

2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 9

'Attitude to Giving'

Introduction ...

I wonder what kind of a reception Paul's letters got in Corinth ...

If you want to read a novel from a brilliant New Testament scholar that explores this ... I would recommend the book: 'Phoebe' by Paula Gooder ... she concentrates more on the church in Rome – so the letter to the Romans – but there are parts referring back to Corinth.

Imagine what the reaction to tonight's passage might have been: in it Paul praises Christians elsewhere ... and then challenges the Corinthians to match their generosity.

Imagine the Bishop of Lichfield – or perhaps Wolverhampton coming here and saying to St Alkmunds:

I want to tell you about a church in Walsall. They have had a really tough time ... problems with their building, the church school governing body taken over by extremists, one of their church wardens mugged on the way out of church, most parishioners on the poverty line ...

Yet they have been brilliant!

Their Christian faith shines strongly – a real beacon in the darkness. And what's more – their giving is phenomenal despite their poverty.

They give away to Charities abroad and they pay their Parish Share 3 times over to support other churches and parishes in the Diocese.

Now St Alkmund's – we love you too so we want you to excel in the same kind of way.

I don't command you to do this but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of that congregation in Walsall.

What would you think?

How would you react?

I don't suppose it went down well with all the Christians in Corinth ... and maybe Paul was not blessed with tact ... and wouldn't have known what a 'softly, softly approach' was!

But – and in this we do need to pay heed – he did link his teaching with core gospel truths. On this occasion:

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ –

that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor,

so that by his poverty you might become rich.

PTO

So – I haven't come tonight with some kind of Paul-ine message from any of our Bishops ... but instead, I'm going to finish by reading a meditation on **John 3: 16** – a verse about God's giving. It was chosen for a reading at one of our weddings here recently.

As you listen – think about who God is calling you – or us – to love ... **and** in what kind of way ...

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.

You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

When you love you will give of your time, you will give of yourself, and you will give of your efforts. Those who truly love hold nothing back.

The measure of your giving reveals the measure of your love.

Love is something you can't see, but we can see the evidence of love in the action it produces, which is giving.

If you love someone you will also give them forgiveness. Love causes you to be merciful, understanding, and forgiving.

Where you give your time and effort also reveals who you love. If you think you love someone, yet never give to them of your time or effort, then you are just deceiving yourself.

There are many people in each of our lives who need and deserve our love. Jesus Christ is the most deserving of all!

Say this: Your giving reveals your love.