

- I) V1-2 INTRO: Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God
In Ch 8 and 9, Paul introduces a different subject
He begins to speak concerning a collection taken for poor saints in Jerusalem
- II) In order for us to understand this, we need to give a brief background
AS WE BEGIN
- III) The church was birthed on the Day of Pentecost (AD 33)
Almost from the beginning, believers had need of financial help
- IV) Part of the reason was because the gospel appealed to those in real need
The rich and well known were prone to reject its message: they had no need
Eccl 10:19 (For the well off) Feasts are made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, **but money is the answer for everything**
- V) Early Christians came from the lower economic classes
The early church drew the poor, offering salvation and community
- VI) Paul made it clear that the followers of Jesus were not rich and influential
1 Co 1:26 Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful (**influential**), not many were of noble birth (**high ranking**).
- VII) As the church began to regularly gather and be taught, needs began to appear
From the beginning, the church developed structure
The believers remained steadfast in the apostles' **doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread** and in **prayers**
- VIII) As they maintained regular fellowship, members became recognized as genuine
This helped them to **love one** another as they witnessed their genuine faith
- IX) The church became an ideal society that truly cared about others
- X) They began to do what Jesus had taught them to do
Lu 12:33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where not thief comes near, and no moth destroys
The church became a family of believers, dying to **self-interest**

- I) Instead, they were motivated by love and sympathy for others, and self denial
Ac 2:44-45 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need
- II) Practicing the teachings, enjoying fellowship and prayer produced a community
DEVELOP
- III) This moved them to support their fellow believers who were in need
This loving concern became an obvious element of their Christian faith
- IV) It fueled their response to meet **genuine needs** in the church
Ac 4:34-35 There were no needy persons among them. For **from time to time** those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone **as he had need**.
- V) As the church continued growing, needs began to increase in the fellowship
Ac 6 records the selection of 7 men for distributing goods to widows in need
AT THAT TIME
- VI) The church developed a structure to meet the needs of those who were truly poor
- VII) **Financial needs** became a continuing condition **in the church at Jerusalem**
Though they were **spiritually rich** in Jesus, practical concerns remained
YOU SEE THIS IN ACTS
- VIII) Acts 11 reports something that occurred at that time (AD 46)
Ac 11:27-30 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a **severe famine** would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help **for the brothers living in Judea**. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.
- IX) By AD 51 the Church in Jerusalem was still experiencing need
This is referred to when Paul met with the Peter, James, and John
Gal 2:9-10 (Paul said) James, Peter, and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue **to remember the poor**, the very thing I was eager to do.

I) In 1st Corinthians Paul closed the letter with a call to help these poor believers
1 Co 16:1-3 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them **with your gift to Jerusalem.**

FINALLY

II) How had many believers become impoverished?

FIRST

III) As already mentioned, many became victims of a famine that had hit them

SECOND

IV) By becoming followers of Jesus many Jewish believers were disinherited
Jesus had prepared them for this

Mt 10:34-36 Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

THIRD

V) According to Acts 8:1 a **great persecution** hit the believers in Jerusalem
This all contributed to a continuing need for help, in the church

AT THIS POINT

VI) **Some might wonder:** Why should gentiles be concerned about Jewish believers?

VII) For centuries Jews excluded gentiles because they were pagans, without God
Peter said as much when he spoke to a Roman man named Cornelius

Ac 10:28 You know how **unlawful it is** for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean

WHY SHOULD THESE GENTILES CARE?

VIII) **First:** Because in Christ, **there is no** Jew nor is there Gentile

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; **for you are all one** in Christ Jesus.

SECOND

IX) Because **Gentiles** should be thankful for what God did for them through Israel
This is shown by concern and care for others, including Jewish believers

Ro 15:27 For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they **owe it to the Jews** to share with them their material blessings.

