



Reading through the New Testament—Week 32

August 13-19

Becoming more like Jesus—growing in His Word

Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

Paul visited Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17) in AD 50. He later wrote a letter of instruction to them (1 Cor. 5:9), which has been lost. Paul's next letter to them was 1 Corinthians, which may be the painful letter mentioned at 2 Cor. 2:4 (although some scholars have assumed this refers to another lost letter written after 1 Corinthians).

Paul also apparently made a "painful visit" to the congregation (2 Cor. 2:1), which made it possible for Titus to follow up and settle the conflicts (2 Cor. 7:6-8). Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians in AD 55. So, Paul may have written a total of four letters, as follows:

1. A letter of instruction (1 Cor. 5:9)
2. 1 Corinthians
3. A painful letter (2 Cor. 2:4)
4. 2 Corinthians

All this effort paid off. Clement of Rome wrote at the end of the first century that God held together this troubled congregation.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul lays bare his heart to the congregation and vigorously defends his apostleship against false apostles who tried to undermine his work.

As you read 2 Corinthians, consider the marvelous example Paul gives of a thoughtful Christian leader striving to unite a wounded congregation. Note especially how he emphasizes God's work among them through the Gospel, which comforts and heals the congregation.

(From: The Lutheran Study Bible, pp. 1979-1980.)

THIS WEEKEND'S SERMON OUTLINE

“The Discipleship of Generosity”

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

A class schedule – your favorite subject

E _____ of generosity

² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

- severe trial, extreme poverty
- overflowing joy, rich generosity, gave beyond their ability, requested the opportunity to give

E _____ toward generosity

⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

- excel in the grace of giving
- everyone's situation is different

E _____ of generosity

⁹ For you know the grace 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.

- rich to poor – Jesus
- poor to rich – me

New Testament in a Year—August 13-19

2 Corinthians

Chapter 8  9  10  11  12 

Additional Reflections from this week's reading

2 Corinthians 8 In his first letter, Paul encourages the Corinthians to help raise an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-5). How were the Corinthians to collect this offering? Who will Paul visit before coming to Corinth for the offering? In reading 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, what was the result of the collection from Macedonia as Paul made his way to Corinth?

2 Corinthians 9 Because of the Christian's faith and love for the Lord, what kind of attitude should be expressed in the giving of offerings according to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8?

2 Corinthians 10 Spend some time with verse 5 where Paul says, "and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." What would that look like in your life if you took captive your every thought to make it obedient to Christ? How would that impact your thinking and what you do in life?

2 Corinthians 11 Looking at the experiences Paul went through (vv. 23-29), why did he share this information? How does it validate Paul's message? What does Paul have to "boast about"? Certainly he doesn't boast about his speaking ability (see v. 6).

2 Corinthians 12 No one knows precisely what Paul's affliction was that he describes in vv. 7-10. But what does his response suggest about the reason for suffering?

Blessing the World

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6 It's that time of the year again. College students are beginning the journey back to campus, throughout Fort Wayne schools are beginning, and summer is coming to an end. Our own halls will not be so quiet this week as the ESM Lutheran School year kicks off on Wednesday, August 16. As you think about students, teachers, and staff in your life, you can bless them by praying for them and writing a note of encouragement. You are also invited to join us at St. Michael on Wednesday for the opening chapel (for K-3rd grade) at 10:00a to encourage students and faculty on our campus.

Belonging in Community

As we learned this weekend generosity is an important part of the character of a person who is becoming more like Jesus. Yet, generosity can feel like an overwhelming command instead of an invitation into an abundant lifestyle.

How would you describe your generosity?

Let's take some time to examine our presumptions and priorities around generosity. Below are two reasons that may prevent you from living generously. Take some time to talk about how they may display in your life. Do you have any others to add?

Scarcity Mentality

Fear can be a barrier to generosity. That is particularly true if you live with a scarcity mindset where you are constantly concerned with not having enough for the unknown that is "right around the corner." This type of risk-averse mindset can easily come in when we think of paying for school, a house, family, or preparing for retirement and can seem like reasonable common sense priorities. Although it is important to manage our money well, these types of investments still should not come before investment in God's ministry. (Read Haggai 1 to see God's thoughts on investing in rebuilding personal houses before they rebuilt the temple.)

Spending Too Much In Other Areas.

If you don't have margin in your budget, it's difficult to be more generous in charitable giving. In other words, your consumption rate is too high. In Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis put it this way: "I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare...If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them." In other words, if you're living up to the same standard as those around you, you are probably giving away too little.

Being generous as Jesus teaches us involves being a courageous risk-taker who seeks first the Kingdom of God. As His people we want to follow in His ways, but this one can be uncomfortable to talk about and to live out.

How can we healthily hold each other to generous living?

Take time to close in prayer.