

## "HOW TO KEEP THE WORD FROM THE WORLD"

**TEXT:** *2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*

**THESIS:** To reveal the factors which will shut down a local church missions program.

**INTRO.:** A. The purpose for this conference is the exact opposite of the message title. The theme states the purpose: **"HOW TO REACH THE WORLD WITH THE WORD,"** but in the practice of many believers they seem to desire to **"KEEP THE WORD FROM THE WORLD!"** Often in order to know *WHAT TO DO*, we need to know *WHAT NOT TO DO!* So that is where we will begin.

B. For any successful missions program in any local church there are several factors which are an absolute requirement, in fact we could call it the Foundation of Grace-Giving or Faith Promise. **1) We must be in the faith. 2) We must be in the family (church). 3) We must be faithful** (no hit-or miss attendance, service or giving!). Also the church must have **a love for the Scriptures, a love for the Savior, and a love for sinners.** That in a nutshell is **"HOW TO REACH THE WORLD WITH THE WORD."** If any of the things above are not true of you then you have learned **"HOW TO KEEP THE WORD FROM THE WORLD!"**

C. What I am about to do is to teach you how you can wreck the church's missions program. To know **what NOT to do**, will help you **not to do it** & in the process **learn what to do. So let's look at What NOT to do...**

### I. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN PREDICAMENT: V.2

A. (Look Around, Don't Look Within):

1. If these believers had looked at their own wealth or lack of it, they would not have been generous - instead they would have been stingy.
2. Don't focus on what you can't do, but on what you can do, with God's enablement.

- a. These folks were poor, but instead of looking at their meager resources, they looked to the Lord of all resources.
- b. These folks were poor financially, but rich spiritually, so they reached down into their hearts before reaching into their pocketbooks.
- c. They saw the need of others and realized that others' need was greater than their own so they gave generously.

### II. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN PRIORITIES: V.4

A. (Principle Takes Precedent Over Personal Priorities):

1. Follow **Jesus' example**, Who when He saw the multitudes was "moved with compassion..."
2. Follow **Jesus' principle** in Mt. 6:

**Matthew 6:31-32** *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

**ILLUS.:** The issue Jesus raises here is one of priorities. Where are your affections? Below or above? Are you so busy putting roots down here on earth that if the rapture or death would occur, you would find it hard to be uprooted?! Are you so self-centered that your focus is on you, yours and your needs? What about a lost and dying world? The believers in Macedonia saw the need of others & in spite of their own poverty trusted the Lord to bless them through their liberality. In fact they begged Paul to take their gifts!

3. Follow **Jesus' command** in the Great Commission.

- a. Once saved our lives are no longer ours exclusively to spend as we see fit; we have an obligation to share the Good News of the Gospel to as many as possible.
- b. Our bodies (and hence our bodily needs: food, clothing, shelter) are not to be the center of our focus; if we place the Lord and the world before ourselves, He promises to provide our personal needs.

### II. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN PERSON: V.4

A. (Give Yourself, Your Gifts Will Follow):

**ILLUS.:** I recently preached for Pastor Pennachietti at Bethel Baptist and I saw a beautiful illustration of this concept. Before the service, some small boys were playing around the platform and one of them picked up an offering plate and sat in it! We need to give ourselves, then the church's needs will be cared for, the preacher's needs will be met, and the missionaries will not have to spend 2 or 3 years on deputation! The way I see the Bible's teaching

on giving is simple: the tithe is for the workers, the offering is for the work and the love gift or grace gift goes to specific needs. At least that's the way it was in the O.T. and Paul wrote in I Cor. 9.

**1 Corinthians 9:13-14** *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

1. There are probably no greater spiritual examples in the N.T. than these believers in Macedonia who live out the principles, precepts and commission of our Savior.
2. Before the Lord can get your wallet, He wants your heart!

**ILLUS.:** There are 4 kinds of givers in our churches: **MAD, SAD, BAD AND GLAD.** *The grumps, the grumblers, the money grubbers and those who give gratefully and gladly* knowing that they will be rewarded for their liberality, either here or over there.

My personal testimony is that as I have been generous, God has been more so!

#### **IV. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN POVERTY: V.7,9**

A. (See The Need, Not Your Lack):

1. Paul says that these believers were rich in some spiritual graces: faith, utterance, knowledge, and in diligence.
2. But they had focused on their gifts and graces and were wanting in the missing grace of giving.

**ILLUS.:** Some believers seem to think they have abounded in faith or knowledge or some other grace and that is all that is required of them. Maybe they have hospitality, love, are able to teach, etc., but lack in the grace of giving. Paul places the priority here. It is not that the other graces are not important, but that this one is critical. *Growth results in giving.*

3. Some boast about one area of Christian growth, but lack a spirit of giving; Jesus set the example. V.9

**ILLUS.:** The mission fields of the world go unpopulated with missionaries, the lost die and go to hell, and missionaries go begging for support for 2,3 or even 4 years trying to raise enough support to get the Word to the world. All that is necessary is for God's people to make a commitment of themselves and then their gifts.

What we will be presenting in the next few services is the means to **REACH THE WORLD WITH THE WORD**, through grace-giving (or faith-promise giving) which we will address. It is not that each one gives a lot, but if everyone gives a little of what God has blessed them with – the world can be reached in our lifetime. Jesus didn't give an impossible commission before leaving this world; He gave a plan to reach the world. We need only to respond biblically and properly.

#### **V. FOCUS ON YOUR OWN PAST: V.10,11**

A. (Turn Past Failure Into Present Victory):

1. God never asks us to do the impossible.
2. He doesn't ask us to give what we don't have.
3. He simply asks us to share what He has blessed us with and then to trust Him.
4. Your faith promise is not a pledge that someone will check up on.
5. Your promise is based on only what you have to give, and then decide to do something specific with that and trust the Lord to supply your need.
6. It all begins with a "willing mind..." i.e., a decision is imperative and necessary.

**CONCL.:** It is up to you and your Lord as to what you decide to do. You can either be a part of **KEEPING THE WORD FROM THE WORLD** or **REACHING THE WORLD WITH THE WORD**. The choice resides with you. It is a matter of YOUR will. Like these believers in Corinth, you have to decide not to focus on *your predicament* (present financial circumstances), *your priorities* (those things you have decided to give yourself to), *your person* (selfishly putting yourself and your needs above those of a lost world), *your poverty* (the Lord will never ask you to do something impossible for you) *or your past* (you may have failed the Lord before, now is the time to change that!).