

Text: 2 Corinthians 8:6-15

Title: Encouragement to Christian Giving

Truth: Giving is motivated by God's grace and guided by principles that help us display God's grace in our own lives.

Date/Location: May 24, 2026 at FBC (revised from 8/13/2006)

Introduction

Our series of messages in chapters 8 and 9 are not just about getting you to write more or bigger checks to the church, or (if you do not write checks anymore) to reduce the numbers in your bank account to increase the number in the church's bank account. The underlying point is that God wants us to give ourselves to Him and then abound in every grace that He gives us, including the grace of giving even in the times we are not very well off.

Our plan for this message is to examine some motivations and principles of giving so that we can see what grace-giving looks like. What I mean by grace-giving is that it is giving not motivated by coercion (law-based giving), but by God's grace as evidenced in the work of Christ in your life, and in the lives of others.

I. Patterns that Motivate our Giving, review v. 1-5, then 6-9

- A. As we saw last time, the churches in Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi had given a generous gift toward the project to help the poor in Jerusalem. Their gift was an evidence of God's grace in the midst of deep affliction, so that they gave beyond what they would be expected to give, even urging Paul to take their gift. This was a natural outgrowth of the fact that they had first given themselves to Jesus. He was first place in their lives, so His other people mattered a great deal to them. They desired to participate in a generous offering so they could show in practice their fellowship with other believers. Paul points to all of this as a motivation to the Corinthians to follow the Macedonian pattern.
- B. The second pattern that motivates Christian giving is the grace which was already operative in the lives of the Corinthian church. This is in verses 6-7. They had "come short in no gift" (1 Cor. 1:7) and they already had a good supply of a number of God's graces:

1. Faith. The ability to trust in Christ is a grace-gift of God.
2. Speech. The word *logos*, Christian speech and particularly gospel doctrine. It is a gift to be able to grasp the gospel.
3. Knowledge. Knowing sound doctrine and being able to live it. These things too are a grace of God.
4. Diligence. Spiritual zeal, energetically pursuing the Lord.
5. Love for Paul. Newly proven just recently, this grace is a subset of the larger grace of loving brothers, neighbors, strangers, and God Himself.

God's grace comes in many forms in our lives as Christians. Besides those above, and others, we learn that **giving** is also a manifestation of God's grace. Its not a fancy or showy "gift" but it is a gift nonetheless. Your giving is one of the ways that God's grace is evident in your life. If you do not give to help the church, or support God's work in any way, that grace is absent from your life.

Paul was moved by the Macedonians with the result ("so" at the start of verse 6) that he urged Titus to travel to Corinth to help them learn the grace of giving. This would add another grace to their abounding collection of grace in faith, speech, etc. God's grace is not designed to be exhibited in a stingy manner.

When Paul urges, "see that you abound in this grace also," he is saying that the Corinthians have a part to play. They are not just waiting around for the grace-mood to strike like a bolt of lightning. We are called to cooperate (*co operate = do something*) with God's grace. Macedonia did it. The Corinthians were to do the same. God's grace does not just produce things out of thin air! Sanctifying graces involve our participation. (Saving graces also involve our participation, but not with any merit of our own.) The lightning strike is not a voice from the clouds. Perhaps God would use the humble teaching of a small church as a way to encourage the grace of giving in your life.

- C. The third pattern of grace that motivates our giving is that which we see in Jesus our Lord and Savior. If the Macedonians were a

good example, and Paul is comparing the Corinthians to them, then the example of Jesus is even more pointed. Paul explains his point by saying that the Corinthians already knew the best example of a gracious and generous giver—Jesus Himself. He put love to action—not mere words—to save us from sin and death.

1. Jesus gave up everything so that we could be made spiritually wealthy. “Everything” was his glory in heaven, pre-existing His incarnation in ultimate wealth and riches, with angels at his beck and call, honor like no other, fellowship directly with God the Father and God the Spirit, manifest authority over all things, and probably many other glories we cannot contemplate.
2. The Macedonians gave out of their poverty. Jesus gave out of His riches to become poor in His incarnation, suffering and death.
3. The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord. Jesus too gave Himself first.
4. Jesus effectively exchanged his riches for poverty so that He could share with us riches of a spiritual sort whereby we could have eternal life. The riches thus gained by the Christian include eternal life by way of forgiveness and imputed righteousness (review that in 5:18-21).

