

## II Corinthians Lesson 08

II Cor. Chapter 8

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Memory verses for this week: *2 Pet 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

**Introduction:** Last week in Chapter 7, Paul exhorted the church to strive for holiness. He spoke of all the trials he had faced in Macedonia, and spoke of what an encouragement Titus had been to him when he reported on how the church was thriving there in Corinth. This week, our chapter deals at some length with the principle of Christian giving. It deals not with the principle of the tithe, but of giving over and above the tithe. The churches of Judea, Jerusalem, and others of that locale, had fallen upon hard times. Persecution from the Jews had imposed hardships. Paul had organized churches in Greece and elsewhere more than a year earlier to send relief offerings for the beleaguered brethren in Judea.

### I. The Good Example of the Macedonians

*2 Cor 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;*

*2 Cor 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

At the close of his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul had given instructions regarding an offering that was to be raised for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Here, he gives more information about this offering, beginning with information about what the churches in Macedonia had done. While this is about that specific offering for those in Jerusalem, these principles can be applied to us today concerning Christian giving and church financing.

As Paul begins this section, he writes, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia". That grace was in that in the trials of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. Even in a time of trial and trouble, the Macedonian churches showed the abundance of their joy. Notwithstanding they were poor themselves, they gave liberally.

Though not named, the Macedonian churches likely included the church at Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, and possibly others. Paul does not elaborate on their difficulties. However, it is apparent these churches as well were facing hard

times. It was during hard time that they had already given generously for the needy brethren in Judea.

If modern Christians understood God's way of financing and applied these principles, there would never be a need for special appeals for funds to carry out the work of the Lord.

Paul uses the example of what the churches in Macedonia had done. They had been very generous with their money, and had given a large amount to help the suffering saints. Many had lost their jobs in Jerusalem for their stand on Christ, and these other churches rallied and helped to provide for them. Now as Paul went about on his third missionary journey, he collected this offering for the church in Jerusalem. That is rather revolutionary. Here the mission churches are sending an offering to help the mother church. Today it is just the opposite. The home church sends out missionaries and supports them out in the foreign field. But in Paul's day the foreign field was supporting the home church.

Note in verse 1 he mentions that God bestowed grace on those churches. You and I need grace every hour. Many say they want justice, but when it comes to the things of God, what we need is God's grace and mercy. Those in Macedonia gave at a time when they were suffering great trials. Though their poverty was deep, they nevertheless had great joy. We may not have a lot of this world's goods, but when we have Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior we are rich beyond our imagination.

*Prov 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.*

*Prov 13:8 The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.*

*Prov 13:9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*

*Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

*Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

*2 Cor 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;*

*2 Cor 8:4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

Paul further emphasizes the point of the generosity of the Macedonian churches. The Macedonian churches had given beyond their ability. They apparently had not given a large amount. But that is not the point. They, like the widow at the

Temple, had given their all. They had exceeded their ability to help others. That is what made their liberality so rich.

The Macedonians didn't just give what they were able, but they gave much more. I think it is wonderful when people are willing to dig deep for the cause of Christ. Some people won't give but a few dollars for the work of the Lord even though God has blessed them with jobs that pay thousands of dollars each month. But the bible teaches we should give not out of necessity, but out of a willing and obedient heart. God does not pry money out of our pockets. We give as our hearts dictate. We have a record of the one poor widow lady that gave more with her few pennies than all those who came by and put in vast sums.

*Mark 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.*

*Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.*

*Mark 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:*

*Mark 12:44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.*

*2 Cor 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

*2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

The Macedonian brethren besought them and even begged them to take their gift as a token of their fellowship for their brethren in Judea. Paul did not have to extract an offering from the Macedonian brethren. To the contrary, they besought Paul to take it and deliver it to their needy brethren.

I found an amusing story in J. Vernon McGee's commentary on giving.

