

2 CORINTHIANS 8 Excel in Giving; Christ Our Pattern; Collection for the Judean Saints!

OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: www.ptwente.com Click on “Latest Studies” on the right side. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

2 CORINTHIANS 8 Excel in Giving

(First example of giving -- the Macedonian churches);

2Co 8:1 *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace (χάρις, charis - khar'-ece graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude): - acceptable, benefit, favor, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank/s, worthy) of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:*
2Co 8:2 *that in a great trial of affliction (thlipsis thlip'-sis – pressure, afflicted, (-tion), anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble). the abundance (surplus) of their joy and their deep (extremely deep) poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality (generosity, sincerity).*

2Co 8:3 *For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,*
2Co 8:4 *imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

2Co 8:5 *And not only as we had hoped, but they first (in priority) gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*

v. 1 In giving the example of the Macedonian churches located in the poorer northern part of Greece, Paul shows he considers both the *opportunity* and the *willingness* to give a gift of *the grace of God*. cf. John 3:16

v. 2 Though the Macedonians were in a *great trial of affliction*, and even though they were in *deep poverty*, still gave generously (*abounded in the riches of their liberality*). Paul is writing about giving because he was raising money to help the Christians in Jerusalem, who were very poor. He had previously mentioned this effort in 1Co 16:1-4.

vs. 3-4 The Macedonians gave in two ways - *according to their ability* in the sense that in total, their gift wasn't very much. Secondly, since their heart was *freely willing* to give, and they gave in proportion to the little they did have, they gave *beyond their ability*. The account of the widow's giving in Luk 21:1-4 illustrates the same point. **Freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift:** Paul didn't have to beg for money from the Macedonian Christians. Instead they were begging him (*imploring us*) to **receive the gift!** (*“willing” – Ex. 36*)

v. 5 *Not only as we hoped:* The Macedonians gave far beyond what Paul was hoping for. What made their giving so spectacular was not the dollar amount, but it was that they *first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*. They were wonderful examples of giving because they *first gave themselves to the Lord*; then gave their trust to Paul and the other apostles. (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Jn 3:16; Mt. 16:24; Eph. 5:1-2)

vs. 1 & 2 – We should note the characteristics of the giving of the Macedonian churches. Although they were much poorer than the Corinthians, probably more persecuted, but in their deep poverty they abounded in joy and willingness, in fact, they were eager to share what they had with the Jerusalem church. What an example for us!

vs. 3 & 4 – Generous giving follows personal dedication. How are we doing in both of these areas?

v. 5 – In giving, the real issue isn't giving money. It is giving ourselves to the Lord. If we have really given ourselves to the Lord, then the right kind of giving will naturally follow. **How is your giving of yourself?**

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2Co 8:6 *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.*

2Co 8:7 *But as you abound in everything—in faith (sanctifying trust in the LORD), in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.*

Christ Our Pattern;

(Second example of giving -- from our Lord Jesus)

2Co 8:8 *I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.*

2Co 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

v. 6 Titus, as the assistant/associate of Paul, possibly the bearer of this letter, was to encourage the Corinthians to make certain that they did in fact follow through on what they had intended to do earlier. **Complete this grace:** The Corinthian Christians may have *intended* to give. They may have *thought* about giving. They may have been *favorable to the idea* of giving. Yet all of this was useless unless they did in fact **complete this grace**. Intentions, vows, and resolutions are useless without action. Titus was to help them do this.

v. 7 *As you abound in everything:* If the Corinthians did indeed abound *in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in . . . love for us*, they must have just begun to do these things. You do abound in all these things. So now, *abound in this grace also.*”

v. 8 The Corinthians are not be commanded to give. That kind of giving is called taxation! **I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others:** Two important points here. First, giving can measure the *sincerity of your love*. Secondly, the Corinthians were *compared in their giving to the giving of the Macedonian churches (testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others)*. It is not unfair to compare our giving with the giving of others, at least in some sense. Jesus compared the giving of the poor widow with the giving of others (**Luk 21:1-4**).

