

2 CORINTHIANS 8

Grace Giving

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 8: 1-5
Day 2	2 Cor. 8: 6-9
Day 3	2 Cor. 8: 10-15
Day 4	2 Cor. 8: 16-24
Day 5	2 Cor. 8: 1-24
Day 6	2 Cor. 8: 1-24
Day 7	2 Cor. 8: 1-24

Perhaps you have heard the story of a small boy whose mother gave him two apples, telling him to divide them with his sister. Attempting to teach her son the virtue of generosity, she informed the boy to give his sister the larger one. Looking perplexed, the boy said to his mother, "Look Mom, give her the apples and ask her to be generous." While humorous, the scenario is far too often accurate even among church people. Generosity is something we think others ought to do, but we are unwilling to do ourselves.

The fact is, however, generosity is directly connected to the level of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the Bible teaches being generous is being godly.

1. We Must Display Liberality in Giving (vv. 1-5)

For many people the subject of giving is a grind. Unfortunately, more times than not, those who hold reservations concerning any talk about giving are the very ones who possess a miserly understanding of stewardship. Grace giving begins with liberal giving (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

The believers in Macedonia were very poor. They lived in virtual poverty, barely scraping by every day. Being people of little means, they were readily despised and even persecuted for their poverty. Being poor meant paying little, if any, taxes; consequently, they were viewed as liabilities rather than assets. Yet the Apostle Paul deeply loved the Macedonians. He never forgot the vision God placed in his heart to minister the Gospel to them (Acts. 16:9). Though they experienced "deep poverty," their lives nonetheless "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Concerning their desire to give, Paul said, in essence, they begged for the opportunity to give, "Praying us" that Paul would, "receive the gift." The Macedonians' deplorable conditions were identical to or worse than the Jerusalem church! Yet the Macedonians insisted Paul take the gift even if it was "beyond their power" to give.

From this background, we learn two keys to unlock a spirit of liberality in giving. *The first key is from a negative perspective and has to do with affliction (vv. 2-3).* Though the Macedonians were dirt poor, no one possessed a more generous spirit than they. In short, being a grace giver has nothing to do with ability. The Macedonians went "beyond their ability."

The second key is from a positive perspective and has to do with affirmation (vv. 4-5). Not being deceived by thinking to buy God's favor by giving or self-sacrifice, the Macedonians "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." God does not want our money; God does not need our money. God wants us; He wants our heart. A grace giver affirms his or her first love — the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We Must Display Sincerity in Giving (vv. 6-9)

Grace givers are liberal givers. Grace givers are also sincere givers (2 Cor. 8: 7-9). Giving the Macedonians' faithfulness as an example for the Corinthians to consider, Paul now calls on them to complete what they began. In other words, he challenges them to "prove the sincerity of your love" by following through what they committed to do.

How do we know giving is the proof of our love? Paul reminds us that the greatest expression of love imaginable was Jesus Christ giving Himself.

First, Paul speaks of His prosperity. He characterizes Jesus as being “rich.” Here Paul speaks about Christ’s pre-incarnate glory with the Father (cp. John 17:3). He was rich in *possessions*. Indeed His possessions filled the entire universe (John 1: 1-4). He was rich in *position*. Every angel in Heaven bowed down to Him. They sang His praises continually. In fact, Christ Jesus was God (Phil. 2:5-11).

Paul also reveals Christ poverty as proof His love. For our sakes, Paul says, “He became poor.” The gift of Christ did not begin when Jesus died on the cross. Giving began in Heaven before the world was.

Finally, Paul cites the purpose of Jesus as proof of His love. He became like us so we could become like Him. Jesus proved the sincerity of His love by giving. No less is expected from us.

3. We Must Display Equality in Giving (vv. 10-15)

Grace giving is liberally giving with a sincere heart. Grace giving also bears *equality* in giving (v. 10). The Corinthians had committed a year earlier to giving assistance to the fledging church at Jerusalem. Now Paul reminds them it’s time to make good their promise. Performance must match the pledge (v. 11). He further instructs them to give only as they have received from God (2 Cor. 8: 12-15). The principle Paul reveals remains clear: equality.

In addition, equality suggests a *mutual sacrifice*. Grace giving is proportionate giving (1 Cor. 16:1). Finally, equality also suggests *mutual sharing* (vv. 14-15). The Macedonians shared with the Jerusalem church out of their poverty. Paul expected the Corinthians to share out of their bounty.

4. We Must Display Integrity in Giving (vv. 16-24)

We have learned grace giving is liberal giving from a sincere heart. Next we observed that sincere giving never complains about the amount. Instead a sincere, gracious giver stands on the principle of equity. Finally, we learn a grace giver is to give with integrity. In fact, integrity is the watchword of every person who gives graciously, liberally, and sincerely to the Lord (vv. 16-18).

Rather than risk being seen as being too close to the money collected, Paul puts in place instructions for precisely how the money is to be handled.

First, note the selection of a committee to care for the collection (vv. 16-19; cp. 22-24). Many times churches make mistakes placing the wrong people on a committee like this. Of course, it goes without saying that giving people must be placed on this team. Why? Because giving people are responsible stewards.

Second, note how they administered the collection (vv. 20-21). On the one hand, they sought to avoid difficulty (v. 20) and on the other they once again sought to provide integrity (v. 21).

Third, note the appreciation of the church (v. 24). Before the entire church the, “proof of our love” becomes evident. God has a special love for men who handle the money well, men who possess integrity. And, men who have integrity are men who are undoubtedly grace givers themselves.