

## 2 Corinthians 17 - 8:1-15

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Today: Renewing the Corinthians' commitment 8:1-15

Example of the Macedonians 8:1-5

Completing grace 8:6-8

Example of Christ 8:9

Completing grace 8:10-12

Principle of Equality 8:13-15

Jerusalem collection

- Events

- When James, Peter, and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship they urged them to remember the poor, referring to the Jerusalem church, which Paul was eager to do (Gal 2:10). In his epistles he referred to believers in Jerusalem as the poor among the saints (Ro 15:26) and mentioned their need in 2 Cor 8:14, 9:12. This was not the first instance of the Jerusalem church being in need; Barnabas and Saul (Paul) delivered relief to them from the Antioch church during the famine in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:30). Their continuing poverty was caused by (1) ostracism by the Jews, (2) persistent food shortages in Palestine caused by overpopulation, (3) accommodating large numbers of visitors to the mother church, (4) crippling two-fold taxation (Jewish and Roman). It was likely aggravated by community sharing (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32)
- Paul initiated the collection among the churches he had founded. He directed the Galatian churches to take up a weekly offering (1 Cor 16:1) but there is no record of them participating. The Macedonian churches participated eagerly in the collection even though they were poor and afflicted (2 Cor 8:1-5). The Corinthian church in Achaia was the first to declare their enthusiasm about the collection (2 Cor 8:10) but later their zeal lagged (likely when they had a falling-out with Paul). He sent Titus to Corinth with a severe letter to bring about their repentance and reconciliation. On that visit, after the Corinthians repented Titus made a beginning with them to complete the collection (2 Cor 8:6). Paul also urged them to complete what they had begun (2 Cor 8:7-15, 9:1-4), which they eventually did (Ro 15:26). The Asian churches may also have participated since Tychicus and Trophimus from Ephesus accompanied Paul on his journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4).
- Guidelines for the administration of the collection were explicitly laid out to avoid accusations of dishonesty. The collection was to be made weekly as people had been prospered (1 Cor 16:2). Giving should be done as a blessing and not as a begrudging obligation (2 Cor 9:5). The funds collected would be taken to Jerusalem by representatives of the churches (1 Cor 16:3).

- The collection was taken to Jerusalem by Paul accompanied by representatives from the churches (Acts 20:4).
- The delivery of the collection is not recorded but It was likely delivered when Paul met with the elders of the Jerusalem church. They glorified God after he described the results of his ministry, which may have included delivering the funds from the collection (Acts 21:18-19). In Paul's defense before the crowd when he was accused of desecrating the temple he says that he came to Jerusalem to bring "alms to my nation" (Acts 24:17).
- The collection may not have completely accomplished its purpose of reconciling Gentile and Jewish believers. There is no record of the Jerusalem church assisting Paul during his imprisonments in Jerusalem and Caesarea.
- Purposes
  - To meet the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem. Almsgiving was an established practice in Judaism.
  - To fulfill his commitment to Peter, James and John to remember the poor (in Jerusalem) (Gal 2:10).
  - To pay back the debt owed by the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church through which the gospel had come (Ro 15:27).
  - To reconcile uncircumcised Gentile believers with law-observant Jewish believers. Paul expresses his hope that the collection will be accepted by the church in Jerusalem (Ro 15:31-32). This would demonstrate that they were all fellow citizens in God's household (Eph 2:19).
  - Perhaps to provoke unbelieving Jews to jealousy as they saw OT prophecies that Gentiles would send gifts to Zion being fulfilled in the church (Is 60:5; Hag 2:7).

Example of the Macedonians 8:1-5

2 Corinthians 8:1–5 (LSB)

1Now brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

2that in a great testing by affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the richness of their generosity.

3For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,

4begging us with much urging for the grace of sharing in the ministry to the saints,

5and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

- v1 The grace of God in Macedonia
  - we make known to you the grace of God
    - Paul tells the Corinthians about the Macedonian experience
    - Focus is not the Macedonians but the grace of God given to them.
  - which has been given in the churches of Macedonia
    - given in. Lit given into. Into their hearts
  - Why?
    - Not to shame or create rivalry.
    - To encourage them also to manifest the same grace of God. They should ask, "We have received the Lord. Where is His grace manifested in us?"