v. 9 From the context, we know that, **“You know the giving of our Lord Jesus.”** *...He was rich:* Before He added humanity to His deity and walked this earth, Jesus could not have been poor if He had begun His existence in Mary’s womb. The riches Jesus enjoyed before adding humanity make *any* amount of wealth on earth seem poor. **Yet for your sakes He became poor:** Jesus lived His earthly life as a poor man. (**Phil: 2:5-11; Heb. 1:5-14, 2:5-9**)

vs. 6 & 7 - Paul’s tender and wise encouragement in giving includes abounding in the “grace” of giving -- The ability to give and the heart to give **is a free gift from God**. Our giving **should be like God’s giving of grace to us: giving freely, generously, because we want to give**. Our giving, like God’s grace to us, **should be offered without expectation of payment in return**.

v. 8 – They . Many of us like to think that we can love without giving. But what does **1Jn 3:17-18** say? *But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* Jesus said much the same in **Mat 6:21** : *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* What we give, and how we follow through on our commitment to give, are valid tests of our love. But we shouldn’t think that Paul is encouraging a fund-raising competition between the churches

v. 9 – Jesus Christ is the Supreme example of giving, He was rich. He was a part of the triune Godhead. He was God the Son. He was worshipped and adored by the angels. And all the angels of heaven worship Him, God declared. Unto which of the angels, said He, at any time, You are My Son, this day I have begotten You. He was above the angels. He was in the beginning with God and thought it not something to be grasped, to be equal with God. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was rich! And yet for your sake, He became poor.

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*2Co 8:10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago;
2Co 8:11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.*

2Co 8:12 For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

v. 9 cont'd - When we contrast the simple life of Jesus with His existence before adding humanity to His deity, we are even more amazed. *yet for your sakes*. This was Jesus’ “giving.” He gave financially in the sense that He accepted a humble life of poverty, having all the power to live as the wealthiest man in all history. He did it *for our sakes*, showing us the giving heart of God, because it fulfilled the heart and will and plan of God making our salvation possible. *That you through His poverty might become rich*: Because of Jesus’ poverty, we can *become rich*, having a share in Jesus’ eternal, heavenly wealth, because He came and had a share in our poverty.

vs. 10-11 Practical words of advice regarding giving. Follow through on your previous willingness. *Now you also must complete the doing of it*: The Corinthian Christians had previously expressed a **desiring** and a **readiness** to give. Now, they *actually had to do it*! **A completion out of what you have**: We can’t give what we don’t have.

v. 12 When we give, God looks for **readiness** and a **willing mind**. These are the true marks of a generous heart before God, and are no more likely among the rich than the poor. *It is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have*: Again, God does not expect us to give what we do not have. True Christian giving cannot be measured by the amount. True giving is measured by obedience, proportion and need, not by amount. You may ask, “How much am I supposed to give?” Paul’s principles throughout this letter, and other letters, remind us that there is no one answer to that question for every believer. If our question is, **“How little can I give and still be pleasing to God?” our heart isn’t in the right place at all**. We should have the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: “We’re not under the tithe - we can give *more!*” Giving and financial management are *spiritual* issues,

v. 9 cont'd - He was born into a poor family. Though He was rich for your sake. He became poor. There is the grace of God in giving! That you through His poverty, He gave in order to enrich you. So the idea is, look, God has blessed you in Corinth. These people in Macedonia, they are poor people here. And yet they have given liberally. You have a wealthy church. You are in good circumstances. You are in a bustling, commercial community. You have good jobs. Now Jesus is the example in the grace of giving. Now may you abound in this grace of giving.

vs. 10-11 – The Devil will let you resolve as much as you like; the more the better, just as long as you never carry it out. The tragedy of life so often is, not that we have no high impulses, but that we fail to turn them into actions.

