

English Transcript

Biblical Giving Principles

Lesson 4 (Part 1): A Model to Follow (2 Corinthians 8 and 9)

Welcome back to Biblical Giving Principles as we continue with Lesson 4. We have established three foundational principles for giving in the first three lessons.

Lesson 1: Maintain an eternal perspective.

Lesson 2: God owns it all! We are managers NOT owners.

Lesson 3: The Old Testament Tithe is a tutor for New Testament giving based on generosity and grace overflowing from the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

In this lesson, we will begin to identify specific giving principles so that we may excel in the grace of giving. We will study and discuss 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 that are filled with more than fifteen principles for grace-based giving. Please turn with me to page 16 in your handout.

Let me start by reading a key passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^[e] in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

“Money is not unscriptural or unspiritual. Even though money can be abused in unspiritual ways, material possessions themselves are neutral. When handled correctly, as God’s Word instructs us to do, money can become one of the most important means of expressing our love for the Lord Jesus Christ and our commitment to His eternal work. It can be an objective gauge of the depth of our devotion to Christ. So important is a proper understanding of finances and giving, the Apostle Paul devotes two chapters in 2 Corinthians to money’s relationship to the ministry.” – Charles Swindoll, *Living Insights New Testament Commentary: 1+2 Corinthians*

As we begin this study, it is important to understand a little bit about three churches that are mentioned in these two chapters.

Corinth:

- This church was planted by the apostle Paul on 2nd missionary journey. You can read about this in Acts 18.
- Corinth was a port city in Greece, and it served as a military and commercial hub.
- As a result of its strategic location, this city was very wealthy city and so was the church.
- This church was composed of Jewish and Gentile believers.
- The apostle Paul devoted much time to resolving the divisions within the church.

- The church in Corinth made a commitment to help church in Jerusalem. Yet, one year had passed, and they still had not fulfilled their commitment.

Jerusalem:

- This church was started at Pentecost (Acts 2). This was 20 years before the church in Corinth was established.
- The church was facing severe persecution. Most were shunned from family and friends because of their faith in Christ. Others were arrested, exiles, and executed.
- The church was experiencing financial poverty. They had no work, no money, and no food.
- There was an urgent need for other churches to help this church survive. Paul encouraged other churches to help financially as they were able.

Churches of Macedonia

- These churches were located in the Northern/Central region of Greece
- The three primary churches mentioned in the Bible are Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 16, 17)
- These three churches were planted by Paul on his 2nd missionary journey as well.

With that as context, we can now begin our study in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

The church in Jerusalem was hurting and facing extreme financial hardships. The church in Corinth was blessed in many ways, but internal strife and sinful behavior had caused the church to focus inward. To renew their vision for the kingdom, Paul provided the Corinthian believers with two examples of self-sacrificial giving.

The Macedonian Church

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-5 and list the principles of generosity and giving demonstrated by this church in each verse. Pause the recording now and restart one you have finished.

Welcome back!

Let us take time to discuss the observations you have made from just these first five verses. Remember that the apostle Paul is going to encourage the church in Corinth to excel in the grace of giving by providing two examples of what grace-based giving looks like in practice. We will simply discuss each verse in order.

8:1 The first thing I see in verse one is the “grace of God” and the impact God’s grace had on the churches like Thessalonica, Philippi and Berea. The grace of the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit transformed these believers. I encourage you to take time to read about the church in Thessalonica. The apostle Paul was with them less than one month, yet this small church was transformed by the gospel of grace. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8 Paul writes,

“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.”

In a short period of time God’s grace filled their head through the Word of God, that impacted their hearts, and they quickly began to live out the truth. They became imitators of Paul and his team and examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Their lives were like a bell or loudspeaker declaring the praises of God beyond their home church. In verses 9-10 we read,

“⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

The people that were impacted through their transformed lives testified to the spiritual transformation that took place. Others shared how these Thessalonians turned from idol worship to serve the living God. Don’t overlook this first principles of giving that speaks about the grace of God and how it transforms lives. As we focus on the grace of God, we will be fixing our eyes on Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith.

