

2Corinthians – Week 29

I. Christian Giving

A. Preparation for the collection (2Cor. 8:1-9:15)

i. A little background of Macedonia

1. Macedonia was a Roman province to the north of the province of Achaia.
2. According to Acts 16:9—10, Paul saw a vision of a man urging him to go to Macedonia and preach the gospel to them so he set sail to this region:
 - a. The first Macedonian city he entered was Phillip, converting Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailer and his household. (Acts 16:12ff).
 - b. Then he went to Thessalonica then to Berea (Acts 17).
3. Therefore, when Paul speaks of the Macedonian churches, these include the Philippians, the Thessalonians and the Bereans.

ii. 2Cor. 8:1 (ESV), “*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,*”

1. Paul begins his appeal to the Corinthians to fulfill their pledge to give by using the Macedonian churches as an example:
 - a. The word “grace” here refers to human generosity, which Paul understands to be something given by God.
 - b. Grace is God’s kindness towards us, especially through the gospel!
 - i. When people are spontaneously generous towards others, Paul takes this as clear evidence that God’s grace is working in and through them.

iii. 2Cor. 8:2 (ESV), “*for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part*”

1. God’s grace...
 - a. Does not lighten afflictions nor removes extreme poverty.
 - b. Instead, it opens the heart and wallet towards others!
2. When you squeeze oranges, you get orange juice!
 - a. The result of their persecution was not divisions, jealousy or bitterness, but rather, joy!
 - i. Why the joy? Because they knew they had better and lasting possessions -- cf. Hebrews 10:32-34
 - b. Their extreme poverty did not eclipse the grace of God: They did not offer excuses as to why they couldn’t give: They gave!
3. In the New Testament, the Christian’s joy has no correlation to his or her outward circumstances. God’s grace allows one to experience joy in affliction.
4. And even though a Christian may be poor, they can be rich in giving!
 - a. Remember the widow how gave 2 small coins? (cf. Mark 12:42-44)
5. Now, material wealth, on the other hand, may eclipse spiritual poverty!
 - a. Christ condemned the rich yet lukewarm church of Laodicea...
 - i. Revelation 3:14-22
 1. That church considered itself rich and prospering
 2. But the Lord considered it wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.
 - b. By contrast, in Revelation 2:8-11, Christ praised the poverty-stricken church at Smyrna also plagued by afflictions to be rich!
6. The Macedonian churches, like Smyrna, were blessed in the eyes of the Lord!

- iv. Three characteristics marked the given of these Macedonian brethren
 1. They gave sacrificially....
 - a. 2Cor. 8:3-4 (ESV), “*For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—*”
 - b. Paul did not tell them to give a certain amount nor a certain percentage.
 - c. Neither did the Macedonians prospered, giving them the ability to give out of their surplus.
 - d. Instead, they gave out of their poverty more than what could be expected.
 - i. Not only did they give according to their ability, but they went beyond that.
 - ii. A man who possesses \$100 cannot be expected to give \$1,000. For \$100 is his absolute limit.
 - iii. And a man’s ability would be determined by two considerations:
 1. Making sure his basic needs are met.
 2. Making sure he sets aside some money for future emergencies.
 3. Doing such would be justifiable and understandable.
 4. However, the Macedonians, compelled by their love for their brethren whom they haven’t met caused them to disregard these considerations, causing them to give “*beyond their means.*”
 5. By doing so, they showed their complete trust in their Heavenly Father, who knows His children’s needs before they ask Him (cf. Matt. 6:8, 25-33; Phil. 4:19)
 2. They gave on their own accord...
 - a. Paul emphasized this to show that he did not coerce them to give!
 - b. Like salvation, their giving was strictly a display of God’s grace working in and through them!
 - c. They volunteered to sacrificially give and wanted to participate in the relief effort!
 - d. However, Paul had to plea with the more affluent Corinthians to follow through with their pledge to help the poor saints!
 3. They first gave themselves to the Lord
 - a. 2Cor. 8:5 (ESV), “*and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*”
 - b. Their first and foremost love was Jesus!
 - i. They understood that meeting the needs of others was service to Christ (Mt. 25:30)
 - c. Their love for Jesus manifested itself by their love for Paul
 - i. They truly recognized him as God’s apostle and their gospel father!
 - ii. Their hearts were open wide to him!

- II. Paul never mentions the word “money” in these passages**
- A. Contribution is more than just the giving of money; it is ...**
- i. A favor (“*charis*,” gift, grace) – vs. 4**
 - ii. A taking part in (“*koinonia*,” fellowship, sharing) -- v. 4**
 - iii. A relief (“*diakonia*,” service, ministry) – vs. 4**
 - iv. An earnestness (“*spoude*,” diligence) – vs. 8**
 - v. Love (“*agape*”) – vv. 8, 24**
 - vi. A readiness (“*prothumia*,” willingness of mind) – vs. 11**
 - vii. Generosity (“*haplotēs*”) – vs. 2**
 - viii. Good work (“*agathos ergon*”) – 9:8**
 - ix. The harvest of your righteousness – 9:10**