v. 11 – God judges our giving against what resources we have. But the issue of what and how we spend is relevant to what you have. If you overspend and therefore never have any to give, you can’t excuse it before God by saying, “Well, I don’t have anything.” **We need to finish our thoughts to give by actually doing it!**

v. 12 – In giving, many go back to the Old Testament law of the tithe, the giving of ten percent unto the Lord. This is a good principle for giving, and perhaps a broad benchmark. It certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (**Luk 11:42**). The New Testament speaks with great clarity on the principles of giving. It teaches us that **giving should be regular, planned, proportional, and private, from a willing mind**. God won’t accept it, if it doesn’t come from a willing mind. You have to want to. You have to be willing to. And then it is accepted, not according to—it’s accepted according to what you have, not according to that he hath not. **God is most concerned with the heart attitude of the giver, not the amount he gives!**

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2Co 8:13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;

2Co 8:14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality (balance, equilibrium).

2Co 8:15 As it is written, "HE WHO GATHERED MUCH HAD NOTHING LEFT OVER, AND HE WHO GATHERED LITTLE HAD NO LACK."

Collection for the Judean Saints; (How to receive Titus when he and his companions come for the collection.)

2Co 8:16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.

2Co 8:17 For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.

v. 13 The Corinthians were not giving so that the Jerusalem brothers would get rich and lazy at their expense but. Paul was to receive the collection so the Jerusalem believers could simply survive. The goal was not to burden the Corinthians, nor was it to make it all easy for the Jerusalem brothers

v. 14 Paul sees that the spiritual **abundance** of the Jerusalem brothers has blessed the Corinthians. So, it should be a small thing for the Corinthians to share with them their material abundance. The **equality** Paul mentions here isn't meant to imply socialism or communism. He is saying that we are not bound to such an equality as would make it wrong for the rich to live more elegantly than the poor; but there must be an equality that nobody starves and hordes his abundance at another's expense. **Now at this time** reminds the Corinthian Christians that this is just the way it is right now.

v. 15 **Exo 16:18** illustrates this principle. Everyone gathered what they could, some more and some less; but they all shared what they had gathered. Property is like manna, it will not bear hoarding. Just as manna, which was hoarded to excess out of greed or lack of faith, immediately spoiled, so we should have no doubt that riches which are heaped up at the expense of our brethren are accursed and will soon perish and their owner will be ruined with them.

v. 16 **But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus:** Paul's intention is to recommend Titus to them as a trustworthy bearer of their money.

v. 17 Titus accepted the invitation to go to Corinth and complete the receiving of the offering. He was eager to accept it. It wasn't with a reluctance that he came, but he

v. 13 – Some say, “Give till it hurts. Then keep giving until it feels better again.” But God's goal for us isn't to “Give till it hurts.” **The goal** is not to afflict those who are doing the giving; **it is to display the giving heart and love of Jesus Christ.**

v. 14 – Right now, you are being prospered. You are being blessed. And so give for their needs! They are in big trouble. But it could be that things could be reversed one day and they will be blessed and you will be in need, and thus I'll take an offering from them to bring to you. That there might be an equality that is worked out within the churches.

v. 15 – The collecting of manna by the Israelites in the wilderness was an appropriate illustration of sharing of resources. Some were able to gather more than others, and apparently shared it so that no one lacked what the needed.

v. 16 – Paul is saying that he has this great concern for the Corinthians. Titus shares the same burden. You know, you were good to him. You received him. He loves you. He has the same care and concern for you, that I have.

v. 17 – Paul said, Titus, would you go to the church in Corinth to see how they are doing and to minister to them? He accepted the invitation. He was even eager to accept it. It wasn't with a reluctance that he came, but he was eager to come of his own accord. He went unto you.

