determined by God himself. Those returns will be immune to inflation, immune to recession. They will be eternal in duration, and they are not limited to finances. Because when you obey God in one area in your life the effects of that obedience bleed over into every other area of your life. Just as when you harbor sin in one area of your life it bleeds over into every other area of your life. So it's going to impact every aspect of your being.

Now commitments that honor God are the commitments that are revealed in His word and commitments that are kept by faith. Since we want our commitments to be God honoring I want us to consider the words of the apostle Paul to a church that was on the wrong side of commitment. They had made a commitment and they were not keeping that commitment. The church in ancient Corinth, in an effort to get them back on track, he told them the story of a church that was on the right side of the very same commitment, the church in Macedonia. They were on the right side of their commitment even though economically they lived on the wrong side of the tracks. Macedonia was a very poor area. As he shared their testimony Paul was subtly rebuking the Corinthians, but also giving them a gracious invitation to choose a better path.

I want you to listen to what he said about the people in Macedonia in chapter 8. I want you to take note of this, some of the sharp contrasts in his descriptions of them. I've italicized some of those words and I'm going to emphasize them with my voice just to reinforce the contrast, things that he coupled together that we normally wouldn't put together. Here's what he said when he shared the Macedonian testimony in **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**. Speaking to the Corinthians, who had reneged on their commitment he said "brothers and sisters we want you to know about the *grace* that God has given to the churches in Macedonia. They have *suffered* a great deal. But in their *suffering* their *joy* was made more than full."

You see God put suffering and joy in the same sentence. Even though they were very poor they gave very freely. God put poverty and generous giving in the same sentence. I tell you they gave as much as they could; in fact, they gave more than they could. And that's impossible unless God is in the mix. Completely on their own, nobody was jerking them around they begged us for the chance to share in the serving of the Lord's people in that way. They did more than we expected and then he got to the key. First, they gave themselves to the Lord. Then they gave themselves to us because that's what God wanted.

You see when you first give yourself to God all other giving flows naturally. Now after that inspiring testimony Paul shifted his focus to the Corinthian church, the wealthy people reneging on their



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commitment. Here's what he said to them in chapter 9. "Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart and not reluctantly and not under pressure or under compulsion because God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace overflow to you so that because you have enough of everything you will overflow in every good work."

A Wide Door of Opportunity

I want to talk to you today about the *Right Side of Giving*. I want to remind you that no matter what the topic on any given weekend, God can speak through his word to his people about 100 different topics. After speaking on this topic in the first service one of our couples said that today God revealed to us the source of the problem in our marriage and showed us what we need to fix. So if you feel like you don't need any teaching on giving well then you're probably smoking something, and then secondly look for something else that God will have for you. All right? The Right Side of Giving. Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, in these coming moments you can through the spirit, say 1000 different things to 1000 different people. It just reminds us of how intimate and awesome your spirit is. I pray that you would make the words of my lips acceptable in your sight and that our responses would be appropriate considering who it is that is speaking to us through his Word. I pray this in Jesus' name Amen. As we listen for God together. May the Lord be with you.

A wide door for effective service has been opened to me. That's how Paul characterized his situation the first time he wrote to the believers in the city of Corinth.

What Paul said about himself could be said about ACAC in this hour of our existence. God has literally set before us wide open doors of opportunity to influence our neighborhood, our city, our region and the world for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what happened in Corinth reminds us that in God's kingdom opportunities don't translate into actual ministry until they are joined to generosity. It may be generosity of time, of emotion, labor, spirit, focus, or finances, but generosity in some form or other is essential if you're going to translate opportunity into ministry.

That's true even when the one desiring to do the ministry is God himself. Think of it, when man fell and everything went south, and the world was fallen and cursed, and this mess had its beginning that was a wide open door of opportunity for God to minister to his broken creation. How did God minister to the broken creation? How did he turn that opportunity into ministry? By generosity. John 3:16 God so loved that he *gave* the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for us. So it wouldn't be a stretch to say God's ministry to us began in his generosity. He gave literally everything on our behalf.

Now the Christian community in Corinth had had a wide open door of opportunity set before them. Paul had asked them to be part of a much-needed ministry. You see their Jesus believing loving brothers and



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sisters in Jerusalem were suffering horrible and hideous persecution. Because of that, many of them were homeless. Most of them were hungry. All of them were impoverished and they were suffering deeply. And they didn't have charlatan American evangelists to teach them how they could get a guaranteed return. So they needed real assistance. They needed the assistance of God's people elsewhere. In response to that crisis Paul called believers everywhere he had planted churches to take up a special offering for relieving the Saints in Jerusalem. Paul said I will see to it that they receive every cent of that offering.

Well, in response to that appeal the Corinthians had responded and in fact they were affluent and they had promised a large and generous offering. Paul took their commitment and shared it with others as an encouragement and incentive for others to participate, but affluence can easily compromise generosity and commitment. I think it would be safe to say that more faith has been corrupted and short-circuited by affluence than by poverty. And so it was that the affluent Corinthians had not made good on their promises. They were on the wrong side of their commitment and they still had not responded. Even though Paul had made several appeals and even sent some people to usher in personally those appeals. They were on the wrong side of their commitment because their gifts had been compromised by the notorious Corinthian lifestyle - a headlong, full speed pursuit of materialism and pleasure and increasing comfort. Paul saw their failure as a serious contradiction to their identity in Christ and a serious contradiction to the love of God.