Park on this idea for a minute and think about the good news that God in heaven came down as a man on earth to rescue our souls from sin and death. What love and care and sacrifice that took. And remember that Jesus is in the business of making us more holy like Him...including in the area of sacrificial giving.

II. Principles that Guide our Giving, v. 8-15

- A. The principle of giving voluntarily (v. 8a, 10a). Paul is *not* writing a command. He explicitly says it is NOT a command in 8a. And in verse 10 he gives *advice*, not a command. He could appeal to his apostolic office, but that would not accomplish what he desires, which is giving free of coercion. So too our giving must be free of coercion, with a ready desire, with a “willing mind” (v. 11-12).

B. The principle that giving is normal in the Christian life (v. 8b). I draw this principle from the portion that talks about Paul testing the sincerity of their love by the diligence of others.

How the Corinthians respond will show the sincerity of their love in comparison to others. At first blush this sounds kind of bad because we have a right sense that we are not supposed to be comparing ourselves to others, not in the matter of giving or loving. There is, however, a sense in which such comparison is legitimate and even helpful.

Let us suppose that you are unfamiliar with how a church “works.” Maybe you have never thought about it before and did not realize that to keep the doors open, the church needs some source of income. So, I explain to you that most Christians give money regularly, a substantial portion of their income, to support their church. If you doubted me, I could prove it with the example of three other churches full of people. Paul did that with Corinth: look at Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi. They have supported the relief project despite having some serious problems. What about you?

What that does to someone like you is to that you begin to think, “Wait a minute. I am a Christian. People like me who are Christians consider it *normal* to give money to the church, to support the ministry, to support the poor, to support missionaries, to support outreach. Why am I thinking I get a pass here? If people like me do not support the church, who does?”

If you benefit from the church’s work in some way, then it is normal and reasonable to support that work. You do not benefit from the work of a plumber or electrician or car repair guy and expect not to pay for it. Why should the church be all that different? Paul is going to see if the Corinthians really do love the Lord by comparing their conduct with their neighboring churches. Normal churches demonstrate their love for God by supporting the work. What about you there in the city of Corinth?

The church is not supported by the government except that it is not asked to pay taxes on its income or property. This is not income; it is simply that the government does not burden the free exercise of religion of its citizens by demanding their churches pay

a tax in order to exist and worship—that would be a violation of the first amendment of our constitution. Many secular people disagree with that, but that is our common heritage, and it is a sensible one.

- C. The principle that it is to your advantage to give (10a). Some people would think that giving to God’s work through the church would be to their own personal *disadvantage*. Much to the contrary, there are several aspects of advantage or benefit that come to the giver.
1. Sow bountifully = reap bountifully, a principle we will look at later (2 Cor. 9:6-10). This can apply both in the eternal and temporal domains. It can apply spiritually and materially.
 2. It is a benefit simply to finish what you start because it helps your spiritual life to be more in order.
 3. It is a benefit because it moves us closer in practice—not theory—to Christ-likeness.
 4. Another advantage is you are strengthening a partnership that may result in a return someday when you lack but the other side has everything it needs (see. v. 14).
 5. Giving results in eternal fruit. Php. 4:17 and 1 Tim. 6:19 teach us that giving enlarges the store of fruit that the believing giver has in heaven. Matt. 6:19-21 likewise reminds us about storing up treasure in heaven. If you store treasure in Heaven, it cannot be taken away, and that is advantageous.
 6. It is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).
 7. Giving demonstrates our love for Christ and His grace. It shows our dedication and trust in the Lord (Mark 12:41-44).
- D. The principle of completing the gift (v. 10-11a). The Corinthians had stated a desire to give and began to make it reality, but they stalled out. This was a long-term project, over several years, and two offerings were made (Acts 11 and then this larger one). Maybe the false teachers had an impact on them to redirect their giving. Therefore, Paul calls on them to complete the project. Make your completion score match your initial desire score.

Good intentions are good, but intentions only go a short distance. The apostle Paul urges the church in Corinth to complete their intentions so that they do not remain in the mere planning phase. He does not want us to be like the guy in James 2:15-16 who sees a need, and says, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” but does nothing about the need itself.