- v2 Grace manifested
  - that in a great testing by affliction
    - great testing. To prove the genuineness of their faith (1 Pet 1:6-7).
    - affliction. Persecution. Acts 14:22 Paul to the churches in Macedonia: Through many afflictions we must enter the kingdom of God.
  - their abundance of joy.
    - Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Not dependent on circumstances.
    - Suffering can produce joy in one wholly dedicated to the Lord. Acts 5:41 Peter and John before the Sanhedrin: So they went on their way from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the Name.
    - The Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) were dedicated to the Lord. The Thessalonian church accepted the gospel as the word of God (1 Th 2:13). It came to them in power and was manifested in their work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope, and joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Th 1:3-6)
  - their deep poverty
    - Material poverty. Unlike Corinth which was materially rich.
    - The region was ravaged during the Roman conquest and then by successive civil wars between Roman factions.
  - abounded unto the riches of their generosity
    - abounded. Was exceedingly great
    - riches. Spiritual riches.
    - generosity. Lit simplicity, single-mindedness as opposed to double-mindedness. The Macedonian churches had a strong sense of the unity of the body of Christ and were more than willing to help fellow believers in need.

- v3-5 Paul's witness
  - For I testify. Paul will give five evidences of God's grace in the Macedonians
  - according to their ability
    - As they were able.
    - Phrase used in marriage contracts: husband would support his wife "as he was able".
  - beyond their ability
    - More than they could reasonably afford
    - Used in marital complaints: the husband alleging that he had supported his wife "beyond his ability".
  - they gave of their own accord,
    - Better "of their own accord". Paul is focusing not on the act of giving but of their spirit.
    - Willingly, without being asked
    - May be willingly participating beyond their ability or willingly begging us to share in the ministry.
  - begging us with much urging for the grace of sharing in the ministry to the saints
    - begging. Coming alongside to accomplish a purpose
    - grace. Privilege
    - ministry. Technical term for giving to the poor.
    - to the saints.
      - To the church in Jerusalem
      - The Gentile churches were indebted to the Jerusalem church which had given them spiritual blessings (Ro 15:27).
  - not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.
    - Gk: themselves they gave first to the Lord and to us
    - Exceeded Paul's expectations that they gave money and then themselves
    - Dedicated to Jesus first then to Paul as His apostle.
      - The Philippian church commended by Paul for fellowship in the gospel (Ph 1:5) and supporting him in his ministry (Ph 4:15).
      - Contrast the Corinthians
  - by the will of God
    - Inclusio with v1.
    - All of God.
    - No cause for rivalry between the churches.

Completing grace 8:6-8

2 Corinthians 8:6–8 (LSB)

6So we encouraged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

7But just as you abound in everything, in faith and word and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

8I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

- v6 Encouraging Titus
  - We encouraged Titus
    - Paul's faithful helper
    - After he returned from Corinth with the good report
  - previously made a beginning
    - In 1 Cor Paul answers a question from the Corinthians about the collection (1 Cor 16:1-4). Titus may have visited before that or he may have delivered 1 Cor and started the collection then.
  - so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well
    - The Corinthians were the first to begin the collection a year ago (in the previous year) (2 Cor 8:10). Now they are lagging the Macedonian churches in completing the collection. Likely because of the rift between them and Paul. Titus is to help them complete it.
    - gracious work.
      - Lit "grace".
      - As manifested in the Macedonians: unity with all the churches in the body of Christ, willingness to help those in need, giving themselves to the Lord and His apostle.
      - Paul has in view their spiritual growth: by completing the collection they will manifest God's grace in their lives as the Macedonians had.

