

**Text: 2 Cor 8.1-24****2 Corinthians:**

## Opening (1.1-11)

Addressing Corinthian Perceptions and Paul's Ministry Philosophy (1.12-7.16)

Defending Paul's Conduct (1.12-2.17)

Exposition of Paul's Philosophy (3.1-6.10)

Appeal for Corinthian confidence (6.11-7.16)

**Instructions concerning the offering (8.1-9.15)**

Assertion of apostolic authority (10.1-13.10)

Conclusion (13.11-14)<sup>1</sup>

At this point in Paul's ministry, he is working on raising funds for the church in Jerusalem. It is meant to build stronger ties between the Gentile Christians in his churches and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

"The New Testament reveals that Paul was actively collecting money for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26) for about five years (A.D. 52–57). He solicited funds from the Christians in Galatia (Acts 18:23; 1 Cor. 16:1), Macedonia (Acts 19:22; 2 Cor. 8:1–5; 9:2, 4), Achaia (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9), and Asia Minor (Acts 20:35; cf. Acts 24:17).

Delegates from most of these regions accompanied Paul when he took the gift to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4)."<sup>2</sup>

"Paul wrote as he did in the following two chapters in order to facilitate the collection and to set forth basic principles of Christian stewardship. This is not the first time that the Corinthians had heard about this collection.

Paul's abrupt introduction of the collection for the saints in 1 Corinthians 16:1, and his subsequent discussion of it in that chapter, suggest that he had spoken to them about it previously. Evidently they began to participate but then dropped the project. Perhaps the controversy concerning Paul that developed contributed to that decision (2:5–11; 7:12). However, now that Paul had learned that the Corinthian congregation was responding

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Constable, 2 Co 8.1.

more positively to him again, he could reintroduce the subject and press for its completion.”<sup>3</sup>

## I. The example of Macedonia (1-6)

As Paul turns to the offering, what does he mean by “grace” in v. 1?

The grace of giving (Paul uses this word ten times in 2 Co 8-9, the highest concentration of its use in any two chapters of the NT)

What testimony does Paul give to the churches of Macedonia? (1-2)

Despite poverty, these churches have been very generous

What aspect of the Macedonian testimony does he highlight? (1-2)

Their joy, their liberality

“If the Corinthians want to compete with the Macedonians, they should compete for the most joyful and willing attitude, not over the amount of money contributed.”<sup>4</sup>

What is the extent of Macedonian generosity? (3)

They gave beyond their ability of their own accord

How does Paul describe Macedonian earnestness? (4)

They begged Paul to allow them to participate

Paul uses ministry terms to describe the Macedonian gift, not monetary or business terms. The action of the Macedonians is spiritual, not earthly.

Terms like “grace,” “service,” and “partnership [*koinonia*]” sprinkle the text (and more than these). In v. 4 Paul uses “partnership [*koinonia*]” to describe the offering (“participation” NAU). What insight does this give us about Christian giving?

Giving is a partnership with God and other Christians to fulfill spiritual tasks

<sup>3</sup> Constable, 2 Co 8.1.

<sup>4</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 366.

What does the final description of the Macedonian giving testimony mean? (5)

The Macedonians gave themselves in this offering, as devoted to God and the leadership of Paul

What action did Paul take after discovering the Macedonian generosity? (6)

Paul sent Titus back to them (with 2 Corinthians) to get the offering ready in Corinth (or restarted if it had stopped) [see 1 Cor 16.1-4]

“Rather than scold the Corinthians for not having finished, Paul instead praises them for their initial enthusiasm. They remain in the beginning stages, however; and he delegates the responsibility for helping them finish it to Titus.”<sup>5</sup>

## II. Motivating Giving (7-15)

How does Paul begin his admonition to the Corinthians in v. 7?

He commends them for their gifts, earnestness, and on a restored relationship with Paul (assuming a positive response)

What does Paul mean by v. 8?

He is not issuing orders, but motivating them by the example of others

What does Paul offer as the supreme motivation for giving? (9)

The incredible gift of the Lord Jesus Christ

Compare v. 2 with v. 9. What is the difference between the gift of Macedonia and the gift of Christ?

Macedonia gave out of poverty, Christ out of his riches; either way, the spirit of giving is extolled

What do vv. 10-11 tell us about the history of the offering in Corinth?

They had begun the project at least a year earlier

<sup>5</sup> Garland, 29:372.

Paul exhorts them to complete the giving project, but what does he want more than obedience?

Readiness to desire to give: the right spirit is more important than the right amount

What makes any offering acceptable? To whom is it acceptable? (12)

Readiness makes it acceptable to God

When Paul talks about equality in vv. 13-14, what does he mean?

He means their offering meets a physical need, whereas the Jerusalem church in sending out spiritual leaders as missionaries met a spiritual need

What does the manna illustration teach about this principle of equality? (15)

Those who collected the manna had sufficient for their needs; as Christians give and receive, God equalizes things between churches so all have what they need

### III. Providing for Accountability (16-24)

Paul talks about two men in vv. 16-18. Who are they?

Titus and "the brother" — someone well known to them from the Macedonians

Why was "the brother" sent by the Macedonians? (19a)

To travel in assistance to the logistics of the offering

Who was overseeing the administration of the offering? (19b)

Paul

Why was he involving other men in administration? (20-21)

To provide accountability so that all things will be done properly

Another man is mentioned in v. 22, he is a proven trustworthy servant.

What role does Titus seem to play in this delegation? (23)

He seems to be in charge of organizing Corinth

Why does Paul speak of these three men here? (24)

He is offering a letter of commendation and wants the Corinthians to accept the men as official representatives