

Lesson 5      7 June, 2020

“God Loveth a Cheerful Giver”

**Lesson Scope:** 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

*References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise*

**Lesson Focus**

In this lesson text, Paul beseeches the Corinthian church to fulfill the promise of a love gift that they had committed to a year prior. He encourages them by praise for the Macedonian brethren who were first inspired by the Corinthians’ commitment, by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the exceeding grace of God that had changed their lives. By the combined love gift of these two churches for the needy Judean church, Paul hoped to bring further appreciation and cohesion between Jew and Gentile believers (8:4; Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25-31).

The principle of giving is taught throughout the Scriptures. Jesus left us a supreme example in that “though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, that [we] through his poverty might be rich” (8:9).

Christian giving springs from being a new creature in Christ. It is the privilege and responsibility of all believers. God’s work of grace in the heart produces a life of self-denial and generosity. As the believer gives himself to the Lord, he abounds in the grace of Christian giving.

God is the giver of all that we have to give to Him. We give back to God much less than He gives. We cannot be reminded of this too often. The greatest of all His gifts is the gift of salvation.

Be ready to explain the law of sowing and reaping in relation to giving. God rewards according to the attitude and sincerity of the giver rather than the quantity of the gift. The widow’s mite is a vivid example. To give much and yet not possess a true heart of love and compassion falls short, as is explained in 1 Corinthians 13:3.

**Lesson Aim:** To present New Testament principles for giving.

**Theme Verse:** Luke 6:38. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall

men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

## Lesson Text

### Bountifulness

#### 2 Corinthians 8:1-12

<sup>1</sup> (KJV) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. <sup>3</sup> For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; <sup>4</sup> Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup> And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. <sup>6</sup> Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also. <sup>8</sup> I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. <sup>9</sup> For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. <sup>10</sup> And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. <sup>11</sup> Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have. <sup>12</sup> For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

### Carefulness

#### 2 Corinthians 8:13-21

<sup>13</sup> (KJV) For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: <sup>14</sup> But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality: <sup>15</sup> As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack. <sup>16</sup> But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. <sup>17</sup> For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more

forward, of his own accord he went unto you. <sup>18</sup> And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches; <sup>19</sup> And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of your ready mind*: <sup>20</sup> Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: <sup>21</sup> Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

### **Willingness**

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

<sup>6</sup> (KJV) But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: <sup>9</sup> (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. <sup>10</sup> Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) <sup>11</sup> Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup> For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; <sup>13</sup> Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; <sup>14</sup> And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Willingness**

1. What prompted the Macedonian church to give? Why did the Corinthian church need prompting? (See also 9:2-5.)
2. Discuss Jesus' example (8:9) in regard to commitment and performance.
3. What makes it possible to give beyond one's power (8:3)?

#### **Carefulness**

4. How is equality maintained in the brotherhood?
5. How should we safeguard the charitable gifts of the church?

### **Bountifulness**

6. What attitudes and expressions militate against liberality?
7. List some rewards of cheerful giving.

### **Analysing the Passage**

“We do you to wit” (8: 1) simply means “we are making known to you.”

The Macedonian church gave joyfully in a great trial of affliction and liberally despite deep poverty (8:2). What a paradox indeed! But this is possible through the grace of God. Grace is here used to refer to the grace of God (8:11, 9; 9:8, 14) as well as the monetary love gift (8:6-7, 19). This gift is also referred to with the words gift (8:4), abundance (8:20), ministration (9:13), and distribution (9: 1 3).

“First gave their own selves” (8:5) expresses the core of Christian giving. Giving does not stand alone, but stands alongside the virtues of faith, utterance (teaching and preaching), knowledge, diligence, and love (8:7).

“That there may be equality” (8:14) means a likeness in proportion, not that all is absolutely equal, but that the immediate need is met through the help of those who have to share. Reference is made in 8: 15 to the children of Israel as they gathered manna (Exodus 16: 18).

God’s ability to give enabling grace and the extent of His liberality to the cheerful giver is manifested in the phrases all grace, abound, all sufficiency in all things, enriched, and all bountifulness (9:8, 11).

