

Collection story for Jerusalem Church (2 Cor. 8: 1-15; 9: 6-12)

2 Cor. 8: 1-15 *1 We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; ²for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, ⁴begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—⁵and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, ⁶so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. ⁷Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. ⁸I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. ⁹For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹³I do not pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.’*

According to Chafin, in order to revive the interest of the Corinthian Christians in the offering Paul reminded them of the example set by their fellow Gentile Christians (vv. 1-7) and of the example of Christ (vv. 8-15). As Paul refers in these verses to the Macedonian churches who have given freely – probably Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea –he gives us several principles of Christian giving that are valid for Christians of all ages. First, giving is more a matter of the heart than of circumstances. Everything about the circumstances in the Macedonian churches would have suggested that, because of their own needs, this was not a good time for them to worry about the needs of others. They were experiencing both deep poverty and “*a great trial of affliction*” (v. 2), and yet they participated liberally and joyfully in the offering. Poverty does

not automatically create unselfishness nor does persecution automatically produce giving. It is isn't what we have or don't have that promotes happiness or generosity. According to Paul, it is the "*grace of God*" (v. 1) which creates an open and generous heart. *Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you**—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking (v.7). These words stress the truth that learning to be generous with material things is a matter of spiritual growth and maturity. It is always been inspiring to know people of quite limited financial resource who are exceptionally generous in their giving to the church because of the richness of their relationship with God.¹

[I had an elderly women who gets government assistance – very low income – saved up – who knows how long – made a generous contribution to our homeless mission. I was deeply shocked when I opened the envelope. It was \$1,000.00 cash.

Another principle Paul mentions here is paradoxical –giving became a joy when it comes out of sacrifice. Paul's model for sacrificial giving was Christ himself. "*Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich*" (v. 9). The Macedonian Christians had taken Christ's model, and in total disregard for their present needs or future requirements, they gave "*beyond their ability*" (v.3). Theirs was a sacrificial offering and it became an inspiration for Christians everywhere. However, in our day, statistics show the rate the poor is giving for charity much exceeds the giving of the rich. It is their sacrificial giving. Scholars observe that there is little sacrifice in much of our giving. At Christmas time our tendency is to spend more on presents for ourselves and family than we give to the Lord. And it has

¹ Kenneth L. Chafin. *The Communicator's Commentary on 1, 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1985), 259.

been estimated that the personal budget of most church folks for sporting events far exceeds gifts to religious and charitable causes. For the most part, there's little sacrifice or joy in our giving. But Paul lays down the principle that people who give generously out of love for the Lord and His church grow and mature in their faith because they don't count the cost. Another characteristic peculiar to these Macedonian Christians was that they didn't have to be pressured into giving. They evidently felt an inner pressure and concern which compelled their giving (vv. 3-4). They were not reluctant but joyful in their stewardship. Finally Paul said, *they gave themselves first to the Lord*. This is the clue to their (Macedonian) generosity. If we give ourselves first, the rest of material things come with it.

9: 6-12. *6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 9 As it is written, 'He scatters seed, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; 12 for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.*

Chafin claims that Paul reminds the Corinthians that there is a spiritual law at work in giving: *the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully* (v. 6). That familiar farm illustration states both the positive and the negative of the same idea. The negative point emphasizes the truth that when a person makes it a habit to give only a little, he or she can expect very little in the way of blessings. On the other hand, though, the personal rewards are great for those who habitually give generously. Chafin asserts that it is a mistake for us to feel that it is unworthy of the Christian to be interested in rewards. It is a part of life. It is a fact that those

who develop the habit of generosity are blessed of God. But it is a mistake to think of these rewards or blessings as always being material. He also observe that a person who continues to be preoccupied with accumulating material things and does not develop a spirit of generosity always falls short of achieving his or her full potential. In contrast, equally successful people who are generous seem to enjoy a higher quality of life. ²

Paul then makes an important point in verse 7 that giving comes from making a choice –a purposeful and deliberate decision [of giver]. Paul’s next point is that it is God who give us our resources, and it is God who creates the grace of giving in us. In verses 9: 8 -10 he gives us a reassuring word about the future. *God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.* ⁹ Paul picks up on the theme of sowing and reaping by saying, *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness* (v. 10). Paul is reminding the Corinthians about the provident nature of God very much in the spirit of Jesus who in the Sermon on the Mount told his followers not to be anxious about food or clothing or shelter because “your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (Matt. 6:32). ³ Paul assures his readers here that God would provide them with enough not only to meet their own needs, but also help others. The *New English Bible’s* translation of 2 Corinthians 9:8 reads, “*Thus you will have ample means in yoruselves to meet each and every situation with enough to spare for every good cause.*” The same translation of verse 10 reads, “*And you will always be rich enough to be generous.*” Paul concludes he chapter and ends his discussion of the offering by reminding his readers, and us, that giving has spiritual results. Paul lists several [spiritual]

² Kenneth L. Chafin. *The Communicator's Commentary on 1, 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1985), 267.

³ Kenneth L. Chafin. *The Communicator's Commentary on 1, 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1985), 268.

results; there are “*many thanksgiving to God*” (v. 12); it proves their love of God (v. 13); the Christians in Jerusalem began to pray for the Gentile churches (v. 14). This simply means that what looked like a money-raising project was in reality a kingdom-building event.⁴

[according to Mind, Body, Health, the impact of altruism

According to Korean pastor,

⁴ Kenneth L. Chafin. *The Communicator's Commentary on 1, 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1985), 269.