

# The Depth of Giving



Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. (2Corinthians 8:1-5)

“Giving” carries the idea of presenting to another something of value without cost to the receiver. From the above text we see that the Macedonian Christians had given themselves to the Lord. “Self” is a word which refers to one’s own being—made up of his mind, his intellect, his will, his emotions and his body. These words are written by Paul in the appeal to the Corinthians to give as they had promised.

These same Christians in Corinth had already been instructed in this matter: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come”* (1Corinthians 16:1-2). This was the background for what Paul writes in this second letter. These instructions set the example for all Christians—it is required of Christians to give.

It is important to give of our means. After all, there are examples and commands for such, but to really give as we ought, it will be necessary for us to give ourselves to the Lord. Giving money comes easy for those who have already given self to the Lord. Giving time and service comes easy for those who have already given self to the Lord. If you find that it is so difficult for you to give any of these, then perhaps you need to consider whether or not you have really given self to the Lord.

**Giving self to the Lord involves denying self.** Remember what Jesus said: *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it”* (**Mark 8:34-35**). So many times, we remember what He says next, *“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world ...,”* and focus on the aspect of not chasing riches. That is fine, but Jesus’ focus is actually on the *“deny himself”* phrase. We might never say it out loud, or even admit it to ourselves, but too often our only thoughts are, *“I’m just fine—I don’t pursue riches”* instead of the more appropriate, *“What else can I deny myself for the Lord?”*

**Giving self to the Lord involves giving our heart to the Lord.** *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”* (**Deuteronomy 6:5**). Jesus quoted this as the greatest commandment. With the heart man thinks (**Genesis 6:5**). With the heart man reasons (**Mark 2:8**). With the heart man understands (**Matthew 13:15**). With the heart man intends (**Hebrews 4:12**). With the heart man purposes (**2Corinthians 9:7**). With the heart man obeys (**Romans 6:17**). With the heart man desires (**Romans 10:1**). With the heart man loves (**Matthew 22:37**). With the heart man trusts (**Proverbs 3:5**). When one gives his heart to the Lord, he gives all these faculties to the Lord. It is not difficult to see how that person can give liberally of his money is it?

**Giving self to the Lord involves giving our bodies—our very life—to the Lord.** *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”* (**Romans 12:1-2**). When we give our bodies, we give our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our mouths to speak, our hands to serve, our feet to go. Such a person can give of his means without difficulty.

The results of giving self to the Lord are obvious. This will make us give liberally. This will make us put the His kingdom first (**Matthew 6:33**). This will make us satisfied with His plan, and we can really say, *“Your will be done”* (**Matthew 6:10**). This will make us want to be as He is (**Galatians 2:20**). Our walk, talk, dress, and adornment will be no problem. Heaven will be so much closer when we give ourselves to the Lord. We will be able to have that same strong confidence we see in Paul: *“... I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day ... in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day”* (**2Timothy 1:12; 4:6-8**).

The price may be high. It may be at the cost of family (**Matthew 10:37-38**). It may be at the cost of favor (**John 12:42**). It may be at the price of suffering (**2Timothy 3:12**). However, giving will be worth it all.

Have you given self to the Lord?