

II Corinthians 8 & 9 – The Grace of Giving

1. Intro

- a. One of the major objectives of Paul's third missionary journey was the taking up of a special "relief offering" for poor Christians in Jerusalem.
- b. Why so important? It would assist in meeting the material needs of the Jerusalem Christians. It would strengthen the unity between the Jewish and Gentile churches, Rm. 15:15-28, and it would silence Paul's critics who accused the Apostle of being an enemy of the Jews or Moses, Ac. 20:1, Gal. 2:6-10.
- c. Unfortunately, the Corinthians who had promised to contribute to the gift were not doing their part. As a matter of fact, an entire year had been wasted, 8:10.
- d. What were the reasons for not honoring their pledge to help? The low spiritual level of the church. "When a church is not spiritual, it is not generous." The invasion of false teachers who had siphoned off as much money as they could, 11:7-12:20, 12:14.
- e. To persuade the Corinthians to participate. Paul taught them that giving was an act of grace.

2. The Example of the Macedonian Churches 8:1-5

- a. Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were at least 3 Macedonian churches known by Paul.
- b. The example of the Macedonian churches:
 - i. They gave even though under "a great trial of affliction," 2
 - ii. They gave even though they were in "deep poverty," 2. The Greek word used here describes a beggar who has absolutely nothing and who has no hope of getting anything.
 - iii. They gave liberally, 2. They remind us of the paradox in Paul's ministry: "...poor, yet making many rich." (6:10)
 - iv. They gave willingly, 3. Needed no prompting or reminding as the Corinthians did. In fact, they begged to be included, 4. This was the only sense in which they were beggars!
 - v. They first gave themselves to the service of the Lord and others, 5, Gal. 1:4, 2:20. "It is impossible to love God and ignore the needs of others."
- c. Paul challenged the Corinthians to: follow the example of the Macedonian churches (1-5), to fulfill their power to contribute to the relief aid (6), to prove their sincerity (8), to prove their love (24), and to prove his confidence in them (24).
- d. Jesus is the perfect example of giving, 9, Phil. 2:5-8. "rich" – preincarnate state in Heaven. Jesus was "rich" yet He came to Earth. "Poor" – incarnate on Earth or His humanity. He was "poor and yet He gave. Why? That we might be rich. Since this was true, how could the Corinthians refuse to give to others?
- e. Regarding the contribution, Paul was "careful" in the following areas:
 - i. He was careful that the Corinthians understood that he was not "ordering" them to give, 8.
 - ii. He wanted the Corinthians to understand that there was a difference between "promise" and "performance" and "willing" and "doing," 10-12, Phil. 2:12-13.
 - iii. He was careful that the Corinthians realized that God was more concerned about the "heart" than the "gift," 12. "God sees not the portion, but the proportion."

- iv. He desired that the Corinthians understood they were not alone in this effort of helping the Judean Christians, 13-15. Paul saw an “equality” in the contribution, 14. The lesson is this: gather what you need, share with others what you can, and don’t try to hoard God’s blessings.
 - v. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that the men selected to handle the money were worthy to handle this task, 16-24.
 - 1. Titus was mentioned because he had done such a good job in Corinth, 6. He possessed a good heart, 16. Paul didn’t have to draft Titus for this work; he desired in his heart to assist in the gathering of this special gift. He was a good team player, 23-24.
 - 2. The “brother” mentioned in verses 18-19 might have been Luke. He possessed a love for souls, 18. He was chosen by the churches to carry the gift, 19. He, along with others, sought to glorify God with his ministry, 19.
 - 3. “Our brother” was probably one of the many people who often traveled with Paul, 22-23. He was responsible, 22. He was chosen by the church to carry the gift, 23. He was enthusiastic, 22.
 - vi. Paul urged the Corinthians “to show” all these brethren “the proof” of their love for the Lord as well as others, Jn. 14:15, I Jn. 3:13.
3. God Prizes Cheerful Givers 9:1-15
- a. Paul had boasted of the Corinthian’s generosity. As Paul writes II Cor., he has turned the tables and uses the example of the Macedonian churches to encourage the Corinthian church to fulfill its promise to give generously to the relief efforts, 1-2.
 - b. Paul stresses the importance of “planning” in our giving, 3, I Cor. 16:1-2. Paul was sending a few men ahead of him to make sure their gift was ready, so it would be a real gift and not look like the people had to give under pressure at the last minute (“as a matter of bounty, not as of covetousness”), 5.
 - c. Our giving should be generously done and not grudgingly given.
 - d. Note the principles of giving as stressed by Paul, 6-7: generosity, purpose, and joy. “Cheerful” is “Hilarion” (“hilarious”) in the Greek.
 - e. Remember that the law of “sowing and reaping” applies to giving as well as living, 8, Gal. 6:7-8. We reap in measure as we sow, Prov. 11:28, Lk. 6:38, Phil. 4:10-20.
 - f. A Christian’s attitude in giving is more important than the amount he/she contributes, 7. God has always loved a cheerful giver, Mk. 12:41-44. According to this standard, the giving of the Macedonian churches was hard to beat.
 - g. According to v. 10, Paul reminds us that God gives us resources to use and to invest for Him, Mt. 25:12-30. Paul uses the example of planting to explain that the resources God gives us are not to be hidden, foolishly devoured, or carelessly thrown away, but cultivated in order to produce more crops. You cannot out give God!
 - h. In verses 12-14, Paul stresses the spiritual rewards for those who gave generously to God’s work. Eccl. 11:1
 - i. God gave generously, purposefully, and cheerfully when He gave His only begotten Son, Jn. 3:16.

- j. A summary of the blessings of giving generously, purposefully, and cheerfully to the Lord's cause:
 - i. Our giving encourages others to give, 1-5.
 - ii. Our giving blesses us, 6-11.
 - iii. Our giving will meet our needs, 12.
 - iv. Our giving will glorify God, 13.
 - v. Our giving will unite God's people, 14-15.

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Post Office Box 292 · Woodbury TN 37190
thejustinreedshow.com/bibleresources