

Second Corinthians 8

Introduction:

1. This chapter, regardless of impressions, is made of God's very words, by which we are to live (Deut 8:3; Luke 4:4).
2. Saints with spiritually sensitive and submissive hearts will find plenty here to encourage and instruct their souls.
3. There is a definite break here from the first seven chapters and their various short lessons and Paul's personal appeals.
4. Following the chapter outline given below, spiritually sensitive saints should (a) recognize and covet the grace upon the churches of Macedonia, (b) commit to performance based on Christ's great grace, (c) fully understand the nature of charitable giving for the poor, and (d) be provoked by the faithfulness and virtue of godly men.

Outline of Chapter 8

- 1-5 Example of giving by Macedonian churches
6-11 Exhortation for Corinth to follow example
12-15 Nature of charitable giving for the poor
16-24 Character and value of faithful brethren

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

- A. "Moreover" indicates Paul's introduction of a new subject and a break from chapter seven, for the word is a marker of the following sentences as additions to what was earlier written.
- B. "To wit" means to know, so that Paul is stating his desire for the Corinthians to know about the churches of Macedonia and their outstanding spirit and performance in their charitable giving.
- C. "The grace of God" is a metonym for their charitable giving for the poor in Jerusalem, where the cause is put for the effect, for it was God's grace that resulted in their liberal giving.
 1. It was the giving of the Macedonians that Paul's primary thrust, as the context shows (8:2-5,8).
 2. The giving here is charity for poor saints in Judea and Jerusalem (I Cor 16:1-3; II Cor 9:12-14).
 3. Paul used metonymy to give God the ultimate glory and to rightly identify the Source of giving.
 4. Giving, which is to be done with simplicity, is a gift by the grace of God to saints (Rom 12:6-8).
 5. It is here that a careful reader will remember Paul's exhortation to use the grace of God (6:1).
 6. When a man gives generously, it is God that causes him to do so (Exodus 35:21; I Chr 29:14,18; Prov 16:1; Ezra 1:5; 7:27).

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.

- A. The combination of factors affecting their giving created a glorious tribute to God's grace on them.
 1. The churches of Macedonia were in a great trial of affliction, being very persecuted by enemies.
 2. Their giving was not grudging, nor of necessity, but of abundant joy and excitement to serve.
 3. They were poor churches, without natural affluence to the degree of other churches in rich cities.
 4. They gave liberally, not miserly or conservatively, but rather freely, or more than they should.
 5. The combination of these factors made their rich, liberal giving all that much more impressive.
- B. The Lord does not measure by the single aspect of amount: He considers all factors (Luke 21:1-4).
 1. Therefore, we should not despise the day of small things, or when we can only give a little.
 2. Nor should we ever give grudgingly, or of necessity, for He will devalue such a gift to nothing.

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

- A. Paul freely witnessed that the Macedonians had given freely beyond their ordinary ability or means.
- B. "Power" in this context means ability to give, which they exerted beyond normal charity or mercy by giving a quantity that did not match their means – they gave beyond what would be ordinary charity.

- C. A key to their giving was that Paul did not have to force them, for they were willing of themselves; and it is here, as every parent and master knows full well, that cheerful initiative is most meaningful!

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

- A. Instead of Paul praying them with many intreaties to give, they intreated Paul to take their great gift.
- B. Instead of Paul convincing them to trust him with the offering, they gave it to Paul and his brothers.
- C. Great and godly men take the initiative in giving, and they trust the man of God in administering it.

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.

- A. Macedonia did not disappoint Paul by acting other than he had hoped, but by exceeding his hope!
 - 1. Paul knew full well their afflicted situation and poor condition, so his hope in their gift was low.
 - 2. But they gave more than Paul could have hoped or expected from them, as now explained.
- B. They made it clear that they and all they had were the Lord's, and they were then the apostle's.
 - 1. The giving of their own selves here is not conversion, but rather their total commitment to God.
 - 2. They then submitted themselves to the apostle and his colleagues with a full heart in the giving.
 - 3. As Paul does often in his writings, he ascribed their great response to the will of God (8:1).
- C. The Philippians, a principal church of the Macedonians, were known for their giving (Phil 4:14-19).

