

## 2 Corinthians 8-9

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would You please turn in your Bibles to Second Corinthians chapter 8? We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this incredible book.

One of the most difficult, yet favorite things about teaching verse by verse through the Bible is I'm not able to skip over parts of the Bible that I would probably rather not talk about. Going verse by verse forces you and I to uncover what God's word has to say about topics that sometimes make us uncomfortable.

Chapters 8 and 9 of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians are one such example, for they deal entirely with the subject of giving.

I'm not alone in my tendency to cringe when the subject of giving comes up, for evidently the Corinthian congregation felt the same way. And Paul knew that, although they were excited about spiritual gifts, they needed to be exhorted about the importance of giving God's way.

On Paul's third missionary journey, as he traveled between the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, he took an offering—not for himself, but for the church at Jerusalem, which was going through hard times financially due to a severe famine in the region.

Seeing this as an opportunity for a bonding between the Gentile Christians in Greece and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, Paul was eager to complete the gift. And we'll soon see that the Corinthian congregation had initially welcomed the opportunity to help their brothers in Jerusalem, but after a year had passed, they

hadn't raised any money in the endeavor. So it's this issue Paul addresses in our text this morning.

And over the next couple of weeks, we'll see why we here at CCC do some of the things we do, because its in accordance with scripture.

So with that as the background, we'll be studying both chapters 8-9 and the title of this morning's message is Giving, God's way!

LET'S PRAY

I recently heard the story of an infant playing on the carpet of her parents house. **SHOW PIC** Almost like in slow motion, the little baby girl picked up a nickel, stuck it in her mouth, and swallowed it. Her mother saw what had happened and went hysterical. She screamed to her husband, "Quick, call 9-1-1, our baby just swallowed a nickel." **CLOSE PIC**

The husband responded, "Forget 9-1-1, call the pastor... he can get money out of anybody!" Sadly, that's the perception of many in the church today because the topic of giving has been so abused by pastors.

So it's critical to see what the Bible has to say about giving.

Remember, Christianity began in Jerusalem, and the Jerusalem church had sent out the first missionaries to reach Gentiles. Paul knows that now the Gentile churches can return the favor by showing their love for the Jews through their monetary support. Paul had already collected an offering in Macedonia. He uses it as an example to inspire the Corinthians!

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: **SHOW PIC** Macedonia was located in present-day northern Greece, and Corinth was located in the south of Greece. Paul wanted to fill Corinth in on what was happening with the believers to the north of them. **CLOSE PIC** And notice how Paul begins to describe it-the grace of God.

It reminds me of the family that attended a church that took the offering just before they took communion. The dad would give his kids a dime to put in the collection. One Sunday the youngest boy, who was new to the adult service, went to receive communion, when his mom gently whispered, "Son, sit back down you're not ready to take communion yet." With a loud voice the boy protested, "Why not, I just paid for it!"

And sadly, that's the attitude in many churches today. But the bible tells us that God's salvation can't be earned or bought. It's free. If your offering is an attempt to buy God's pardon, or God's blessing, or God's favor - then put your dirty money back in your wallet!

We don't give to get - we give to show our gratitude! Giving is a response to the goodness of God in our lives. And apparently the Macedonian churches - Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea - were all grateful for God's grace. Even though times were tough they'd been generous. Let's read verses 1 and 2 together

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia 2 that in a great trial of

affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. The Greek phrase in verse 2 translated, "deep poverty" means "rock-bottom destitution." In our lingo today we'd say "As poor as dirt." It's a graphic description that would cause someone to picture a beggar with nothing going for him, and with no hope of improving his circumstances.

Yet even though the Macedonians had very little materialistically, they still gave generously.

It's interesting, numerous different studies have shown that poor people are proportionally more generous than rich people!

Which proves our willingness to give isn't as much about what's in our bank accounts, as it is what's in our heart. Of course the balance in our bank account might affect the amount we can give, but it shouldn't affect our willingness to give.

Jesus demonstrated this principle with His shocking words in **Mark 12:41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites,[fn] which make a quadrans. 43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."**

Jesus was more interested in the heart behind the giving than he was in the amount of the giving. And this is what we see in the Macedonian churches, for Paul says...

**3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,** The Macedonians weren't pressured or badgered into giving, they asked if they could give!

It blesses me when someone approaches us and asks, "You guys don't pass the plate, so how do I give an offering around here?" I think you're doing it right when folks have to ask how they can give an offering.