The story is told of a Scottish church that was attempting to raise money for a new building. One member of the church was a rich Scot who was known to be worth fifty thousand pounds. He was a typical Scot and was pretty stingy, like most of us are. A deacon came to see him and asked, "Brother, how much are you going to give for the new church?" The Scot replied, "Oh, I guess I'll be able to put in the widow's mite." The deacon called out in the next meeting, "Brethren, we have all the money we need. This brother is going to give fifty thousand pounds." The man was amazed. "I didn't say I would give fifty thousand pounds; I said I would give the widow's mite." The deacon replied, "Well, she gave her all,

and I thought that is what you meant to give!” It is interesting that God notes what you give but also what you keep for yourself.

*2 Cor 8:5 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.*

*2 Cor 8:6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.*

The Macedonian brethren exceeded Paul’s hope. They gave first of their very selves to the Lord and His work. When the heart is right, monetary giving is only natural. Moreover, it is the will of God for us. His will is for us to first give ourselves to Him and then to His work. Paul hoped to stir the Corinthian brethren by the example of their Macedonian counterparts. Titus had been the courier of Paul’s first epistle to Corinth. He had just recently returned from another journey there.

Therefore, Paul wrote “insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also”. Titus evidently had made known the need upon his first visit to Corinth. His recent return to Paul, however, demonstrated the Corinthian church had not followed through on the matter. It may be there had been so much internal turmoil in the meantime, they had forgotten about helping others. Now Paul was about to send Titus back not only with this second epistle, but also receive their special offering. Paul referred to this as accomplishing in them the same grace as had been demonstrated in the Macedonian churches.

The apostle speaks of how they gave not only their money liberally, but first gave their own selves to the Lord. If you don’t first give yourself to the Lord, I don’t think you can expect any special blessings for pouring in large sums of money. God wants you and I first in His service doing His will. And the first thing we have to do is to be saved. God’s Will is for every man to come to know Christ as Lord and Savior.

*1 Tim 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*

*1 Tim 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

*1 Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

*1 Tim 2:6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

*2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

This loving consecration of the Macedonians so challenged Paul that he immediately determined to send Titus back to Corinth again, to encourage them to find this same grace in giving. When one church gets on fire for the Lord, they can ignite a spark that encourages and exhorts others to greater service for God. And God receives the honor and glory when churches do that.

## II. The Supreme Example of Christ

*2 Cor 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*

*2 Cor 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.*

Paul praises them for abounding in such virtues as “faith, and utterance”, as well as “knowledge, and in all diligence” in making known their love to him. He urged them to “abound in this grace also.” He speaks of the grace of giving. The word translated as grace (cariv charis) among other things has the sense of ‘kindness’ or ‘goodwill.’ Heartfelt giving certainly is an expression of kindness and goodwill.

The Corinthian church had abounded in faith, doctrine, and diligence. Paul encourages them to abound in the grace of giving. A simple indicator of having grown from carnality to spirituality is the degree of one’s giving. Carnality (of which the Corinthian church had ample supply) is by its very nature selfish.

Spirituality is by its very nature generous. To be spiritual is to be selfless. The Corinthian church was still struggling to achieve a degree of true spirituality. It was evidenced in their sluggish giving.

In verse 8, Paul again used the example of the Macedonian churches to prod the Corinthian church. Realize that he was not commanding them to give. He was not dealing with the tithe which is a universal injunction. He was encouraging them to go beyond and help by going the second mile. Their freewill giving would prove the genuineness of their love. Talk is cheap. The proof of our love is in our actions.

The very essence of the concept of ‘agape-love’ is giving. It is a giving of oneself for another. Before Paul urged the Corinthians to be generous in their giving, he first compliments them on the other gifts which they manifested. They were abounding in faith, in speaking the Word of God, in knowledge of the truth of God, in diligence in Christian service, in love for the Lord’s servants. And he encourages all to abound in this grace also. Many Christians possess many of these other gifts that are mentioned, yet they do not give liberally with their money. As Christians, we are commanded to give at least a tenth of our income

to the Lord. But in verse 8, Paul says he is not commanding them to give to those in Jerusalem, but was urging them to do so. When we give, this demonstrates our sincerity to the work of God.

*2 Cor 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

Here Paul presents the penultimate example of agape-love. No greater love was ever exhibited than that of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His grace toward us, He gave His all. He left the riches of glory and willingly lived a most modest life on this earth that we might receive the riches of the inheritance of His glory.

