

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

Second Corinthians – Chapter 8

Example of the Macedonians

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia” (v1)

The churches of Macedonia are the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He wrote directly to the church in Philippi and the church in Thessalonica but the only reference to the church in Berea was in Acts 17:10-15 where he ministered and they had the testimony that *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).*

Paul will use this chapter to explain the grace manifesting in these churches that should be replicated in the Corinthian church and all churches.

“For even during a season of severe difficulty and tremendous suffering, they became even more filled with joy. From the depths of their extreme poverty, super-abundant joy overflowed into an act of extravagant generosity.” (v2 TPT)

It appears these churches were going through a season of difficulty, perhaps, persecutions in which Paul describes the season they are going through as “severe difficulty and tremendous suffering”. However, whatever they were going through did not affect their mood, attitude, or “love-tank”. Instead, the more the difficulty or suffering, the more they were filled with joy. The joy in their lives manifested in the act of extravagant generosity.

If there is anything to learn from this verse and the life of the churches in Macedonia, it is that nothing should affect the level of our generosity towards God and people. In difficulty, be generous! In the times of suffering, be generous! Even at times of poverty or lack, remain generous.

“For I can verify that they spontaneously gave, not only according to their means but far beyond what they could afford. They actually begged us for the privilege of sharing in this ministry of giving to God’s holy people who are living in poverty. They exceeded our expectations by first dedicating themselves fully to the Lord and then to us, according to God’s pleasure.” (vv3-5 TPT)

- They spontaneously gave,
- They gave beyond their means or they could afford,
- They begged to give,
- They exceeded Paul and his team’s expectations.

That is a glowing testimony of giving. They gave more than just an extravagant offering. They fully surrendered themselves to the Lord and gave out of a longing to fulfil God’s pleasure. This is the key to generous giving. First, we dedicate our hearts to God, which includes our finances, then we give to God’s work as he directs us.

Graces to Abound In

“So, we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 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.” (vv6-7)

Paul made mention a list of important graces that should be seen in our lives and in our ministries. They are:

- We have unstoppable faith.
- We have an anointing of grace to speak the Word.
- We have revelation knowledge.
- We have all diligence (excellence).
- We show love.
- We are generous.
- We abound (excel) in everything.

Q: Which of these graces is presently operating in your life?

Jesus Example

“I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. 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.” (vv8-9)

Paul is not compelling the church in Corinth but as a test of their love level, they should consider and learn from the example of Jesus. How did Paul explain the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

- He was rich (he was infinitely rich – TPT)
- For our sakes, He became poor (he impoverished himself for our sake – TPT)
- Through His poverty, we might become rich (by his poverty, we could become rich beyond measure – TPT)

Jesus gave all... that we might receive all.

Giving & Fulfilling Your Vow or Intentions

“So here are my thoughts concerning this matter, and it’s in your best interests. Since you made such a good start last year, both in the grace of giving and in your longing to give, you should finish what you started. You were so eager in your intentions to give, so go do it. Finish this act of worship according to your ability to give.” (vv10-11 TPT)

Apparently, the Corinthian church was not poor. They had intended, a year prior to receiving this letter, to make a generous offering to the believers in Jerusalem living in poverty. Paul encourages them to now follow through with their pledge.

Intentions is not the same as doing. Praying that you will give when the Lord makes a way is not always the best way to go. If it is in your heart to give, then just do it. Paul said “finish your act of worship according to your ability to give”

“For if the intention and desire are there, the size of the gift doesn’t matter. Your gift is fully acceptable to God according to what you have, not what you don’t have. I’m not saying this in order to ease someone else’s load by overloading you, but as a matter of fair balance. Your surplus could meet their need, and their abundance may one day meet your need...” (vv12-14 TPT)

Note the principles of giving Paul teaches here:

- A willing, cheerful offering is more important than the amount.
- Financial commitments of giving are to be taken seriously.

- We are to share our substance with those in need because the time may come when we may need their gifts or other's gifts.
- Our giving reflects our devotion to Christ.
- We are to give what we are able and not stress about what we cannot give. We are to give in proportion to our income.

Titus & A Honoured Brother

“I am thankful to God that he has given Titus the same real concern for you that I have. He is glad to follow my suggestion that he visit you again—but I think he would have come anyway, for he is very eager to see you! I am sending another well-known brother with him, who is highly praised as a preacher of the Good News in all the churches. In fact, this man was elected by the churches to travel with me to take the gift to Jerusalem. This will glorify the Lord and show our eagerness to help each other. By traveling together, we will guard against any suspicion, for we are anxious that no one should find fault with the way we are handling this large gift. God knows we are honest, but I want everyone else to know it too. That is why we have made this arrangement.” (vv16-21 TLB)

Paul affirmed the credentials of Titus in v23 *“Concerning the credentials of Titus, he’s my partner and co-worker in ministry for you. As for the brothers coming with him, they are apostles of the churches, which are the glory of the Anointed One.”* He calls Titus his partner and co-worker in the ministry. In Titus 1:4, Paul said *“To Titus, a true son in our common faith”*. Although, Titus was a co-labourer with Paul in ministry, he was also a son to Paul.

As for this other brother, we do not know who he is. It is widely speculated that it might be Luke, but no one knows for sure. However, this brother has a good testimony among the churches as a good teacher of the Word and he was elected to follow Paul and his team in taking this offering and gift to the needy in Jerusalem.

I guess the believers then are not so much different from the ones today. Paul wanted to remove any suspicion from himself therefore, asked them to nominate those who would guard the money until it reaches its destination.

Conclusion

“Therefore, show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.” (v24)

By your giving and generosity, you show or reveal your love. Your giving is a proof that you love!