As we focus on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ the grace of the Lord will continue to overflow with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:12-17). This was the testimony of the apostle Paul and it should be the testimony of every follower of Christ. And this transformation will gradually influence every aspect of our lives. **Paul is letting the Corinthian church know how the grace of God has transformed the hearts of the Macedonians believers in the area of giving, generosity, and kingdom living. They were developing an eternal perspective and were learning that God owns it all. No longer would they lay up treasures on earth, but their focus was on eternal rewards.**

There is so much more we could say about verse 1 regarding the grace of God. But let us move on.

8:2 These churches were experiencing great persecution for their new faith in Christ. They were facing a severe test of affliction. They were also dealing with extreme poverty. We can see that generous giving for the kingdom is not limited to the rich or to just when things are going well. Giving is for all believers in good times and in severe affliction and extreme poverty.

We also see that the grace of the Lord Jesus was also transforming the inner character of these believers. The pressures from the outside were developing inner joy and contentment. Verse two says they had abundant joy. And this inner transformation of character had a tangible result. These poor believers began to give sacrificially. There was an overflow in a wealth of generosity. **So, in this one verse we see that these churches gave joyfully, sacrificially, and generously.** What brought about this behavior? I am convinced that it overflowed from the

grace of God through the gospel as we saw in verse 1. But there is still more.

8:3 We see in this verse that these churches gave in proportion to their means. Those who had more gave more. I sense that they were not comparing themselves to each other. They realized how much they had been blessed by God and they realized that everything they possessed was given to them by God in the first place. And not only did they give out of their abundance, but they gave beyond their means. This is another way of saying they gave sacrificially. Their giving cost them something. They also gave willingly or voluntarily. There is no sense that they were told to give a specific amount, but they gave on their own accord.

Grace-based giving is proportionate to one's income. It is sacrificial, meaning above and beyond one's means at times. And it is always voluntary, never forced or manipulated.

But there is still more.

8:4 These churches begged or pleaded to participate in this act of grace to help the poor church in Jerusalem. When is the last time you begged to be able to give. Usually, people are begging us to give in order to support a cause. There is something else in this verse that we must not miss. Grace-based giving that is transformed by the gospel understands the connectedness of fellowship that exists with the body of Christ. The word for “taking part” or “sharing” that is used in this verse is the Greek word “koinonia”. This word implies partnership, deep affection, and unity of purpose. These churches were hurting because their brothers and sisters in Christ, whom they had never met, and probably would never meet this side of heaven, were in deep distress. They wanted to help relieve their burden in some way, by God's grace.

Grace-based giving is fueled by the unity we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. This unity is not limited to just believers in a local church but should extend across churches and across geographic boundaries. This sense of oneness is what fuels global missions. This should create within us this sense of urgency to plead for the privilege of giving toward kingdom priorities in our local churches, community, and around the world.

8:5 Finally in verse five, Paul is amazed by something. These churches gave themselves first to the Lord. I sense this means that their first priority was to be devoted fully to the Lord in worship, reverence, thanksgiving, prayer, and submission. This focus provided the fertile environment for the grace of God to work in their lives to then respond with abundant joy and rich generosity.

When we give ourselves without reservation to the Lord, then the giving of our time, treasures, and abilities comes naturally, or super-naturally. We don't need to be convinced, manipulated, or coerced. We give freely with an open heart and open hands.

There are so many biblical principles of grace-based giving in just these five verses. The apostle Paul wanted the church in Corinth to be encouraged by these Macedonian churches so as to stir them to continue growing in the grace of giving.

What encourages you most about the way in which the Macedonian church responded to the needs of the church in Jerusalem?

