



Lesson 29: ***Excellence in Giving*** 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 9:15

The example of the Macedonians in giving

- ▲ *They gave out of their poverty and pain*
2 Corinthians 8:1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.
- ▲ *They gave with a perspective of privilege*
2 Corinthians 8:3 Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

The excellence of Jesus in giving

- ▲ *Christ gave very graciously*
2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.
- ▲ *Christians are very grateful*
2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

The exhortations to the Corinthians on giving

- ▲ *Note the previous plans for the offering*
 - ▼ *Paul had given plans for collecting the offering*
1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.
 - ▼ *Paul had given plans for carrying the offering*
1 Corinthians 16:3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.
- ▲ *Note the purpose of the offering*
 - ▼ *This offering is providing for the poor*
2 Corinthians 8:13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, 15 as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little." [Exodus 16:18]
 - ▼ *This offering is provoking praise*
2 Corinthians 9:12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.
 - ▼ *This offering is producing prayer partnerships*
2 Corinthians 9:14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.
- ▲ *Note the policing of the offering*
 - ▼ *The apostolic delegation*
2 Corinthians 8:6 So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. — 16 I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. 17 For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. 18 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. 19 What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. — 22 In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. 24 Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.
 - ▼ *The accountability defined*
2 Corinthians 8:20 We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. 21 For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.
- ▲ *Note the peer pressure in the offering*
2 Corinthians 8:8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

2 Corinthians 9:1 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.
- ▲ *Note the principles for the offering*
 - ▼ *Excel in giving*
2 Corinthians 8:7 But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.
 - ▼ *Expend and expand in giving*
2 Corinthians 8:10 And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.
 - ▼ *Enjoy your giving*
2 Corinthians 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
 - ▼ *Engage in the employment of giving*
2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. [Psalm 112:9]

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9:12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Notes on Paul's Benevolence Offering

1. Along the route of his third missionary journey (52-57AD), Paul collected a benevolence offering from the churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he would deliver in 57AD (Acts 24:17).

Acts 24:17 "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.

2. Paul promoted this benevolence offering to the Galatian churches (1 Corinthians 16:1-4), to the Macedonian churches (2 Corinthians 8, 9), to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8, 9), and to the surrounding churches of Achaia (Roman 15:26). Because Paul spent three years at Ephesus and wrote from Ephesus about this offering, it's only logical to believe that he collected from the church at Ephesus and the surrounding area (Acts 19:10) as well.

3. When writing Romans from Corinth in 57AD, Paul declared his intention to deliver this offering to Jerusalem, and shared his spiritual views on the matter.

Romans 15:25 Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. 28 So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. 29 I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. 30 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. 31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, 32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

4. Paul and Barnabas had previously collected a similar offering at Antioch to deliver to the Jerusalem church during the Judean famine in 46AD (Acts 11:27-30).