Giving Motives

Now Paul's words of correction made it clear that the problem with the Corinthians was not a lack of money. The problem was an improper and inappropriate motive for giving. They were attempting to give out of the wrong reason. Paul knew that the solution would not lie in him dumping a bunch of guilt onto them. Shame on you. You should've known better. You should be ashamed of yourselves. Paul did not do that and here's why.

Selfishness isn't defeated by guilt. It is defeated by heart changing truth and specifically the truth about Grace. See, I don't know whether you've ever noticed that selfishness is largely immune to guilt. You throw guilt at selfishness and it's like throwing Jell-O at Teflon. It just slides off. It doesn't stick. There's a good reason for that. Both selfishness and guilt come from the same source, the great counterfeiter, Satan.

You see, guilt is a demonic counterfeit of grace. It's a false motivator. It may motivate giving for a brief season, but it won't sustain giving over the long haul. It doesn't honor God. Satan isn't concerned about people who give out of guilt because he knows they're not going to do it very long and he knows their attitude and doing it will actually reinforce his lies about God. Because, if we give out of guilt, there is no joy in our giving. If there is no joy in your giving, there is no glory for God in your giving. Your giving



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doesn't honor your creator and your Savior. It actually casts him in a negative light and reinforces the lies that Satan peddles about him. So guilt is a demonic counterfeit of grace.

I grew up with preaching that really emphasized guilt. It didn't change anybody. It just left us with 4 flat tires, in the ditch, by the side of the road, feeling hopeless. Paul knew that testimonies, stories of what God has done in other people's lives, can often change what sermons cannot change. Sometimes we need to see truth fleshed out in another human being before we can embrace it and understand it in ourselves. When Paul wanted to encourage grace in the Corinthians he pointed them to the testimony of people who were walking in grace, the impoverished believers in Macedonia. When he did He talked about giving as a privilege, as the fruit of a passion. He talked about it in terms of purpose. He did not talk in terms of guilt. And he certainly didn't talk in terms of greed and the testimony of the Macedonians made it clear that giving that honors God flows out of the spirit, not emotional reactions to appeals or pressure.

I say that because Scripture clearly calls us to imitate God, to act like God, and to do things God's way. God didn't give because somebody showed him some heart rending pictures and appeal to his emotions. God certainly didn't give because somebody put the *squeeze* on him. God certainly didn't give because he was feeling guilty or feeling like he had an obligation. God gave freely out of his desire to bless, out of his grace. So the people who looked like him, the Macedonians, did the same thing. Paul didn't beg them to give. They begged Paul for the privilege of participating in the offering. Those are people after God's own heart.

Giving Rooted in Grace

One commonly overlooked reason why God wants giving to be rooted in grace rather than guilt or greed or any other inappropriate alternative is because the greatest commandment given to us is to love God with every fiber of our being. We are called to love God. Guilt, lies, formulas, and manipulation are totally inappropriate for a love relationship. If God tried to motivate us through guilt and formulas, or if he tried to manipulate us or if we act in manipulative fashion, or if we give only out of guilt or because somebody's given us some lame formula, then we are not acting in a loving fashion.

You see, love by its very definition, by its very definition has to be expressed willingly, not begrudgingly, not in lifeless fulfillment of some imagined obligation. Love doesn't ask what's the least I can do for my spouse. I mean, what is the bare-bones minimum I can do here? Love doesn't bless its spouse because it feels guilty. Love doesn't bless its spouse because somebody's putting the squeeze on it. Love doesn't ask what do I have to do? Love says what's the best I can do and can I do even more than that.

That's what God wants from us when it comes to giving. When the Corinthians found themselves on the wrong side of their commitment and the wrong side of giving Paul didn't grumble about their lack of giving. Paul grieved over their lack of spiritual maturity. He knew that not only with the people in



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Jerusalem going to miss out on their offering, but he knew that the Corinthians were going to miss out on Christian maturity and real freedom and grace. So he pointed them to people who demonstrated a better way, the Macedonians. They understood that grace motivated giving is both voluntary and cheerful. Those two things go hand-in-hand.

If you give or if I give simply because we feel pressured, then it's very likely we're not going to be very cheerful about the whole situation. That's why Paul reminded the Corinthians that giving can't be commanded. Nobody can command you to give. Anybody that tries to command you to give you should kick them to the curb immediately. Giving can't be commanded. It can only be commended, held up and celebrated as an example of love. Celebrated makes it seem more appealing. That's what Paul was doing when he told the Corinthians of the Macedonians. Look what these dudes are doing. Isn't that awesome? Don't you want some of that action? Don't you want to get in on that?