It does not matter that you cannot give a large amount right now. “I want to wait until I can give a large amount, like several thousand dollars.” Giving as worship does not wait until you give, just like you do not wait to worship. You just do it! That is not wise thinking because it procrastinates and does not actually help. Intentions do not get the job done. Act now, “out of what you have.” If you can give \$100 this week, do it. If your next paycheck is more or less, give accordingly. After a while, it adds up to faithful giving to the Lord, demonstrating where your heart is. Giving is like the tortoise and the hare—slow and steady wins the race. Giving is like investing using dollar-cost averaging—a steady approach that wins in the long run.

E. The principle of giving according to means (v. 11b-12). “It is accepted” is a passive verbal construction that indicates that God is the observer, the one who accepts or not. He judges a gift favorably if you desire to give it and give it in proportion to your resources. As we said last time, occasionally giving above-and-beyond is acceptable, but reckless giving is not in view. God evaluates the gift not on the dollar amount but on the heart.

If there was any place in NT Scripture that tithing could be mentioned and enforced, it would be here in this passage. It is not mentioned. We rightly conclude that it is not a mandate for the Christian today.

Verse 12 explains end of verse 11. The issue is a willing mind first, then giving is acceptable on the basis of what you can give, not what you do not have and thus cannot give.

The Macedonians were not well-off. But Paul does not indicate that the Corinthians were in desperate financial straits. They could afford a larger gift, and Paul is urging them to do so from the heart.

F. The principle of equality (v. 13-15). Paul is not advocating you give so that others would have ease and you would be burdened. There is no virtue in giving at a level of personal sacrifice so that others can enjoy a life of ease, as in people who are not pulling their own weight. That is a redistribution scheme run amok. Rich televangelists demanding money from their poor constituents is sinful. And there will always be poor people (Matt. 26:11).

Rather, giving is meant to supply a true need of the recipients, and sometime the level of the playing field will change and perhaps the recipients will be able to help the Corinthians. In the end, it will “come out in the wash” and balance out.

Note: the giving in this passage is reciprocal financial giving at different times. I do not take the giving to be financial and the return to be spiritual benefit. We find *that* idea in Romans 15:27.

Paul applies the principle of Exodus 16:18 to the present-day situation. If you read the surrounding verses there, Exodus 16:13-21, you will see that each person had to gather up some manna. They had to put in some work. But you can imagine a situation where one man has a sick wife and four children, and he cannot gather as much as a family with two healthy parents and two older kids. So, they share among themselves so that everyone has just what they need for the day. There was no saving the manna because it spoiled, so there was no sense in hoarding it for yourself. Our resources also will spoil, it is just that they last longer than a day, so we get the illusion that they are very long-lasting. But in the big scheme of things, they are not.

The method of achieving the “equality” in Exodus is a matter of discussion. Some believe it was normal means (I lean toward this view) while others say that there was a miracle for each person so that the amounts were “auto-magically” equalized for each family. Whatever view you take, it is crystal clear that Paul is saying our kind of equalizing is done by human action, not divine miracle. Whether miracle or not, God wanted there to be an equality of need, so we should do the same, but voluntarily.

The goal was not wealth re-distribution to enrich the mother church in Jerusalem. Later in history, schemes extracted the wealth of church people and redirected it to Rome are exactly *not* what Paul is talking about here. If Paul saw what happened with that over the centuries, it would make him sick.

Conclusion

Paul gives three patterns to motivate generous giving.

1. The Macedonians who gave beyond their ability (v. 1-5). We examined this in detail in the previous message. They took the initiative, asked Paul if they could help, and then gave beyond their means. This grew not out of a sense of coercion, but from their absolute dedication to God. They first gave themselves to the Lord, and everything followed.
2. The grace which God had already given the Corinthians (v. 6-7).
3. The example of Jesus Christ's self-sacrifice (v. 8-9).

Then we found six principles of giving:

1. The principle of giving voluntarily (v. 8a, 10a).
2. The principle that giving is normal in the Christian life (8b).
3. The principle that it is to your advantage to give (10a).
4. The principle of completing the gift (v. 10-11a).
5. The principle of giving according to means (v. 11b-12).
6. The principle of equality (v. 13-15).

MAP

What Else Is There to Talk About?

The importance care for others, like Titus. Recognize that our needs are not the only thing that matters.

How money should be handled in the church.

How to plan your giving.

More about sowing and reaping.

How your giving blesses others and glorifies God.

What is the deal with tithing? And faith-promise giving?