

Is Man Responsible for Sin?

By

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Dear friends, today I want to speak of the grace that is manifested in our giving to the Lord and to others as well. II Corinthians 8:1-5 we read of the Macedonian believers who gave generously to the Lord's work out of their very own personal needs and their own poverty.

2 Co 8:1-6, "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." NKJV

How can anyone in such need respond so sacrificially as to give of themselves and their means to meet someone else's needs? Our text today gives us the answer. Before they shared of their own means with others who were in need, "They first gave themselves to the Lord." Dear friend, this is the way that we all genuinely give to others. We must begin with a heart of devotion and love for the Lord which then motivates us to reach out and care for the needs of others. Since these believers FIRST gave themselves to the Lord, God the Lord showered them with his grace in their own lives with such fullness that in spite of their hardships they gave themselves willingly, liberally and sacrificially.

The late Dr. Kennedy told of a peasant woman in West Africa who had been wonderfully saved about 50 years before. She found herself driven with a desire to do something more for the Lord, but was greatly limited by her low income. Others gave such liberal gifts as a whole bowl of corn at the special meetings but she could not make such a gift. Later in the week, at one of those special meetings, she placed a silver coin upon the offering plate. This coin only represented one dollar and seemed not to be very much when compared to what others had been giving. But dear friend, its value was beyond the wildest dream of everyone. Even the missionary who witnessed this gift thought that she might have gotten this coin dishonestly, and as a result hesitated to receive this gift. But not wanting to make a scene in the service, he said nothing. Following the service he found the woman a questioned her about this money. In answer to his inquiry she said that because the Lord Jesus had freed her from the bondage of her sins and had given to her eternal life as a gift from God, she wanted to serve the Lord and help make Jesus known to others. As a result he discovered that she had gone to a nearby plantation and sold herself for the rest of her life for the sum of \$1 dollar. This was truly a gift of love and sacrifice on her part.

Someone once said "you may give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." I know you remember that the Lord Jesus himself shared a comparable story that likens itself to this event. Jesus spoke of some of the Pharisees who were in the Temple watching to see how much the worshippers gave to the work of the Lord. Being filled up with sinful pride they wanted everyone there to witness how generous they had given and thus gain respect from their giving. As they gloried in their self-centered pride believing they had accomplished what they set out to do, the Lord Jesus told about a poor lady who also gave, but she only put a very small coin in the offering. As they made sport of her the limited amount she had given, Jesus was quick to declare that while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks upon the heart. Jesus said this woman gave all she had and thus in God's eyes had given so much more than they had given. In our giving, we need to give to God, and not to influence others. We need to take the time to demonstrate our Lord's love by seeking to know the needs of others.