THIRD

- I) Because there is **one church**, made up of both Jew, and gentile
Eph 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

PAUL IS TELLING THEM TO HELP THE JEWS

- II) Why should these Gentiles care about Jewish believers?
They should because they are **equally children of God** and followers of Jesus
They are part of the **One body** that is Christianity
- III) With this as a backdrop Paul returns to what he had commanded in 1st Corinthians
Set aside money to send to the poor in Jerusalem
BEGIN STUDY
- IV) V1-2 Moreover brethren, we make known to you **the grace of God** bestowed on the
He begins by using other **Gentile** churches in Macedonia as examples of giving
Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica are Macedonian churches

- V) Notice how he spoke of the generosity of **other churches** to provoke them

FIRST: WHAT HE ISN'T DOING

- VI) **He is not** doing this to encourage a **competitive, carnal** response from them
The church already had a competitive spirit that he had to address
1 Co 3:3 **you are still carnal**. For where there are **envy, strife, and divisions**
among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

- VII) They were already guilty of competition, and Paul rebuked them for this
1 Co 1:11-12 It has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ! Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Co 3:4 For when one person says, "**I follow Paul**," and another person says, "**I follow to Apollos**," you're following your own human nature, aren't you?

- VIII) This was one of the weaknesses of the church: they sowed strife
The **infiltrators** had taken advantage of this and had sowed discord about Paul

- IX) Because of this, Paul **would not** provoke them to **carnal competition** for money
WHAT IS HE DOING?

- I) He uses their generosity as a **model** to motivate them to **emulate their faith**
Heb 10:24 let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works
They should provoke one another to love, support, and service
FACT
- II) This is what believers are to do: **provoke one another** to love and good works
Our **examples** should **inspire** other believers to desire more of the Lord
IMPORTANT
- III) This is not something that should discourage us, but encourage us
It should be something **authentic in us** that people see and desire to have
ILLUSTRATION
- IV) In our own lives, we can serve to be examples and encouragers to others
Patty when she lived with Marie and me
WITH THIS HE SAYS
- V) V1 Brethren we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches
The Macedonians were examples to the Corinthians of God's grace in action
FIRST
- VI) He points out that their generosity originated in **the grace of God**
It was not their own goodness, but God's grace prompting their hearts to give
God's grace is the foundation of giving to others
- VII) Matthew Henry: The **grace of God** must be owned as the root and the fountain of
all good **in us**, or **done** by us, at any time
- VIII) We who have received **from the Lord** are careful **to give** to the Lord
We know that everything that we have first comes from Him
Ps 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and **everything in it** the world and all who live in it
- IX) We give, not to get but out of love and gratitude towards Him
- X) God bestowed grace on the churches of Macedonia and in response, they gave
This **free grace** bestowed on them produced a **generous spirit** within them
- XI) As a result, out of love for God and others, they cared for those in need
This grace was also available to the Church of Corinth **as well as us**
- XII) V2 Provides another insight into their giving and instructs present day believers
In a great trial of **affliction** the abundance of **their joy** and their **deep poverty**

- I) Paul points out that they were enduring a season of great trial and affliction
They were under affliction and persecution and barely had enough for themselves
- II) Thessalonica was a great example for other churches to imitate
1 Th 1:6-7 And you (Thessalonians) became **followers of us** and **of the Lord**,
having received the word **in much affliction**, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that **you**
became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.
- III) Paul uses them as examples because they gave when it was difficult to do so
Their trial of affliction and deep poverty resulted in sacrificial and joyful giving
- IV) Giving under such conditions both **refined** their faith, and **revealed** it
- V) Their trials produced great joy, and their deep poverty produced riches of liberality
Under the fire of affliction and poverty, joy and generosity had been refined
INTERESTINGLY
- VI) One commentator mentioned the church of Philippi had a core **of women**
(Ac 16:13-15) points out that the first converts were women
With the absence of bread winners (men) the women had little to give
- VII) In spite of this: They responded to difficult times with love and concern for others
- VIII) V3 For I bear witness that according to their ability yes **and beyond** their ability
Though they were poor, their giving was **proportionately** incredibly generous
- IX) They exercised faith, knowing that God would supply their need
Jas 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen **the poor** of this world to
be **rich in faith** and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?
- X) V3 They were **freely willing** (They weren't **coerced** or given **false promises**)
They were **freely willing** because they were **free to be willing**
- XI) This was because Jesus had set them free from their normal self-centered lives
- XII) They knew that the **love of money** is a trap to be recognized and avoided
Eccl. 5:10 Whoever loves money **never has money enough**; whoever loves wealth
is **never satisfied** with his income. This too is meaningless.