The “unspeakable [indescribable] gift” (9:15) doubtless refers to God’s eternal Son.

Though Paul had not yet delivered the love gift to Jerusalem, he writes in the present tense, confident that the Judean brethren’s reception of the gift would be positive (9: 12-15).

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **Willingness**

1. God gives grace, inspiring believers in the grace of giving (8:1-2). In fact, in some of the Epistles the opening salutations speak of God multiplying His grace. Believers need to draw from this Wellspring of

grace in prosperity and in adversity. Remember, though, even in dire situations, one usually has enough to share. Giving is not limited to money but includes giving of time and talents, being helpers of others' joy, and encouraging by letters, cards, and prayers.

2. A Christian gives willingly (8:3-4, 12). This willingness springs from a consecrated heart. The Macedonian brethren first gave of themselves and then stretched themselves to the limit. The children of Israel gave from willing hearts, so much that they needed to be restrained from giving (Exodus 35:21, 29; 36:5-6). Giving willingly is the proof of sincere love (8:8). Spontaneity is maintained by love for God and the church. God forbid that we should need to resort to worldly social fundraising ventures to meet the needs of the church. Giving should be mostly anonymous.

3. Jesus is our supreme example in giving (8:9). He committed Himself to be slain, before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Further, in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), He chose to follow through with His commitment. He chose to leave heaven's glory, to be made of no reputation, to be born a babe in a manger, to fill a servant's place, to be despised and rejected of men, to become obedient to death, even the death of crucifixion. On the cross He bore our sins in His own body, giving His own lifeblood for us all. Have we given to Him our soul, our life, our all?

### **Carefulness**

4. Christian giving promotes equality in the brotherhood (8:13-14).

Adversity comes to rich and poor alike. No one is always a giver. No one is always a receiver. Christian giving does not provide ease for some at others' expense. Rather, it provides equality in that each need is met.

5. Each Christian should know the joy of giving and receiving (8:14).

We are all receivers from the start. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Keeping this truth in mind should help keep us humble in giving. While giving yields the greater joy (Acts 20:35), the receiver need not feel inferior or humiliated, but should joyfully, humbly receive, thanking God for the giver and the gift. By giving we add to the receiver's joy and by receiving we add to the giver's joy, which in turn brings glory to God, the Giver of all.

6. Church monies should be handled by plural faithful brethren (8:18-

21). “Two are better than one” when testimony or witness may be required. Our policies to have two or more brethren to count the offerings or audit the church’s records help to maintain honesty and integrity before God and man. Each charitable gift needs to be distributed promptly, without partiality. Greed or pilfering of funds destroys trustworthiness (1 Timothy 3:8; 1 Peter 5:2).

### **Bountifulness**

7. Christian giving should be planned and voluntary (9:7). Priority and stewardship are in focus. Each household should plan according to what they have (8:12) and to what they purpose in their hearts to give. Then perform the doing of it (8:11). Our schools, the brotherhood assistance programs, and our missions at home and abroad must have priority in our giving. Our plans should be flexible enough to give more when unexpected needs arise in the brotherhood.

Mail solicitations for charity funds need to be carefully screened. In some organizations, a large amount of the funds given fail to ever reach the needy people. We need to be guided by the principle of stewardship rather than by impulse.

8. God loves the cheerful giver (9: 7). To be loved of God outweighs all the sacrifice required to be a cheerful giver. Giving grudgingly often stems from a judgmental spirit. Giving of necessity spells drudgery. God’s love and full blessings rest on those who are not regimented to only give what they see as their share.

9. Christian giving not only supplies the needs of the saints but also draws the church together and glorifies God (9:11-15). The prayers of the giver and the receiver blend together in commitment and petition, respectively. The performance of each results in the abundance of “many thanksgivings unto God.”

### **Important Teachings**

1. God gives grace, inspiring believers in the grace of giving (8:1-2).
2. A Christian gives willingly (8:3-4, 12).
3. Jesus is our supreme example in giving (8:9).
4. Christian giving promotes equality in the brotherhood (8:13-14).
5. Each Christian should know the joy of giving and receiving (8:14).
6. Church monies should be handled by plural faithful brethren (8:18-21).

