

2Corinthians – Week 31

I. Review

A. 2Cor. 8:6-9

- i. Paul capitalizes on the Corinthians' repentance by pleading with them to complete their pledge to give.
- ii. Since the Corinthians excelled in diverse spiritual blessings (faith, knowledge, speech), Paul tells them to excel in the area of giving, which he calls an "*act of grace.*"
- iii. He lets them know that he is not commanding them to give, but encouraging them to prove the sincerity of their love for the Lord and His people by turning their pledge into reality.
- iv. Paul uses the example of Christ as the prime example of giving and generosity
 1. Thought He was rich, He became poor so that we might become rich!
- v. Now, Paul urges them to finish the work and reminds them of the divine principle of fairness...

II. Continuation

A. 2Cor. 8:10 (ESV), "*And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it.*"

- i. As Paul said in verse 8, he is not giving them a command, but his counsel.
 1. He uses reasoning (the generosity of Macedonians & of Jesus) to spur them on since genuine love for others does not come from issuing a command.
- ii. Their original intent was good, that is, a year ago, they started to plan to make collections for the destitute saints but somehow never came to fruition.
- iii. If they do not carry out what they originally intended to do, it will make them look bad.
 1. We learn in chapter 9 that at one time, Paul had used the Corinthians (Achaia) as examples to spur on the Macedonians.
 2. Now that the roles have reversed, it would be to their benefit to complete the work.
 - a. This will prevent from them from labeled as talkers and not doers.
 - b. This will also prevent them from being ridiculed for starting something they couldn't complete.
 - i. Remember the builder Jesus spoke of in Luke 14:28-31?

B. 2Cor. 8:11 (ESV), "*So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.*"

- i. Paul is not trying to recruit them in the last minute to give.
 1. They were the first ones to get involved.
 2. Now he is telling them to stop dragging their feet and finish their year-long task.
 - a. Delaying something diminishes motivation to complete the task.
 - b. Delaying also brings into question the initial willingness to do the task.
 - c. Not to mention, God frowns upon empty promises:
 - i. Eccl. 5:4-5 (ESV), "*When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.*"
 - ii. James 5:12 (ESV), "*But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*"

- ii. The phrase “*out of what you have*” parallels the phrase in verse 3, “*according to their means*”
 - 1. Paul is not telling the Corinthians to do as the Macedonians did and go beyond their means but only to give according to their means.
 - 2. Paul does not wish for them to go into debt or become burdened (cf. vs. 13).
- C. 2Cor. 8:12 (ESV), “*For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.*”
 - i. Paul assures them that whatever amount they give, if it’s done with a willing and a readiness of spirit, it is acceptable to God.
 - 1. What matters to God is what’s within the giver’s heart.
 - 2. Giving should be done willingly and not with a begrudging spirit.
 - ii. The phrase “*according to what a person has*” replaces the principle of tithing in the Old Testament
 - 1. OT
 - a. A tithe was to be given to the Lord (Lev. 27:30) – a tenth of their produce.
 - b. Tithing puts a focus on how much a person is to give (10%) and allows one to ignore how much is kept for oneself.
 - 2. NT
 - a. Under the new covenant, a Christian gives according to his ability, which means, he is able to give far more than a tenth and still have enough to provide for his necessities of life.
- D. 2Cor. 8:13-14 (ESV), “*For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.*”
 - i. Here, Paul is trying to deflect any possible complaint by assuring the Corinthians that the mother church in Jerusalem is not going to live the high life from these gifts.
 - ii. Four points of Christian giving are revealed here:
 - 1. Christian giving should come out of recognition of genuine need.
 - 2. Christian giving should not put the recipient on easy street.
 - 3. Christian giving should not put the giver into harm’s way.
 - 4. Those who help others in their time of need will be helped in their time of need.
 - iii. Equality or Equity?
 - 1. The NIV and KJV uses the term “*equality*” while the ESV, “*fairness*”
 - 2. Is Paul saying that the goal of giving is for each Christian, on a global level, to have equal amounts of material goods?
 - a. Equality, as we understand it, involves counting out equal shares of something: “You get two; I get two”
 - b. Equity involves fairness.
 - i. Equity is seen at the dinner table:
 - 1. If a turkey is carved, mom, dad and small child do not get equal shares, but they get a share according to their needs.
 - 3. The better term is “equity” or “fairness”
 - a. Paul is not saying that a family of 1 should have the same amount of goods as a family of 7. He is merely teaching the principle of equity.
 - b. He is merely teaching the Corinthians that the whole goal of giving is to make sure everyone is cared for and that each has enough to survive.
 - c. This point (equity) is made clear in the next passage...

E. 2Cor. 8:15 (ESV), *“As it is written, ‘Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’”*

i. Paul uses the miracle of the manna to solidify his point by paraphrasing Exodus 16:18...

1. Exodus 16:18 (ESV), *“But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.”*

a. Note: an “*omer*” is about 2 quarts.

2. Paul takes this OT passage as a divine pattern of distribution of goods:

a. God supplied the needs of ancient Israel by sending them manna.

b. Those who acted greedily by hoarding the manna found it the next morning full of maggots and smelling bad (cf. Ex. 16:19-20).

3. The principle of divine equity is this:

a. Don’t hoard goods but use your surplus to help those in need.

b. And should you ever be in need, you will be helped as well.

i. Proverbs 11:25 (ESV), *“Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”*

ii. NIV puts it this way... *“A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”*