

THE BLESSING OF GIVING

Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 8-9

I. An ILLUSTRATION of Giving (8:1-5)

A. The *Character* of the Macedonians' Giving: enthusiastic generosity

1. Circumstances

- “severe test of affliction”
- “extreme poverty”

2. Attitudes

- Abundance of joy
- Wealth of generosity
- Sacrifice (“beyond their means”)
- Willingness (“of their own accord”)
- Eagerness (“begging us earnestly”)

3. Basis: They had first given themselves to God

B. The *Cause* of the Macedonians' Giving: God's grace (8:1) (= Desire + Ability)

II. Some INCENTIVES for Giving (8:6-12)

A. The encouragement of example (6, 8)

B. Their desire for excellence in Christian character (7)

C. Their gratitude to Christ for his self-giving (8-9)

D. Their sense of personal integrity (10-12)

III. God's INTENTION for Giving: Equality (8:13-15)

IV. INTEGRITY in Administration of Gifts (8:16-24; esp. vs. 20)

V. The IMPEDIMENT to Generous Giving: Covetousness (9:5)

VI. The INTERACTION in Giving (9:6-14)

A. What the Giver does:

1. He Gives out of what God has given to him (9:6-8)

a. Why?

- Prospect of gain (see Prov. 11:24-25; 19:17)
- It is pleasing to God
- To make room for God to replenish and expand resources

b. How?

- Generously
- Purposefully
- Cheerfully
- Not grudgingly
- Not under compulsion

2. He shares in the meeting of needs (12)
3. He proves the legitimacy of his faith (13)
4. He motivates others to give (2)

B. What God does:

1. He gives grace to meet the needs of the giver (8; Phil 4:19)
2. He gives grace to provide the resources for ministry (10-12)
3. He graciously insures a bountiful harvest (6, 10; Gal. 6:7-10).
4. He meets the needs of the saints through the giving of the saints (12)
5. He blesses the giver with joy (7: 8:2)

C. What the Recipient does:

1. He glorifies God and thanks him for meeting his needs (11-13)
2. He is encouraged by the evidence of grace in the lives of others (13-14)
3. He reciprocates in ministry through intercessory prayer (14)

VII. The IMPACT of Giving (Summary)

- A. The Giver is enriched.
- B. The needs of the Recipient are met.
- C. The bonds of fellowship between believers are strengthened.
- D. God is glorified.

VIII. One IMPRESSED Apostle (9:15)

Biblical Principles of Giving

1. God Himself is the Model, Motivator, and Equiper of all Christian giving! (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:8–10, 15).
2. Giving our money to the Lord is an extension of the prior gift of ourselves (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 8:5). The donation of a portion of our wealth is made in the recognition that *everything* we have belongs to God (Luke 19:11 ff.; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 6:19–20; 1 Chronicles 29:14).
3. The ability and motivation to give to the Lord is a function of grace (2 Corinthians 8:1, 3, 6, 7; 9:8–10). Grace is that work of God in us that gives both the desire and the power to fulfill God's will.
4. In God's eyes, the *attitude* of the giver is more important than the *amount* given (2 Corinthians 9:7). Accordingly, grace giving is to be characterized by:
 - joy (2 Corinthians 8:2);
 - cheerfulness (2 Corinthians 9:7);
 - liberality (2 Corinthians 8:2);
 - sacrifice (2 Corinthians 8:2–3);
 - eagerness (2 Corinthians 8:4, 7–8);
 - willingness (2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:2);
 - perseverance (2 Corinthians 8:10–12); and
 - integrity (2 Corinthians 8:20–21)
5. Giving is a spiritual exercise *all* believers—even poor ones—may participate in (Luke 21:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8:2).
6. The value of a gift is not determined by its amount but by its cost (Luke 21:14; 2 Corinthians 8:2). The question should not be, “How much can I spare?” but rather, “How much can I sacrifice?” Not “How much can I give?” but, “How much can I give up?”
7. We are not expected to give more than we are able. Often, however, we find that we can give more than we thought we could! (2 Corinthians 8:3, 12).
8. The extent of spiritual “treasures” or fruit is either limited or expanded by the extent of the gift (Matthew 6:19–21; 2 Corinthians 9:6).
9. The ability to give is granted by God, who gives even more to those who want to give more (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:9–11).
10. The opportunity to give is to be viewed as a privilege, not an obligation (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:7).
11. The greatest threat to generous giving is not poverty but covetousness (Luke 12:13–34; Acts 5:1–10; 2 Corinthians 9:5).
12. If we promise financial support, we must make every effort to fulfill it (2 Corinthians 8:10–12; 9:5).

13. Our giving is to be

- regular,
- individual,
- systematic, and
- proportionate (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

14. The results of grace giving include:

- A harvest of righteousness (2 Corinthians 9:10; Philippians 4:17);
- further enrichment of the giver so that he can give more (2 Corinthians 9:11);
- thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11–12);
- the meeting of needs (2 Corinthians 9:12);
- the glorifying of God (2 Corinthians 9:13);
- verification of the message of the gospel (John 13:35; 2 Corinthians 9:13);
- the offering of reciprocal prayers (2 Corinthians 9:14); and
- a strengthening of the bonds of fellowship between believers (2 Corinthians 9:14)