That's what we hope to do over the next three years. We're going to make channels by whereby you can quickly share with us your stories. We want stories of how your commitment was challenged and how God came through for you. We want to get those stories out in print. We want to get them out in the app. We want to get them out on our website so that giving would be commended and never, never commanded.

Just last weekend I believe it was after the service, one of our couples shared a story. They had sought the Lord and made their commitment so that they would be ready for this month. Right on the heels of their commitment, their dryer died. And they certainly hadn't planned that. We don't plan whenever our dryer is going to die. They didn't have a budget for the new dryer, but within a one or two day period a friend called who had come into a washer and dryer and now had more dryers than they needed and wanted to know did they know anybody that could use virtually a new dryer. They upgraded at no cost to themselves.

The challenge was so typical of Satan. The response and the provision was so typical of God. You see, those are the kinds of stories we want to share. Now they have more than a dryer. They have a testimony. You can't go to Sears and say I want the dryer testimony package. Only God can give you that package.

Jesus had earlier uncovered a principle of giving that often goes undetected. In John 12 verse 24, he said, unless the seed fall into the ground and dies, it abides alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.

Paul said essentially the same thing but in different words. He told the Corinthians grace motivated giving produces life in other people. When you are giving is motivated by God's grace it will produce a harvest that is consistent with God's grace. That harvest is always people coming to faith in Jesus and their lives being changed. Think of it. If you're giving changes just one person's life, and it will change far more than that, but if it changes just one person's life, how will that play out over the future.



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Real Life Examples

I've shared with you that my dad was raised totally secular. No knowledge of God. He never read one word of Scripture. He knew nothing about God. After surviving D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge and all the rest he came home and had his first encounter with the word of God. This happened because somebody in the Gideon's ministry had invested in placing a Bible in the nightstand of the Veteran's Hospital in Butler, Pennsylvania in the room my dad occupied. God healed him of Post Combat Stress Disorder. God saved him. Dad went on to lead 3,000 people to faith in Jesus. His children all knew the Lord. His grandchildren all know the Lord. His great-grandchildren all know the Lord. You tell me, you change one life, and how does that play out? How can that play out over time? Those are returns that you'll never get from Wall Street.

We are part of the Mission Alliance known as the Christian Missionary Alliance. Early Alliance people lived on the right side of giving and the right side of commitment. They translated the open doors of opportunity into ministry, by grace.

I think of one example. There were number of young men in the early Alliance that heard about the fact that there was no witness of Christ's gospel in the West African nation of the Congo. They determined they were going to go and share Jesus. They did so at a time when the treatment of tropical diseases was virtually nonexistent. If you contracted a tropical disease you were as good as dead. You couldn't come back to the states and have them treated because they didn't know anything about tropical diseases. They didn't know what they were treating. When these young men went, there were 7 of them in all. They knew they were almost guaranteed that they were going to die. Of the 7, 6 died in Africa of tropical diseases. One returned home for treatment. Because they generously planted their lives in the ground of the Congo, today there are believers in Alliance churches. In the Congo alone, they number in the hundreds of thousands. Hundreds of thousands of people will worship in the Congo region today because of those young men who generously gave their lives. I think they already know that.

Meanwhile, back in the States in the early Alliance there were numerous business owners that did reverse giving. 90% of their business profits went to the work of the Lord and they lived on 10%. And guess what, all of their businesses thrived. They adopted a motto, *All for Jesus*. They made it more than a motto. They made it a lifestyle. That's why today even though Alliance people in the US number only about 600,000, around the world, we number over 7,000,000. In most places, in many places, we are the largest body of evangelical believers in those nations. Vietnam, Indonesia, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, on and on. It's because people, not under compulsion, not under pressure, not because somebody worked them up into a frenzy, just because they understood grace. They gave and God translated their generosity into ministry.



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We've got a chance to continue that legacy.

Conclusion

Today, as you stand to submit your pledge, don't give out of guilt. We're not gonna pressure you to give. We're hoping you're just going to be expressing your love for God and giving evidence of his supernatural work of grace in your life. We're hoping that you'll be taking another step of aligning your heart with his heart.

The reason God loves a cheerful giver is because he is one. One of the most profound statements of Scripture is that it *pleased God* to offer Jesus as the sacrifice for you and me. It *pleased* him to do that for us. He is a cheerful giver. We get the opportunity to be in his spittin' image. We get the opportunity to look like our daddy. We can be chips off the old eternal block and to reflect his character. Before we do that, let me pray briefly and you unite your hearts with me.

Gracious heavenly Father, thank you for being a cheerful giver. You owed us nothing. You are under no obligation. And in your great love and grace you gave at a level we could never imagine so that we might have new life. Lord, we don't want to hoard the blessing. We want to pass it forward. Today, as we make commitments to pass that blessing forward, Father, I pray that they'll be no hint of guilt, that there have been no promises of the new house or a new car or any other such nonsense, there has just been a simple declaration of your will and our need to generously participate in it. I pray that not only our gifts would honor you but more importantly I pray that our hearts would honor you. That everyone would do what you have led them to do. I pray that in Jesus' name Amen.