7. Christian giving should be planned and voluntary (9:7).
8. God loves the cheerful giver (9:7).
9. Christian giving not only supplies the needs of the saints but also draws the church together and glorifies God (9:11-15).
10. God amply rewards the cheerful giver (9:6, 8, 11).

### Answers to Questions

1. What prompted the Macedonian church to give? Why did the Corinthian church need prompting? (See also 9:2-5.)

The Macedonian church was prompted to give by Paul's testimony of the Corinthian church's commitment to give (8:24; 9:2), by the grace of God that was in them (8:1), and by their desire to help the Jerusalem brethren (8:4).

The Corinthian church needed prompting because they apparently were slow in fulfilling their former commitment to give. Paul encouraged them to "perform the doing of it" (8:11); lest he and they be ashamed (9:4) and the Jerusalem church suffer from their negligence.

2. Discuss Jesus' example (8:9) in regard to commitment and performance.

Jesus chose to commit Himself to be the Saviour in God's plan of salvation before the foundation of the world. In the fullness of time He chose to fulfill what He had committed to do. He left the courts of glory to be made of no reputation; to be born a babe in a manger; to fill a servant's place; to be despised and rejected of men; to be obedient unto death, even the death of crucifixion. He bore our sins in His own body, giving His lifeblood for us all.

3. What makes it possible to give beyond one's power (8:3)?

It is only by the exceeding grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have been cleansed from our sin and received new hearts and the power of the Holy Spirit. It definitely includes first giving of ourselves to the Lord and the church by the will of God (8:5).

4. How is equality maintained in the brotherhood?

The word equality as it is used here means "likeness in proportion." In other words, no member is overlooked but everyone receives an amount according to the size of his need. Everyone's needs are met even though the amounts received are different. We meet the needs in the brother-

hood through freewill brotherhood assistance offerings. The deacons in each congregation are responsible to distribute according to the needs.

5. How should we safeguard the charitable gifts of the church?

Trusted men need to have the oversight of church funds—men of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Deacons are to be free from greed (1 Timothy 3:8) and blameless (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:10).

Gifts must be distributed promptly for each need according to the funds available, without partiality. It is best to have two brethren count the offering after it is collected. Giving should be mostly anonymous.

Financial records should be accurate, legible, and easily understood. All church accounts should be audited by competent brethren.

6. What attitudes and expressions militate against liberality?

Attitudes and expressions that militate against liberality on the part of the giver could be selfishness, lack of purpose and planning, lack of diligence, holding grudges, the drudgery of necessity, thanklessness, superiority, partiality, or a lack of sincere love. On the part of the receiver it could be a sense of entitlement, pride or partiality (“I won’t accept help from him”), thanklessness (“why wasn’t it more?”), or impatience (“why does it take so long to get help?”).

7. List some rewards of cheerful giving.

Some rewards from this passage are: God’s boundless love, God’s abounding grace, God’s exceeding grace, and God’s all-sufficiency in all things. Giving yields joy in every good work and brings abundant joy to others. Giving brings many thanksgivings to God, from the thankful receiver and from the giver who was thankful to be able to give. Giving enriches both giver and receiver.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Give as the Lord hath prospered thee, . . .

Give with a willing mind and free, . . .

He hath supplied thee o’er and o’er,

Blest thee in basket and in store,

Promised to fill thee more and more,

Thy gracious Lord.

Give to the poor along the way, . . .

Give to His people far away, . . .

Give to His needy as they cry,  
Give to His people ere they die,  
Give to His Gospel that it fly,  
O give, give, give.  
Give, though so poor thy gift may seem,  
Give but the cup in Jesus' name, . . .  
Cheerful then give the good thou hast,  
Fearless thy bread on waters cast,  
It will return to thee at last  
In harvests great.  
Give, give, with a willing hand,  
Give, give with a liberal hand,  
Give, give at His blest command,  
Who prospered thee.  
—*Palmer Hartsough*

### **Research Guide**

Study Bible examples of saints who gave themselves first and the extent of their gifts: the children of Israel (Exodus 35—36:7); Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2); Ornan (1 Chronicles 21); and others.