- v7 Abound in all grace
  - But just as you abound in everything, in faith and word and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you
    - In everything. As 1 Cor 1:5-7. Paul speaking positively, seeing them as new creations (2 Cor 5:16-17)
    - faith. They were standing firm in their faith (2 Cor 1:24)
    - word and knowledge. Understanding the word of God.
    - earnestness. Towards Paul as recently demonstrated (2 Cor 7:11-12)
    - the love we inspired in you. Towards Paul. Demonstrated when they repented (2 Cor 8:8).
  - see that you abound in this gracious work also.
    - See that you abound. Better “I am telling you these things so that you will abound”. Not commanding (v8).
    - gracious work. Lit “grace”. Unity of the body of Christ, eagerness to help those in need, devotion to the Lord and to His apostle.
    - Abounding in this grace would validate their other Christian graces.
- v8 Proving sincerity
  - I am not speaking this as a command
    - Not lording it over them (Mt 20:25)
    - Fellow workers with them (2 Cor 1:24)
    - Does not want to compel their participation. 2 Cor 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver.
  - but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.
    - Proving. Test to determine the truth. Paul wrote the severe letter to test them (2 Cor 2:9) so they would behold their own earnestness towards him (2 Cor 7:11). Now again he is attempting to show the Corinthians the true sincerity of their love.
    - the earnestness of others. The Macedonian example showed what could happen in churches sold out to their Lord.

Example of Christ 8:9

2 Corinthians 8:9 (LSB)

9For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though being rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

- you know. Because they had heard and received the gospel.
- the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - To the Corinthians through Him.
  - Willing participation. Manifested in action towards those in need.
- that though being rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.
  - 2 Cor 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- The grace of God in Jesus Christ is the true motive for Christian giving. How will the Corinthians respond?

Completing grace 8:10-12

2 Corinthians 8:10–12 (LSB)

10And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is profitable for you, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.

11But now complete doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it from what you have.

12For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

- v10-11a Profitable
  - I give my opinion in this matter.
    - Still not commanding.
  - this is profitable for you
    - Completing the work will bring eternal reward. Zeal without action is wood, hay, stubble (1 Cor 3:14-15).
    - It will demonstrate integrity.
    - It will bring maturity
  - who were the first to begin a year ago
    - A year ago (last year) they were in the lead; now lagging.
    - Likely interrupted by the rift with Paul.
  - Not only to do this but to desire to do it.
    - They were proceeding with the collection.
    - They were showing the same grace as the Macedonians.
- v11b-12 Reasonable
  - from what you have. As they are able
  - Acceptable. Before God. Two conditions
    - Readiness is present. 2 Cor 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver
    - According to what a person has.



Principle of equality 8:13-15

2 Corinthians 8:13–15 (LSB)

13For this is not for the relief of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality—

14at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality.

15As it is written, “HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK.”

- v13a Not for affliction
  - affliction. Causing suffering. Same word as 8:2 Macedonian affliction.
  - The intent of the collection is not to afflict the Corinthians while the Jerusalem church lives in luxury.

- v13b-15 Principle of equality
  - At this present time. When the Corinthian church is rich in material things and the Jerusalem church is poor.
  - Your abundance being a supply for their need.
    - Material abundance.
  - Their abundance also may become a supply for your need.
    - Spiritual abundance.
  - that there may be equality.
    - Equality means everyone's needs met.
    - Does not mean that everyone has identical possessions.
    - Does not mean that the Jerusalem church can live off the Corinthians. 2 Th 3:10 if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat.
    - Accomplished through giving.
    - Culturally, a gift required reciprocation and whoever gave the greater gift gained status. Here gifts are reciprocated and equal.
    - The Corinthians can be assured in the Lord that they will receive abundant recompense for gifts given now.
  - As it is written
    - From Ex 16:16-21 provision of manna
      - Provided by God
      - Every day each man gathered, some much and some little
      - Measured with an omer. Each received one omer per person in their tent.
      - Not to be hoarded
  - In the OT equality was enforced
  - In the NT equality is voluntary
    - God provides to His people, much to some, little to others.
    - God gives grace which causes His people to see themselves as all members of His body and to want to take care of the needy members.
    - Those with more give to those with less, as they are able, so that needs are met
    - Relationships are strengthened and the body of Christ is built up.

Application: Rich and poor

2 Cor 8:14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality.

How are we rich?

How can we give to those who are poor?

## References

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