In verse 6 and 7, Paul urged Titus to teach the church in Corinth about this grace of giving. They had made a commitment to give to help the church in Jerusalem, but they had not followed through. This church was blessed by God in many ways through their faith, speech, knowledge, and love. Now Paul and Titus wanted this church to grow to excel in the grace of giving (1 Cor 8:7). Giving must not just be an activity. It is not just about giving money. Giving is a spiritual barometer of our heart. Our giving can be a channel of God's grace into the lives of others.

Someone once shared this with me.

Money can buy medicine, but not health.
Money can buy a house, but not a home and a family.
Money can buy companionship, but not a friend.
Money can buy entertainment, but not joy.
Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
Money can buy experiences, but not wisdom.
Money can buy education, but not intelligence.
Money can buy sex, but not love.
Money can buy a crucifix (cross), but not a Savior.
Money can buy a "good life", but not eternal life.

I believe that God is less interested in the amount of money we have and what we give, and much more concerned about our heart attitude that is revealed through whatever we choose to give.

Paul was going to provide the church in Corinth with two examples of grace-based giving to encourage them. The Macedonian churches were example number 1. His second example would be the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-9.

"I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Notice that Paul is not commanding the church to give. Their giving must be an overflow from the grace of God in their lives.

We find no better example of gracious giving than in Jesus Christ. Summarize in your own words what is meant by verse 9.

Note the contrast between the Macedonian church and Christ. Though the Macedonians were poor, they gave as if they were rich. Though Jesus was rich, He lived like He was poor. Both

acted out of grace – giving sacrificially of themselves for the sake of others.

- Consider the grace of the Lord Jesus.
- He was rich (He is God, in heaven).
- He humbled himself and faced severe trial (death for our sin) motivated by great joy and love.
- He gave himself sacrificially as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.
- He gave himself voluntarily – He willingly laid down his life.
- So that we who were poor (spiritually) could become rich, blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

We read this also in Romans 8:31-32,

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

When we understand the grace of God through the gospel and the depth of Christ’s love, this should begin to transform every area of our lives, not the least of which is our approach toward giving.

Remember: God Owns It All!

Biblical giving follows the example of the grace of the Lord Jesus and flows first from full devotion to Him, that leads to joyful, sacrificial and voluntary giving of our time, talents, and treasures resulting in thanksgiving to God who owns it all.

The apostle Paul then continues to exhort the church in Corinth to overcome at least three common hindrances to our giving.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-15.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵ As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

First, **procrastination** can impact our giving.

We see this in verses 10-11. Procrastination is intentionally putting off something that should be done. This church made a commitment one year ago to give. Paul was encouraging them it was time to act. It was time to follow through with their good intentions. Some think that they may have been influenced by false teachers who were discrediting Paul and trying to convince them that Paul would use the money for himself.

A second hindrance to our giving may be tied to **hesitation** on our part.

We see this in verses 11-12. We can say that hesitation is delay because of uncertainty or questioning the timing of our giving. We may hesitate because we lack information to make our decision. If this is the case, we should ask questions to address our concerns. If we the ones who are asking for financial support, we must work to provide a clear picture of what is needed and the impact that the gift will have on the kingdom.

The verse also says that we are called to give based on what we have, not what we hope to have in the future. When needs are presented, the time to respond is in the moment based on what you have.

The third hindrance to giving, may be a **lack of trust in God** to provide for our own needs in the future.

We see this in verses 13-15. We may not give because we wonder how our own needs will be met in the future if we give away funds that could be used to meet our future needs. Paul tells them, that their abundance today will help those in need and in the future, we can trust that God will provide through the abundance of others to meet our need in the future. God is a good Father and he knows our needs. We can trust Him to provide for our daily needs. The way to overcome this lack of trust is to believe God and his promises. It is wise to save so that we can provide for future needs, but our trust should never be in our resources but rather in God. We can never out give God.

Which of these hindrances to giving have you experienced?