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

- A. Having witnessed the wonderful grace of God in the churches of Macedonia, Paul now exhorted the more affluent church at Corinth to emulate these poor saints in their liberal giving!
- B. Titus used his first trip to Corinth, following up for Paul, to encourage their giving in response to Paul's first epistle (I Cor 16:1-3; II Cor 2:13; 7:6-7,13-16).
- C. But now Paul, in conjunction with the delivery of this epistle, encouraged Titus to help the church at Corinth in completing the project and collecting the funds for their transportation to Judea.

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.

- A. Paul drew a conclusion from the Macedonian example, by "therefore," to exhort them to giving.
- B. Being a wise serpent and harmless dove, Paul commended them for general goodness (Matt 10:16).
 - 1. Corinth was an abundant church, abounding in every category of the gospel (I Cor 1:4-5).
 - 2. They abounded in faith, which was belief in the gospel and the gift of faith (I Cor 1:7; 12:9).
 - 3. They abounded in utterance, gifts of tongues and prophecy (I Cor 1:5; 12:10; 13:9; 14:23-26).
 - 4. They abounded in knowledge, which was the gift of knowledge (I Cor 1:5; 12:8,28; 13:9; 14:26).
 - 5. They abounded in diligence, by obediently obeying Paul's commands by epistle (II Cor 7:7-16).
 - 6. They abounded in love to Paul and his colleagues, as Titus had informed Paul (II Cor 7:7,15).
- D. Appealing to their abundant conduct in other areas, Paul pressed them for abundant giving as well.

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

- A. The degree or quantity of charitable giving was not a commandment, but only the general duty.
- B. Neither was Paul attempting to force them into giving at this point, but rather inducing them to give.

- C. Paul's exhortation to abundant giving for the poor saints in Judea was based on the outstanding example of the churches of Macedonia and his desire for Corinth to prove their love of Christ.
1. He would not deny Corinth the opportunity to match or exceed the Macedonians in giving, lest they be found to be an inferior church by this important measure of Christian charity.
 2. The sincerity of love to Christ is proven by the extent of giving for Him (II Cor 5:14; Luke 7:47), which is done by love for His brethren and ministers (Jas 2:15-16; I John 4:20; 5:1; John 13:35).

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.

- A. Here are several of the greatest reversals of fortune ever witnessed in the universe by God's grace!
- B. The Lord Jesus Christ was rich in heaven in the form of God, but became poor to save poor sinners.
- C. Sinners, made poor by Adam and their own sins, were made rich by His free and adopting grace.
- D. And the Lord Jesus Christ has been made rich again for having done such great things for God.
- E. For much greater detail in these thoughts, see the sermon outline, "[Reversal of Fortune in Christ](#)."

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.

- A. Rather than commanding their giving or the liberality of it, Paul gave advice for Corinth to conduct themselves like great Christians in light of Christ's sacrifice and the Macedonian example.
- B. It was a great opportunity for Corinth to love Christ, enhance their reputation, and help the poor.
- C. The church had already shown the Corinthian spirit by responding aggressively to Paul's first epistle (I Cor 16:1-3), as Titus reported to Paul (II Cor 8:6). They not only gave, but they gave eagerly and fervently, which is the sense of "forward" in this context. This is not a use of the Bible "froward."

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.

- A. Paul's exhortation for the church was to complete the full work of giving to its finish (II Cor 8:6).
- B. Willingness to give is a duty, but willingness without giving is dead (I Tim 6:17-19; Jas 2:15-16).
- C. It is a whole lot easier to will to do something than to actually perform what you were willing to do!
- D. The words, "out of that which ye have," is according to their ability, as the following context shows.

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.

- A. Here Paul took up a few elementary considerations of the nature of Christian charity for the poor.
- B. Giving begins with a willing mind, and the willing mind is a duty, not an option (I Tim 6:17-19).
 1. You cannot reason that since you are not a cheerful giver, you should therefore not give (9:7).
 2. You should get cheerful about the opportunity to give and then give accordingly (9:7)!
 3. In the same way, elders should choose to be willing in taking oversight of churches (I Pet 5:2).
 4. Giving without a willing (and cheerful) mind is to lose in every way, and it is sin (I Cor 16:1-3).
 5. The many Bible promises for liberal giving should not be expected by an unwilling giver.
 6. The key to the Lord is not the amount of the gift, but rather the cheerful attitude of the giver.
- C. Giving then continues based on what a man has to draw from for his giving, his financial ability.
 1. God does not expect the poor to give as much as the rich in quantity, nor does He allow the poor to escape giving altogether due to their poverty, for the little they have is from the Lord.
 2. The rich should be willing to give "out of" their abundance for the support of poor saints (8:11).
 3. The poor should not despise their small gifts "out of" their poverty to help the saints (8:11).
 4. For the Lord even took notice of the widow's two mites and praised her highly (Luke 7:47).