When it comes to examples, the best and supreme example in the grace of giving is always the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He was once rich in Heaven's glory living with the Father and the Holy Ghost in glory. Yet willingly, for we the lost sinners of this wicked world, He became poor. And through his poverty, we that know Christ as Savior are now rich.

Through His willing poverty, the riches of God's salvation and all that accompanies it has been freely bestowed upon us. He gave. Therefore, we should as well. Hinted at is the excuse made in Corinth that they could not give much to the Judean churches because they were not affluent. Though that objection is not directly stated, it is clearly implied. Paul points out the relative poverty of the Macedonian churches as well as the example of our Lord to demolish that lame excuse.

### **III. Advice Concerning Giving**

*2 Cor 8:10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.*

*2 Cor 8:11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

Paul advised them it would be good to follow through on what they started out to do last year and he urges them further in verse 11. "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have". They had started out to accomplish this special giving project and had fizzled out. Now Paul says, get on with it.

Paul urges the church to perform what they had originally planned to do which was to take up an offering for the saints at Jerusalem. We should always have a heart that is tender to the leading of the Lord when it comes to giving. It says in verse 11 that these folks had a readiness to will, and they needed to use this

willingness to perform the giving and go ahead and take up the offering.

*2 Cor 8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

*2 Cor 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:*

Paul touches the heart of the matter. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not". Strongly hinted is the excuse some in Corinth likely had advanced. They didn't have much to give. Paul's retort was the attitude of the heart is what is first important. God is more interested in a willing spirit. He is pleased with what we can do. What we are unable to do is irrelevant. Give what you can. What is important in giving is not How much we can give, but the attitude from which we give. This in no way applies to tithing which is 10% of gross income plus nothing minus nothing. Apparently, some in Corinth had made the excuse they couldn't afford to give. What rather is important is a willing spirit in giving.

Paul in continuing states "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened". That statement went without saying. Yet in light of the foot-dragging of the Corinthian church, Paul said the obvious. He surely did not intend for the Judean churches to be relieved of their duress at the expense of the Corinthians.

Paul points out that many times we have a willing heart, but simply do not have the finances to be able to give. If we don't have the money, but our heart is right and desire to help, God recognizes this and still blesses us. He tells them that he was not trying to put an unreasonable burden on them that others might not have to give as much. But if they had the ability, he wanted them to give.

It is not the amount of the tit that counts as much as it is above the tit. (the one-tenth requirement as set out by scripture as a minimum.) When we sacrifice and show willingness to give, God is pleased with us. We read the example earlier of the widow in her gift, and I think we will read it again due to its relevance here.

*Luke 21:1-4 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

*2 Cor 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:*

*2 Cor 8:15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*



Though some in the Corinthian church evidently made the excuse of not being able to afford further giving, Paul noted that they in fact were in a time of abundance. He urged that they share of their prosperity to their impoverished Judean brethren. The day was coming when the tables might be turned. The Judean churches then could provide assistance for them. In any event, God's people are brethren wherever they are. They ought to be willing to show love one to another. When one is in need, whether individually or collectively as a church, others ought to rise to their need.

Paul quoted from Exodus 16:18 regarding God's provision of manna from heaven. "As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack". God provided for Israel with the manna. He will provide further as we give to meet the needs of others.

We see that as they gave what they could, it would help those in Jerusalem. And since no one knows what tomorrow holds, it might be that the shoe would be reversed one day and that it would be those in Jerusalem helping out the Corinthians. When we are abundantly blessed, as we are here in our church, we should use this money to help those in need and to support more missionaries. The spreading of the Gospel should always be our major thrust, but we have responsibilities as needs arise to help with physical needs of fellow brothers and sisters particularly.

Some want to only help those who are church members. But in Christ's ministry, he fed the multitudes and always sought out the lost and those who were far from the religious groups of the day. By our love to the lost, we many times by example show forth the love of Christ, and therefore give ourselves a doorway of opportunity to spread the gospel. The verse Paul refers to here is based out of Exodus 16:18.

