

2 Corinthians 8-9 (New International Version)

¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵And 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. ⁶So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us^[a]—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹For 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.

¹⁰And 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. ¹¹Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹²For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

¹³Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴At 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, ¹⁵as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."^[b]

¹⁶I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. ¹⁷For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. ¹⁸And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. ¹⁹What 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. ²⁰We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. ²¹For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

²²In 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. ²³As 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. ²⁴Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

2 Corinthians 9: ¹There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. ²For 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. ³But 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. ⁴For 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. ⁵So 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.

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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. ⁹As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."^[c] ¹⁰Now 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. ¹¹You 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.

¹²This 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. ¹³Because 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. ¹⁴And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Corinthians 8:7](#) Some manuscripts in our love for you
- b. [2 Corinthians 8:15](#) Exodus 16:18
- c. [2 Corinthians 9:9](#) Psalm 112:9

OASIS: CC Gifts of Grace, 2 Corinthians 8 & 9
Bible Study for the “grow” portion in mid-May, for LC Meeting after CC visit

Possible starter question: Today’s study, which is triggered by GC’s capital campaign, focuses on the delicate topic of generosity and giving. Just to get warmed-up, let’s list some of the *good* benefits that come to mind when you think of giving. Also, what are several of the tensions and awkward concerns surrounding this topic.

Transition: Now, let’s grapple with God’s teaching and with our attitudes and practices.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead the study, discussion and application.

Reading of the Scripture: Let’s listen as 4 people read aloud the 4 paragraphs, 2 Cor. 8: 1-15.
(n.b. Consider giving the people a few minutes to study this section quietly on their own, which will help them have more to contribute in the discussion.)

First section (2 Cor. 8: 1-15):

- O vs. 1-5 What are some ways that the Macedonian churches were a good model?
(n.b. The historical context: during the 40’s and 50’s AD, the Judean believers had been hard hit by famine and persecution. The largely Gentile church in Antioch had been quick in sending relief and commissioning Paul and Barnabus to seek aid from the churches of Galatia. By 56 AD, the churches in Corinth and Macedonia (today’s Greece) had also taken initiative to join in this collection, for which the leaders of the Jerusalem church were very grateful.)
- O vs. 6-8 What are Paul’s hopes for the Corinthians?
 - I In what ways do you understand that Jesus has made you rich?
- O v. 9 What does Paul affirm about the redemptive model of Jesus?
 - I Which ones are internal or attitudinal—and why are these so important?
 - A Note Paul’s emphasis on “finishing the work” (v. 11). A pastoral crisis had erupted in the Corinth church and had disrupted their great start.
What sort of things might threaten or derail your best giving intentions?
- O v.15 In what ways does the experience of the exodus community (Ex. 16: 18ff) illustrate the sort of equality that Paul has in mind?
 - Summary of vs. 1-15:*** What would you say are “transferable principles” that Paul has provided to the Corinthians, that should guide our Christian giving?
 - A Which principle speaks “loudest” or most challengingly to you?

Second section (2 Cor. 8: 16 - 9: 6): (For time reasons, you may choose to skip this largely historical section. If time allows, read aloud this section and ask this observation question:

- O *What does this section reveal about Paul's careful concern that the administration or "processing" of this collection be done in a godly fashion?*

Third section (2 Cor. 9: 6-15): (Read aloud, perhaps 2 readers for the 2 paragraphs.)

- O vs. 6-11 What wisdom and insight does Paul now add in this series of challenges (from an agricultural truism to an affirmation of God's character from Psalm 112:9)?
(n.b. Remember that Paul is writing this portion to the relatively well-off Corinthians, which he might not have said to the poverty stricken Judeans.)
- O What do these verses tell us about God's character and activity?
- O What are Paul's aspirations for the Corinthians? Which deal with attitudes? With actions?
- O vs. 12-15 What are the potential results and benefits of the Corinthian generosity?
 - I Which of these are most motivating or challenging for you?

Summary and conclusion:

- A What from this Scripture do you find most challenging?
- A As you think about your giving and generosity, what attitude would you most like to see God form in you? What current attitude or tendency needs to be replaced or overcome?
- A Any new actions you want to cultivate? Any possible "growth edge"?
- A Let's think about how giving and growing are sometimes related. Any stories come to mind that you'd be willing to share with us of a time that you experienced growth or real satisfaction as a result of being generous?

Prayer together:

- for one another to grow in the grace of giving;
- for our church and *A New Day of Grace*.