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2Co 8:18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,

2Co 8:19 and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,

2Co 8:20 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—

2Co 8:21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

v.18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches: Commentators have had a field day trying to identify the **brother** mentioned here. Who is he? This **brother** accompanied Titus when he went to Corinth on Paul’s behalf. This **brother** was well known and praised *in the gospel in all the churches*.

v. 19 This **brother** was *also chosen by the churches to travel with* Paul, carrying *the gift*. Beyond these things we know nothing. As you might expect, Bible commentators have been ready to say whom they believe *the brother* to be. Some of the candidates have been Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and a variety of others. But no one really knows. And it doesn’t really matter, or else God would have made it clear! was eager to come of his own accord. He went unto you.

v. 20 Avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift: Paul wisely avoided any gossip about his role in the collection by sending Titus and his companion to collect it, and accompany Paul in carrying it to Jerusalem. *Also in the sight of men* is a reminder that all things financial in the church should be conducted above board and properly. Paul took whatever steps were necessary so no one could blame him with financial impropriety. **Paul could write like a poet, and think like a theologian; but he could also act with the meticulous accuracy and integrity of the best accountant.**

v. 21 Paul had this awareness, that what I’m doing, I’m doing in the sight of the Lord. Too often the big problem is with those who misuse money. They don’t have that consciousness that God sees all that they are doing.

v. 18 – We are not told the identity of “the brother”, but that is really unimportant. He was a well-known brother. All of the churches acclaimed this fellow. He was respected. His ministry was respected in all of the churches. What a great reputation! How would a recommendation for us look?

v. 19 – To protect Paul and Titus from **false accusations regarding the mishandling of the money**, the churches picked the unbiased brother (v. 18) as their representative to lend accountability to the enterprise. *for the glory of the Lord Himself*. Paul wanted careful scrutiny as protection against bringing dishonor to Christ for any misappropriation of the money. He wanted to avoid any offenses worthy of justifiable criticisms or accusations. Note the importance of accountability in the area of properly handling God’s funds!

v. 20 – Money is a great corrupter. Paul, as we all should be, wants to **be extremely careful when it comes to the handling and administering the LORD’s money.**

v. 21 – Paul said I want to be clear before God. That’s first and foremost. That’s most important! If I’m clear in my conscience towards God, in the sight of God, if I’m doing what is right in the sight of God, that’s the main thing. On the other hand, I want to do it in the sight of people, too. Because I don’t want people to get a false impression and to think that I might be using the things of God for my own personal gain. So providing things **that are honest in the sight of God and also in the sight of men.**

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2Co 8:22 And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.

2Co 8:23 If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

2Co 8:24 Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

All to Jesus I surrender – Judson Van de Venter – Marantha

*1 - All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.*

Refrain: I surrender all, I surrender all.

All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

*2 - All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken; Take me, Jesus, take me now.*

*3 - All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art mine.*

*4 - All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.*

*5 - All to Jesus I surrender, Now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh, the joy of full salvation! Glory, glory to His name!*

v. 22 Along with Titus, we have sent another brother, in order that everything might be above board, in order that there be no questions as to the accountability or handling of the funds that were received.

v. 23 Do you want to know about Titus? He is my partner and fellow worker concerning you: or our brethren. If you have any questions about him, ask of the brothers who were sent. **They are the messengers.** Paul calls them the apostles. They are the apostles. They are sent out by the Lord. And they are the apostles.

v. 24 *Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf:* This is a strong encouragement from Paul to give! He is saying that when Titus and the unnamed brother come, the Corinthian Christians should show them a good offering. He is saying that **the churches** will also know of it. He is saying that the offering given will be **proof of your love**. And finally, he is saying that he has been **boasting** to others about what gives the Corinthian Christians had been, so he asks them now to come through and give like the givers he has been claiming they are!

v. 22 – They were sending along, with Titus, the brother, in order that everything might be above board, in order that there be no questions to the handling and administering of the funds. **This is wise!**

v. 23 – The greatest of all commendations is to be characterized by bringing glory to Christ, as was the case in these two messengers. **How would we be characterized in this area?**

v. 24 – Paul has been boasting of what a great bunch the Corinthians were. What a wonderful church, there is there in Corinth. Now prove to them that I wasn't just bragging out of turn. So Paul talks on the delicate subject of giving.

SUMMARY OF GIVING:

They first of all gave themselves to God. That's first! Lord, my life is Yours, I give myself to You. All that I am, all that I have is Yours. **A necessity of giving is a willing heart.** Out of the willing heart comes the **giving of your time, energy and your possessions**

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