

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #26 – Adult Bible Study**

**II Corinthians 8:1 – 9:15**

**April 8 & 9, 2025**

**8:1-7**

1. This section of the letter (chapters 8 & 9) may or may not have originally followed on from chapter 7. In either case, the subject matter stands as a complete unity from a thematic perspective and so determining its meaning and application is not significantly influenced by whether or not it is a fragment from a different letter.
2. Paul begins the discussion with the Corinthians by speaking about the Christians in Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea
3. The entire area was impoverished because of suffering under Roman occupation
4. The Christian population would have been even more impoverished, due to the persecution they suffered. Much of the persecution was economic: Christian shopkeepers would lose business when their new-found faith became known. As well, most Christians came from the lower classes.
5. Despite their relative poverty, the Macedonians were being financially generous, to a fault.
6. Their generosity is born of grace: their generosity is spurred by God's grace and their response to it. All giving is (or should be) first of all a response of gratitude to God
7. RSV uses word "relief" in verse 4 (as opposed to NRSV "ministry") – the original Greek sense here is of "menial personal service" – sometimes used to refer to how Jesus served us. The upshot is that the Macedonians were serving others through their offerings in the same way that Jesus served them and us!
8. Paul connects generous giving with other spiritual gifts (v7) such as faith, speech, knowledge, eagerness, and love

**8:8-15**

9. Paul is speaking carefully—but still forcefully—here because his relationship with Corinth has been strained
10. Some general rules for giving are given here:
  - a. Learn from the way others give
  - b. Give proportionally
  - c. Share with the more needy
  - d. (And, this can apply to more than just the giving of money)
11. There is more to giving than mere rules or formulas, however
12. Jesus' example is that he gave all: so there is a standard that can never be exceeded or encapsulated in a simple formula (such as a 10% tithe)
13. Paul is more concerned about the *attitude and spiritual situation* of the Corinthians than he is about actual amounts of money: *"For if the Christians in Corinth were unworried about the Christians in Jerusalem, it would not be long until there was no church in Corinth. There might be a group which continued to worship together, but it would have cut Christ out from itself."* (Ernest Best)
14. Note the Christology expressed in verse 9. Jesus must be explained and understood in many ways, using thoughts, ideas, images, and real-life examples along the way. What did Jesus do for us? In this case, while money is being discussed, Paul describes Jesus and what Jesus did/does for us in financial terms!

**8:16-24**

15. Here is discussion of the simple practicalities of collecting and disbursing money
16. Note that Paul employs a team – most Christian work is best done in teams
17. In ancient times there was no way to conduct audits or establish financial controls in the modern sense, making the need for personal integrity and track records of trustworthiness all the more necessary
18. There were traveling philosophers and teachers in the ancient world who were only interested in collections that would line their own pockets, and Paul himself had been accused of being one of these
19. One safeguard for giving lay in the fact that what people actually gave would be /could be reported to others
20. In an oblique way, here is scriptural support for the sacred necessity of the ministry of administration

**9:1-5**

21. Here is discussion of the very real and human “political” situation: Paul wants the Corinthians to be prepared to make good on their previous financial commitments – he does not want to spring a surprise on them
22. In addition to appealing to the example of Christ, Paul is willing also to set up a competition of sorts between the Corinthians and the Macedonians
23. And, Paul himself wants his boasting about the generosity of the Corinthians to be justified!

## 9:6-15

24. Paul restates and affirms a theological affirmation from Old Testament thought here: that giving generously is met with generous reward – and this can be true
25. On the other hand, the above is not always true, and further, is it a worthy motive for giving? Or is this motive simply a smart way of investing for greater return?
26. Perhaps the return is more spiritual than material
27. Paul is using every argument at his disposal to elicit generosity from the Corinthians, perhaps because of the dire situation in Jerusalem
28. Still, giving is a personal matter, between the individual and God
29. “Uncheerful” giving is that which comes from guilt or a desire merely to invest for greater return
30. “Cheerful” giving is that which comes from gratitude to God and corresponding love for others, a sincere and altruistic concern or empathy
31. Only cheerful giving can produce true joy in the giver
32. Verse 12 in NRSV speaks of “service” and in RSV speaks of “ministry” – both words translate the Greek “leitourgia” which is the root word of “liturgy,” the service or work of the people in worship – so Paul connects the service/ministry of financial giving with the worship of God – no surprise here because loving God and loving neighbor are one and the same thing!

## Observations about Giving and the Health of the Body of Christ

33. There were many reasons for the importance of the offering that Paul (and others) collected for Jerusalem
  - a. Giving is the natural response of those who have experienced God’s grace
  - b. Giving produces joy in the one who gives for the right reasons
  - c. Giving expresses on the human plane what God did/does in the heavenly plane through the giving of Jesus
  - d. Giving on the part of Gentile Christians will help Jewish Christians see the validity of Gentile conversion to the Jewish Messiah
  - e. Giving is not about legalism (no less and no more than 10%). For some, the tithe is too much, for others too little
  - f. Giving expresses and encourages the unity of the church – regardless of political, economic, social, class, or other boundaries between persons/groups
  - g. In this case, the offering was financial. But what other “offerings” are incumbent upon Christians when there is need in other parts of the Body of Christ? What other offerings are possible: information, knowledge, sanctuary, freedom, protection, solidarity?
34. Finally: Our ability to give and God’s call for us to give is itself a gift from God (v15)

## Questions for Your Life Today

- A. When was the last time you underwent a serious consideration and evaluation of your financial giving?
- B. When have you been the recipient of the generosity of others?
- C. When has your generosity been particularly helpful to someone else?
- D. When you consider your own giving do you think first about what Christ has given to you?
- E. How do you see (or not see) your financial (and other) giving as being tied directly to your own spiritual health?

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### Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of I Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator’s Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985