- I) They gave because they loved God, and cared for the people who were in need
They didn't put their trust in uncertain riches but in God who richly provides
1 Ti 6:6-8 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing
into the world, and **we can take nothing out of it**. But if we have food and clothing, we will
be content with that.
- II) They had learned to care for those in need, and the blessing of caring for others
Ac 20:35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support
the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed
to give than to receive.
- III) V4 **Imploring us** with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the
They were urgent in their giving, motivated by love and concern for others
They insisted on giving, reflecting a deep knowledge of God's grace and love
- IV) When the poor gave, the false teachers made accusations against him
THIS IS THE 16TH ACCUSATION
- V) Paul takes advantage of the poor, using guilt to take advantage of them
- VI) Paul made it very clear that they gave **of their own free will**, out of love
It was they, and **not Paul** who did the begging!
ILLUSTRATION
- VII) When we began our church, we did not receive offerings
We had our first Su am on 7/26/81 and received our first offering Wed Mar 2, 1997
This church was built on teaching the word and our **response of faith**
WHAT WAS THE ORIGIN OF THEIR GIVING
- VIII) V5 And this they did, not as we had hoped but **first gave themselves to the Lord**
We knew they were experiencing poverty, and had expected a small offering
Their sacrificial generosity proved to be an enormous blessing to Paul
FIRST
- IX) They first gave themselves to the Lord, knowing everything had come from Him
1 Chron 29:14 (David) But who am I and who are my people, that we should be
able to give as generously as this? **Everything comes from You**, and we have given You
only what comes from Your hand
When God has your heart, He has all of you
- X) They were stewards of what belonged to Him, and used their finances wisely

- I) They first gave themselves to the Lord to do with as He pleased
This opened their hearts to willingly sacrifice on behalf of their fellow believers
SECOND
- II) V5 They first gave themselves to the Lord **and then to us**
In first giving themselves to the Lord, they also gave themselves to trust Paul
- III) The few goods that they had were put at the disposal of the Lord and the Apostle
They trusted that Paul would dispose of it in a way that was honorable
THIS ANSWERED THE CHARGE
- IV) V6 So we urged Titus that as he had begun so he would also **complete this grace**
Paul heard they were faithful to God and loyal to him, and sent Titus back
- V) Paul knew that they would be faithful in their support of the church in Jerusalem
Titus will oversee the carrying out the disposal of this generous gift
This is what he means when he said he would also **complete this grace**
- VI) V7 But as you abound in everything-in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all
Paul had said this in 1 Co 1:7 **You come short in no gift**
- VII) V7 He says you abound in spiritual gifts
Faith, speech (vocal gifts like tongues, prophecy), words of **knowledge** and **wisdom**
- VIII) You are also diligent, abounding in eagerness to do the proper thing
This reminds me of what he told the church in Rome
Ro 12:11 **not lagging in diligence**, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord
- IX) V7 and in your love for us
Which is not just something that you say, but is observed by what you do
You are ready to do what you have been directed to do
- X) Since all of this is true
Abound in this grace also: Be loving and generous to those in need
- XI) You abound in faith, so exercise it and trust the Lord to use it and provide for you
Without faith you cannot please God
When you have true faith, you will abound in good works revealed by love

- I) V8-9 I speak not by commandment but I am testing **the sincerity of your love** by
If I commanded you to give, you most likely would obey the command
The problem would be that you would give because you were told to
- II) Genuine Christian generosity is not coerced, but is the fruit of love and faith
It springs from a heart sincerely touched by Jesus, not giving out of guilt
God weighs the motives of the heart
WHAT IS OUR EXAMPLE
- III) V9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet
Jesus was rich in the glory of His divine attributes: the Son of God
He became poor in emptying Himself and taking upon Himself flesh
- IV) Though He was God, took upon Himself human flesh and dwelt among us
He took the form of a servant, and gave His life for us
Phil 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming
obedient **to the point of death**, even death on a cross
- V) On earth, He chose the life of the poor, revealing the depth of self-surrender
- VI) When He was born, he was placed in a borrowed manger
When He preached to the crowds at the Sea of Galilee, He borrowed Peter's boat
When He triumphantly entered Jerusalem, He rode on a borrowed donkey
When He celebrated Passover, He borrowed an upper room
When He died on the cross, He was buried in a borrowed tomb
- VII) V9 that you through His poverty **might become rich**
He did this to save you, and to give you the abundant joy of eternal life
Eph 2:5-7 (God) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in
transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with
Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the
coming ages he might show the **incomparable riches of his grace**, expressed in his
kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- VIII) He gave His all for you: Will you not respond in kind to Him?
His sacrifice and **our response to it** is what provokes us to be generous to others