Some churches pass a plate or offering basket, and that's fine. I have a very strong conviction that we are not to do that here, because I've seen the implied pressures of what offering plates bring to people.

I don't ever want someone to not come to church because they feel pressured to give. I don't ever want someone to come here and feel ashamed or embarrassed because the plate gets passed around. No this is a place of rest, of worship, of refreshment, of learning, of fellowship. If you feel uncomfortable because the conviction of the HS falls upon you then great. But if you feel uncomfortable because you feel pressured to give, that's a disservice to God in my opinion.

Continuing to speak of the macedonians giving...

**4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive[fn] the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.**

5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. Note, the priorities of the Macedonians. Before they gave money to God, they first gave themselves to the Lord.

Too many folks try to buy God off by giving money, hoping to pacify their conscience.

Here's the problem... God could care less about your money until you give Him your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. He wants you - not your money.

6-7

6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also. The church at Corinth abounded in the use of spiritual gifts. But so what if they spoke in tongues, and prophesied, and discerned spirits - if they were greedy and unwilling to help those in need? 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. “I’m not laying the law down on you,” Paul says to the Corinthians, “but here is an opportunity to prove the sincerity of your love for Jesus.”

See it's not the pleas' of a desperate pastor that motivates giving, it has to be a love of Jesus and for others that prompts our giving.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. Talk about giving, Jesus gave

Himself for us so that we could be spiritually rich. He left the hallowed halls of heaven for a life on earth!

Born in a borrowed cradle, Jesus preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, ate His Last Supper in a borrowed room, and was buried in a borrowed grave. He who made everything laid it all down and entered into total poverty that you and I might be rich. Jesus is our example!

Paul shifts his focus now to instructing the Corinthians to follow through on the pledge of giving...

10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they previously expressed the desire to give, but now it's time to stop talking and just do it.

This is one of the great dangers for us, for one of the hazards of Bible study is thinking that by writing something in our notes, or agreeing with it in our hearts, we're actually doing whatever it is we're agreeing with.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Jesus said this in John 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

It's very dangerous to soak in the word without applying it.

12 For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. ” This is great news! We all have different financial means-so it's not the amount of our giving, but rather our willingness!

Sadly, it's a common thing today for the “top donors” of a church to have special meetings with the pastors and leaders, to be part of an exclusive club. THAT IS WRONG!

Matthew 6:1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.[fn]

Only 2 people in our church know who gives and how much you give. Bob our treasurer, and Connie who runs our financial reporting. I never want to know who gives, who doesn't give, how much or any of that because I would never want the temptation to have money skew my conversations with people. We trust that the Lord will provide the necessary finances for this fellowship, not the people.

13-14



13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; 14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. This is the genius behind the simple tithe or tenth. To be clear, no amount of giving is mandated in the new testament. But I personally subscribe to a tithe, or a tenth, then give offerings on top of that. See if we all give a different amount, but the same percentage, everybody learns the joys of giving.

Jesus said **Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**”

God will not be a debtor to any man. And I will tell you from personal experience, you cannot outgive God.

15 As it is written, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.”<sup>[fn]</sup> Back in the book of Exodus, during Israel’s 40 years wandering in the wilderness, God provided wonder bread-supernatural manna that fed the entire nation. But God instructed the Israelites to gather just enough manna to last one day, and if they tried to hoard the manna, they would find their stocked up supplies would be stinky and full of worms. Haven’t you noticed that the longer we walk with the Lord, the more we discover that those physical things that used to impress us quickly become wormy and stinky to us.

**Luke 12 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to**

store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Does this mean as Christians we're not to have any possessions? Should we all live in a position of poverty? No, not at all. Abraham, the father of faith, was a very wealthy man. David, Solomon all incredibly wealthy. It's wisely been said most people can survive through poverty, but few can survive being rich.

1 Timothy 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain[fn] we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It's not wrong for us to have things or even want things. But it's wrong for things to have us because God wants us to be free. It's an issue of the heart

16 But thanks be to God who puts[fn] the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 17 For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. The rest of chapter 8 is basically a letter of recommendation for Titus and two anonymous “brothers.”

18-22

18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, 19 and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind, 20 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us— 21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you. Whoever this unnamed praise-worthy brother was, his job was to accompany the offering to Jerusalem with Paul. It was a security precaution. If something happened along the way - the money was lost, or stolen, or it sunk in a shipwreck - Paul didn't want anyone accusing him of having tampered with the money.