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

- A. Paul preempted any argument Corinth might have for excusing themselves from giving by distorting his call for giving beyond what God expected.
- B. The comparison here is between Corinth and the poor in Judea, as the following verse clearly shows.
- C. The purpose of giving is not to put yourself in poverty in order that others may be saved from it, for that would not remedy the situation, but rather transfer it from one party to another.
- D. The purpose of giving is not to make life easier for others, while you are burdened more by it, for the giving is to be from what you have, not from you could have by outworking those in need.
- E. The purpose of giving is to assist faithful and working men with the four necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and emergency medical care, which they are lacking by acts of God in their lives.
 - 1. Men who avoid work or refuse work should not be shown any charity (Prov 20:4; II Thess 3:10).
 - 2. The only things the Bible considers legitimate wants or needs are food, clothing, shelter, and emergency medical assistance, as the Good Samaritan reveals (Luke 10:25-37).
 - 3. If a man has been foolish or uninsured, the church has no obligation (Prov 18:9; I Tim 5:10).

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:

- A. The equality here is not communism or communal living, but rather providing of four basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, and emergency medical care (Job 31:16-22; Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 18:7; Matthew 25:35-40; Luke 10:25-37; James 2:15-16).
- B. The rich may remain rich, with only a commandment for readiness and willingness (I Tim 6:17-19).
- C. The certain recipe for universal poverty is to take the money (or capital) away from those who earned it or to whom God entrusted it, for then all investment and economic wisdom will cease. Just look at the ignorance, poverty, and inequities in the former Soviet Union and their satellite countries.
- D. The Corinthian church was a prosperous church in a prosperous city – they had abundance to share.
- E. The words, “That now at this time,” indicate that Corinth was in the present condition of being a giver: and one reason for their giving would be to perpetuate the godly principal of equality that could return the favor from others at another time.
- F. This text does not teach the lesson of I Cor 9:11, where carnal things are traded for spiritual things.

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

- A. When manna was gathered, which was only for necessary food, the efforts of the more diligent and strong were shared supernaturally with those more feeble and weak (Exodus 16:18).
- B. It is only by inspired Scripture we can learn certain spiritual applications from Old Testament events.
- C. The supernatural distribution of manna has nothing to do with sharing the wealth in other ways, for the Bible only stresses the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and emergency medical care.

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

- A. Here Paul began a new lesson, commending and explaining the value of faithful Christian saints.
- B. Not only did Paul desire this fruit of giving for the Corinthians, which would be to their credit before God and the churches of Christ, but Titus also was greatly concerned for this church.
- C. When a person has earnest care in his heart for another, it is the grace of God that put it there.
- D. If Paul by himself had sought to obtain this gift from the Corinthians, he could have faced greater opposition from his enemies in the church. So he was thankful for Titus’s eagerness in the matter.

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

- A. Though Paul exhorted Titus to perfect the Corinthians in this grace, Titus aggressively chose of his own mind to go to the church and press them in this duty and privilege.
- B. Paul was covering both Titus and himself from any charges by the false teachers at Corinth that Titus had been forced by Paul to visit Corinth and seek their liberal donations to the Judea project.

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

- A. The specific identity of this brother is unknown, but his reputation provides a good lesson anyway.
- B. The Corinthians knew who he was, for he was standing before them when the epistle was read.
- C. Here was a brother that was praised according to the rule of the gospel throughout all the churches.
 - 1. There is nothing wrong with identifying and praising men fully committed to the gospel, for the example provokes other sincere saints to emulate them (Ps 37:37; Phil 3:15-17; Rom 11:12-14).
 - 2. The matter of praise that matters is living by the rule of the gospel, not by any other matter.
 - 3. Saints understand the importance of their reputation with others (I Sam 2:26; Pr 22:1; Luk 2:52).