*Exodus 16:18 And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*

#### **IV. The Messengers**

*2 Cor 8:16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.*

*2 Cor 8:17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.*

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

In this section, Paul speaks of a group of three Christian men who have been appointed to handle the offering for those needy saints in Jerusalem. Based upon personal knowledge, Paul commends all three men, beginning with the praise of



Titus. Titus had been a big blessing to Paul as was mentioned earlier in our study last week.

The Apostle now shifts to the brass tacks of the actual collection and transmission of the impending offering. It will focus on and through Titus. He comments, "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you". His point is that God had laid it upon the heart of Titus to be concerned for them. Indeed he was. When Paul suggested that he return again to Corinth, Titus was more than willing. In fact, of his own volition, he chose to go back. The Apostle clearly is preparing the way for the offering Titus hopefully would receive.

*2 Cor 8:19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:*

*2 Cor 8:20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:*

*2 Cor 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Two brethren had been chosen by other churches to travel with the offerings being collected. Paul does not here mention them by name. However, in Acts 20:4, brethren from Macedonia (Sopater, Aristarchus, and Secundus) are noted as traveling with Paul to Jerusalem. It is likely at least one of these are the parties referred to in these two verses. The principles of accountability as well as approval by the churches for the oversight thereof is set forth.

The men involved in the transportation of these funds were men "whose praise is in all the churches." Moreover, these were "also chosen of the churches." It should be noted that there were no reliable ways to send funds in the Roman world other than by personal delivery. Titus and his chosen cohorts would be responsible for at least this leg of that journey. Again, the offerings in question are referred to as a 'grace.' It all was to the glory of God. The final phrase "and declaration of your ready mind" likely was inserted by Paul as a strong hint of what he hoped they would do.

He further stresses the principle of accountability. His thought is simple. He wished to avoid any charge of impropriety in the monies which would be administered by them. Therefore, there were several men of known integrity involved in the accounting and administration of these funds. Great care was given to providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. Paul was scrupulous to insure that the handling of church funds was honest in every regard. That included before God but just as importantly before men. A profound principle for handling of church funds is

herein set forth. Paul insisted that there be complete accountability before men. Men of integrity were chosen and complete accountability was insisted upon.

Paul tells them that while it is good that they help those in need there in Jerusalem, it was his earnest care for the Corinthians that have moved him in this endeavor. It is amazing how God works all things to good. And I know from my own experiences that when I give, many times I am so blessed in doing it. We should never give expecting a blessing, but God is never unfaithful to remember our work and gifts for the ministry and cause of Christ.

*Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

*Mal 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*

*Mal 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

*2 Cor 8:22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.*

It is not clear if a third man besides Titus was in the oversight party or if this brother refers to the same one in verse 18. In any event, Paul makes clear that this brother had been “oftentimes proved diligent in many things.” This unnamed brother was renowned for his carefulness in such matters. He would be even more careful because of Paul’s (hoped for) confidence they would rise to the occasion. Implicit in all of this is the hint that some at Corinth had let it be known they did not trust sending funds as far as Judea. Paul seems to bend over backwards to let them know the integrity of oversight of such monies.

*2 Cor 8:23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

*2 Cor 8:24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.*

It was good that these other men were highly thought of that had been chosen to accompany Titus to Jerusalem with the offering. It is a great blessing to have good men of integrity in our churches. The bible says a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. Paul was glad these faithful men had been chosen so that the collection would be handled properly that no blame would fall upon him.

*Prov 22:1 A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and*

*loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

In verse 23, Paul puts his recommendation upon Titus lest any question his integrity. Titus was Paul's associate as a partner and co-laborer for them in the ministry. He also further gave his approval of the other brethren. These had been chosen and sent by the several churches involved for the glory of Christ.

That is a high position. Only a fool would take advantage of such a position and fools they were not.

In verse 24, Paul concludes by admonishing the Corinthian brethren to demonstrate to these godly messengers from sister churches (and to the churches themselves) "the proof" of their love. In other words, put your money where your mouth is. Demonstrate to them how we boasted about your promise to give.

Paul put the Corinthian church on the line. They had talked about giving but had not come through. Now Paul, in so many words, challenged them to put up or shut up. The proof of true love is in the pudding. It manifests itself in the degree of giving on our part. It was time now for the Corinthians to show their mettle.

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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