

# The Joy of Giving

## 2 Corinthians 8 v 1-15

### Context:

In his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16 v 1-4), Paul the apostle gave instructions to the church in Corinth about taking up a special collection of money to support the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing a severe famine at the time. It is clear that Paul was encouraging *all* the churches for which he had responsibility to participate in this offering of aid for the impoverished Judean believers. However, by the time he writes his second letter to Corinth it is evident that, for whatever reason, the Corinthian believers had made a start on the collection but hadn't completed it. So, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 to urge them to finish the work they began so that when he passes through Corinth the money will be ready for him to pick up and take with him to Jerusalem. Although these verses address a specific special one-off collection, they nevertheless contain some excellent general principles to inspire and challenge us in the area of giving our money to the Lord. Let's see what he has to say.

### Observation:

1. What does Paul want the Corinthians to know about in v 1?
2. What was the situation of the Macedonian churches and how had they responded according to v 2?
3. How did they express their generosity according to v 3-4?
4. How did they even exceed Paul's expectations (v 5)?
5. What task had Paul given Titus (v 6) and how does Paul describe the collection at the end of v 6?
6. What areas of the Christian life did the Corinthian's excel in (v 7) and how does Paul describe the collection at the end of v 7?
7. What is Paul's purpose in v 8?
8. Who does Paul hold up as a model for the Corinthians in v 9 and what is the model?
9. How had the Corinthians shown their eagerness the previous year (v 10)?
10. What command does Paul give them in v 11?
11. What principle concerning giving does Paul introduce in v 12?
12. What is Paul's motivation and aim according to v 13-14?
13. What OT text does Paul quote to illustrate this principle in v 15?

### Meaning:

1. How many times does Paul use the word '*grace*' in these verses and what does that tell us about both the purpose of giving and the power that makes it possible?
2. The Macedonian churches in Philippi and Thessalonica were experiencing severe persecution for their faith in Jesus (v 1). How do you think they could experience 'overflowing joy' in the midst of such trials?
3. How do you think these Macedonian believers were able to give so generously, even beyond their ability, in a situation of extreme poverty (v 2-3)?
4. Often church leaders find themselves urgently pleading with their members to give, but it was the opposite with the Macedonian church members (see v 4). Why do you think this was the case?

5. What do you think Paul means in v 5?
6. Paul seems to be suggesting in v 7 that giving can be a gauge of our spiritual temperature. Do you agree?
7. To what extent is our giving a test of the sincerity of our love (v 8) and do you think it is legitimate of Paul to compare the Corinthians with the Macedonians?
8. In what sense is Jesus the perfect model and example for us in our giving (v 9)?
9. Some people take v 9 to mean that God wants us to be financially rich as Christians. Do you think this is what Paul is teaching here?
10. How can we make sure that our actions as Christians match our words, so we walk the walk as well as talk the talk (v 10-11)?
11. Are you encouraged by the principle in v 12? How might we apply this principle to our own giving? What is more important – the amount of money we give or the attitude with which we give it – or both?
12. Paul outlines a principle of *equality* among Christians in v 13-15, but not one whereby everyone has *exactly* the same amount of money, but rather everyone has *exactly* what they need. How does the true story of God's provision of manna in the wilderness illustrate this principle (v 15 – see Exodus 16).

### **Application:**

1. How might our attitude and approach to giving be transformed if we allow it to be shaped by the word 'GRACE'?
2. How has this passage informed, inspired, and challenged you on the issue of giving?

### **Pray:**

- Thank God for his grace shown to us in Jesus.
- Pray for God's grace to motivate and empower your giving.
- Pray for biblical equality in the church – that everyone has as much as they need.