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:

- A. This brother also had been specifically selected for financial integrity in carrying the gift to Judea.
- B. The common bond among Paul, Timothy, Titus, and this brother was the same Lord Jesus Christ and His glory, which object should unite all saints in all churches.
 - 1. Whether an administrator like Paul or givers like the Corinthians, their bond was in Jesus Christ.
 - 2. When the goal is clearly and only the glory of Christ, there should be few questions of integrity.
- C. The basis for sending this man is not our presumption of you, but rather knowing your ready mind.

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

- A. There is an important and necessary goal in church financial situations to avoid any blame in gathering or distributing monies (Acts 6:1-5).
- B. Paul would not give his enemies any grounds to criticize or accuse him in this large financial project.
- C. All administrative and managers should learn from this holy and inspired example of the apostle.

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

- A. Absolute integrity in financial duties is required for the approval of God and the approval of men, and every minister and church must always be scrupulously honest and open in monetary matters.
- B. Of course, since you can hardly please wicked men, this requirement applies to good and honest men, for the wicked will always be questioning, complaining, and/or falsely accusing.
- C. A godly man or woman will always seek to win approval of God and men (Pr 3:3-4; Luke 2:52).

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.

- A. There are three persons under consideration: Titus (8:17), a brother (8:18-19), and a brother (8:22).

- B. These two last brothers were known by the Corinthians, for they arrived with the epistle; but they are unknown by name to us, by which silence we are directed to focus instead on their character!
- C. Since two or three witnesses are necessary to confirm any matter (Deut 19:15; Matt 18:16), Paul chose the value of three over two to be totally clear in this large financial transaction.
- D. Upon the seriousness of a major collection from Corinth, this brother was committed to be even more diligent and faithful in properly handling this financial matter than he had been in prior tests.

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

- A. Reference again is made to the three brethren – the three witnesses and financial couriers for the complete honesty of this monetary transaction – Titus and the two brethren (plural).
- B. Paul had to write this verse against any potential efforts by the false teachers in Corinth to discredit the gift or falsely accuse the means of obtaining and transporting it to Judea.
 - 1. If these false teachers were to question the role of Titus, Paul commended him as a ministerial partner and the one assigned to the church at Corinth.
 - 2. If these false teachers were to question the role of the other two brethren, Paul commended them by their election of the Macedonian churches and their character as reflecting Jesus Christ.
- C. The churches of Macedonia, who had trusted these brethren with a great percentage of their limited wealth, had confidently sent them as faithful messengers to carry this gift to Judea.
- D. The brethren chosen by the Macedonian churches as messengers were exemplary Christians and reflected the glory of Christ in their lives, which is a most noble ambition for every sincere saint.

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

- A. By the messengers from Macedonia witnessing the eagerness and liberality of the Corinthians, the reputation of the Corinthians as a church would spread far and wide.
- B. Paul concluded his present line of reasoning by exhorting the Corinthian church to prove their love of Christ and the churches by a generous gift for the poor brethren in Judea.
- C. The goals for the Corinthians to consider in their giving were the love of Christ and His people and Paul's ministerial confidence in them and boasting about them.
- D. There is a place and purpose in considering the perception of our actions by others – for godliness can be one of the means by which we provoke others to love and good works (Heb 10:24; Phil 3:17).

Conclusion:

- 1. How faithful are you with the grace of God in your life? Like the Macedonians (II Cor 6:1 cp 8:1)?
- 2. What level of initiative and performance do you have in living the gospel and its costly duties (8:3,5)?
- 3. Do you understand all that Christ did for you and what you owe Him (II Cor 5:14 cp 8:9)?
- 4. Are you performing all the things you have been willing or promised to do (8:11 cp Eccl 5:4-5)?
- 5. Is your praise in the gospel in this church? In any other church? Throughout all the churches (8:18)?
- 6. Is your life to the glory of Jesus Christ and an obvious reflection of it to others (8:23 cp Phil 3:15-17)?
- 7. Are you a liberal giver out of your bounty to support the needs of poor saints you meet (8:12-15)?

For Further Study:

- 1. The sermon outline, "[Reversal of Fortune in Christ](#)," provides a detailed exposition of II Corinthians 8:9.