If you have lost the joy of giving focus on these three things:

1. Forget about what you do not have and reflect on all that God has given you.
2. Remind yourself of God's promises regarding generosity.
"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19
3. Examine your heart to see where you need to grow in the grace of giving.

We will close out this first part of Lesson 4 as we read and study 8:16-9:5 looking at financial integrity and accountability.

How gifts are given and handled are just as important as the heart attitude of the giver. The apostle Paul identifies Titus and unnamed brothers who would handle the collection of the gifts from the church in Corinth to be brought to the church in Jerusalem.

Let us first read 2 Corinthians 8:16-24.

Only qualified and trustworthy people should handle financial responsibilities. Let us identify the credentials of these individuals as we look at each verse.

8:16 Titus had the same kind of love and concern that Paul had for the believers in Corinth. Those who are responsible for finances and have authority must first have a love for the Lord and His church.

8:17 No one should serve in this leadership role because they are forced to serve. Titus was serving in this way on his own accord. He did so willingly on his own initiative. This follows the example of the Lord Jesus.

8:18 All leadership within the church should be done with a plurality of leaders. This provides accountability and protection along with many other blessings. Titus would be joined by another qualified leader who was well known by the churches for his faith and handling of the Word of God.

8:19 The churches had also commissioned this other leader for this important work. This would have been done in a public manner so that all would know that Paul, Titus and this other brother were being entrusted to handle these finances with integrity. The gift of administration is hinted at in this verse. The goal of this service was to glorify God in the way in which this large financial gift would be delivered and distributed.

8:20 It is clearly stated that these precautions were being taken to ensure that these leaders would be above reproach and nothing would bring shame to God or His church.

8:21 This verse continues the same thought of handling finances in a way that is honorable in the sight of God and others. Everything should be done for all to observe.

8:22 In keeping with the plurality of leaders, another man is added to the team whose character has been tested and proven genuine. He is very zealous for serving the Lord and he has a love for the church.

8:23 Titus was a partner and fellow worker with Paul. The other men also knew that they represented the churches in the region and through extension they were representing Christ. The church is meant to be a reflection of the character of Christ. This is why it is so important to be above reproach in all things, especially the handling of finances.

Here is a key principle from this passage: Money matters should be administered honestly and openly.

The money belongs to God so people are accountable to the Lord for how the finances are handled. We are also accountable to one another. When people give to churches, ministries, charities, they trust that their gifts will be used wisely and carefully, and in a manner consistent with the stated purpose and goals.

How have you experienced financial concerns because of lack of integrity and accountability for how the financial gifts have been managed?

What impact did this have within the church and the community?

In the final section of this lesson, let us read 2 Corinthians 9:1-5.

Paul knew the tendency to sometimes just put forth the minimum effort and say the task has been completed. These verses remind us that following through with what you have promised also demonstrates integrity and accountability. This builds trust and glorifies God!

“There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord’s people. ² For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. ³ But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.”

The eagerness of the Corinthian church to give encouraged the Macedonian churches to give generously. How would the Macedonian church react to find out that the Corinthian church did not follow through on their commitment?

God planned to use Titus and the two other men selected to serve with him to encourage the church in Corinth. They were not looking to pressure the church or make them feel guilty. Instead, they would reinforce the example of the Macedonian churches and the Lord Jesus as they encourage the believers in Corinth to excel in this grace of giving.

Biblical giving follows the example of Jesus and flows from a heart of devotion to the Lord for His saving grace. This then transforms our hearts to be overflowing with joy, having a willingness to sacrifice, and a deep love for the Bride of Christ, His church.

Think of a time when you followed through on a financial commitment and maybe even went above and beyond what was expected. How did you feel? How was the recipient of the gift blessed? How did others see the character of God through your giving and follow through?

We will stop here bringing an end to Lesson 4, Part 1. When we continue we will pick up with 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 as we discuss more biblical principles for giving God’s way.