So Paul made himself accountable by not only making sure he did what was right, he also employed procedures that safeguarded his integrity...

We've done the same here! When counting tithes we make sure we have dual controls to ensure no one is tempted to skim off the top. We have 2 signatures that verify the totals, and then the

bank deposit each week is reviewed to ensure it matches those signatures.

We don't want to give the appearance of evil.

23 If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 Therefore show to them, and[fn] before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf. So Paul concludes here by telling the Corinthians to follow through in their commitment.

Chapter 9 1-2

1 Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous (worthless) for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. A year before the Corinthians were so excited to help out, it stirred up the other churches. Yet as we know, the excitement fizzled, and the Corinthians hadn't yet contributed.

It's fascinating, when you study the epistles you'll realize that Paul never criticized one Church to another. No despite the church's problems he would only highlight the things he could applaud them for, he never pointed out their faults and the failings to others.

What a good example for us to follow!

3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 4 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.[fn]Paul planned to bring some Macedonians with him to Corinth, and he wanted to make sure the Corinthian church weren't going to embarrass themselves by not having this offering ready that they were so previously zealous for.

So, because the Corinthians have demonstrated a pattern of not following through...

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. Paul doesn't want to come to Corinth with Macedonians and there be no offering. He's been talking up the church at Corinth, and he's concerned about the Corinthians not following through, so he issues these reminders...

Paul now concludes his exhortation regarding the collection by reminding the church of the benefits that God gives to those who give generously

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Just as there are natural laws in the universe—laws of gravity, laws of inertia, and laws of thermodynamics, there are also spiritual laws. And verse 6 lists one of them-If you give sparingly, you will reap sparingly; if you give bountifully, you will reap bountifully.

What does this mean exactly, how will we see the benefits, how does this all work?

I don't know how electricity works—whether the electrical current travels through the wire or spins around the wire. I don't know how light works—whether it's a wave, a particle, something in between, or something altogether different. I don't know how gravity works—but I utilize them all.

And even if I try to ignore the law of gravity, or the laws of electricity, or try to deny them, it doesn't change reality.

When I was a teenager I was standing in some water in my dad's machine shop, and I got shocked-I'll never forget that feeling in my life. Now I coulda said-'I don't believe in the laws of electricity, and guess what, I still woulda been shocked!

The law of sowing and reaping is as certain as the law of gravity. And so insistent is the Lord upon this principle that it is the only one about which God says, "Test Me."

God said this to the nation of Israel in **Malachi 3:10** "Will a man rob God?"

**Yet you have robbed Me!**

**But you say,**

**'In what way have we robbed You?'**

**In tithes and offerings.**

**9 You are cursed with a curse,**

**For you have robbed Me,**

Even this whole nation,  
10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,  
That there may be food in My house,  
And try Me now in this,”  
Says the LORD of hosts,  
“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven  
And pour out for you such blessing  
That there will not be room enough to receive it.

7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. This is why it's so wrong for a pastor to pressure or manipulate folks to give, as if God needs their money or His purposes will fail if they don't give? Remember, we're under grace, not law. Be led by God's Spirit in your giving.

God wants us to be “a cheerful giver.” The phrase could literally be translated, “a hilarious giver.” God wants us to give with joy.

If you are begrudgingly giving your tithes here, I encourage you to keep your money. God doesn't want your grumpy money, and neither do we.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. God is all-sufficient, and if you trust Him He'll be your sufficiency.

Listen if God wants this church to remain open, He'll supply our financial needs. And if the finances ever dry up, then we'll just shut it down because that means God has a different plan.

9-12

9 As it is written:

“He has dispersed abroad,

He has given to the poor;

His righteousness endures forever.”<sup>[fn]</sup>(he quotes Psalm 112:9)

10 Now may<sup>[fn]</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, The Gentile’s offering will not only meet the physical needs of the Jews in Jerusalem, it’ll cause their hearts to rejoice.

That’s the beauty of physical offerings-they turn into spiritual blessings.

13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!How fitting that Paul wraps up his discussion on our giving by reminding the Corinthians of the greatest gift... God's “indescribable gift” is Jesus



God Himself is a cheerful giver, for He willingly gave His own Son for you and I! God is pleased when we who are in His image give the same way He gives to us.

Do you have a difficult time letting go of the money that God's given you? It may in fact reflect an ungratefulness in your heart to God for what He's done.

**Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**