

The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Lesson 9

The Grace of Giving

In his first letter to the church at Corinth Paul gave them directions on the collection of money for the destitute church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4). Corinth had graciously offered to donate the money but subsequently had experienced a “falling out” with Paul because of various sin going on in Corinth that Paul admonished them for. Now that they have repented and the relationship was restored, Paul reminded them of the offering, and in doing so, writes the key New Testament passage on giving.

Read 2 Corinthians 8

1. There are hundreds of passages in the Bible about money and its powerful affect on people. What did Jesus say in Luke 12:34? Who gives the power to make wealth (Deut 8:18)? Were there any godly men in the Bible who were wealthy (Job 1:1-3, Genesis 13:2; 26:12-13; 30:43, Ruth 2:1, 1 Kings 10:23)? Money itself is morally neutral, so what is the problem (1 Timothy 6:10, 17, Ecclesiastes 5:10)?
2. Whose gracious example did Paul use to inspire the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:1-6)? Were the Macedonians enthusiastic and willing? Did they rise above their circumstances to give (2 Cor 8:2)?
3. Did the Macedonians view giving as a privilege or an obligation (8:4)? What Christian virtues did the church possess (8:7)? What virtue did they need to add?
4. Did Paul command them to give (2 Cor 8:8a)? What would their giving prove (8:8b)? Therefore, is giving an obligation or a free will expression of love?
5. What individual is the greatest example of love, generosity, sacrifice, and giving (2 Cor 8:9)? Describe Christ’s descent from riches to poverty so that we might ascend from poverty to riches (Phil 2:5-8, Col 2:9-10).

6. In 2 Cor 8:15, Paul used an interesting quotation from Exodus 16. Review Exodus 16:13-18. What gift did God give Israel in the wilderness? Did everyone have their needs met? Was anyone allowed to hoard this gift (Ex 16:4)?

7. Notice the repetition of the phrase “the grace of God” as it relates to the act of giving (2 Cor 8:1, 6, 7, 19; 9:8, 14). Apparently, giving is not some compulsory religious policy. Giving is considered in the New Testament to be the free grace of God flowing through the believer. How does Paul explain this in 2 Corinthians 9:7-8?

8. Many churches expect their members to “tithe”, meaning to give 10%. Biblically, where does this originate (Genesis 14:20; 28:22, Lev 27:30-33, Nu 18:21-24, Deut 12:11; 14:28)? The tithes of Abraham and Jacob were clearly voluntary. Do the commands of Moses in Leviticus and Deut sound voluntary or like the law? Who received the tithes in order to support themselves (Nu 18:21)?

9. Tithing was part of the law of Israel given by Moses to support the priests and the Temple. It was not voluntary, and since it was a national law it amounted to a tax. There were three different tithes. Therefore, how much were they really giving? Compare Jesus’ teaching on giving in Matt 6:2-4 to the O.T. compulsory giving. There is no command in the New Testament to tithe. What are the New Testament principles of giving as taught in 2 Corinthians 8-9 (8:3, 8, 12; 9:7)?

10. Paul encouraged giving using the analogy of sowing and harvesting. Everyone knows the size of the harvest is directly proportionate to the amount of seed sown (9:6). What are five blessings of the harvest (2 Cor 9:7b, 8-11, 12-13, 14, 15)? Historically do we know if the Corinthians in Achaia came through and gave graciously (Romans 15:25-27)?