

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Chapter 8

Introduction

“Tithing or Tipping?” was the name of the article. In it the author criticized Christians for their failure to **tithe** to the church on a regular basis. Rather than tithe, he says they **tip** – giving a little here or there when they feel they have been treated to a good service.

Someone I was discussing the article with pointed out that “tithe” means *ten percent*, whereas tipping is now up to *fifteen percent!* Maybe we should encourage more tipping and less tithing!

You need instruction regarding your giving to the Lord’s work here on earth. You find that instruction in chapters eight and nine of Second Corinthians. Interestingly enough, the apostle Paul doesn’t mention tithing. He doesn’t even mention money! He talks about giving by using the word “grace” over and over, a total of six times in these two short chapters. Grace-giving is the standard for you as a believer.

As we begin to learn about grace-giving, we’ll see two things this morning: #1 Let God’s Grace Guide Your Giving, and #2 Let God’s Grace Guard Your Giving.

#1 Let God’s Grace
Guide Your Giving
(v1-15)

Paul was taking-up a collection from the Gentile churches to help the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. The saints in Jerusalem had suffered intense persecution for many years; they had been stripped of their possessions, prevented from getting all but the most menial of jobs, and even imprisoned. An offering from the Gentile churches would be of great practical help, and it would express the spiritual oneness of the church as the Gentile believers sacrificed for their Jewish brothers and sisters.

Paul used this collection as his opportunity to instruct them, and us, about grace-giving. As you come to appreciate the grace of God in your own life, giving becomes a privilege which expresses the gratitude in your heart for what God has done and is doing for you. No limit can be put upon it; it is not *tithing* or *tipping*. It is, as Paul says in verse five, “giving **yourself** to the Lord.” Not a tenth of yourself, or a fifteenth of yourself; you give all of yourself and all of your substance in response to the grace of God that is described in verse nine,

2 Corinthians 8:9 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.

How do you give all of yourself and your substance? These verses tell you as they give you guidelines for grace-giving.

Grace-giving is independent of your circumstances:

2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:

2 Corinthians 8:2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.

The “churches of Macedonia” included those at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The believers there were enduring “great trials of affliction” and “deep poverty,” yet they gave “liberally” towards the collection. They gave despite their circumstances because of the “grace of God bestowed” upon them. The formula they used was something like this: Great affliction and deep poverty *plus grace* equals abundant joy and abounding liberality.

Grace-giving is independent of appeals:

2 Corinthians 8:3 For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing,

2 Corinthians 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

Paul didn't ask them to give; ***they asked him if they could give!*** They “implored” him “with much urgency” to “receive” their “gift.” The church has become a place of frequent appeals for money. You could even describe the appeals as begging. Churches are training believers to depend upon appeals. This is exactly the opposite of

grace-giving. **You** should be imploring with urgency to give to the Lord's work.

Grace-giving is independent of your service:

2 Corinthians 8:5 And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God.

2 Corinthians 8:6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

2 Corinthians 8:7 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.

Paul is holding-up the Macedonian believers as an example to the Corinthians. They “first gave themselves to the Lord” means that they were busy serving God in the church through the various gifts that the Holy Spirit had bestowed upon them. In addition to serving the Lord, they gave towards the collection. The Corinthians, too, “abounded” in serving the Lord; but they needed to “abound” in giving as well by “completing” their previous promise of giving towards the collection.

Christians often convince themselves that even though they don't give to the church, they do give by serving. Paul is being tactful as he points out that serving the Lord is no substitute for giving! After all, if you serve the Lord, it is because He has given you a gift and the empowering to serve. Giving is something different than serving.

Grace-giving is independent of any commandment:

2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

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Paul did not give them any “commandment” to follow regarding giving. He did not remind them about the tithe. I do not want to discourage anyone who tithes... But tithing is not the New Testament principle for giving. We covered this at length in our study of First Corinthians chapter sixteen. There, as here, we see that your giving is not to be limited by any percentage. Giving is in proportion to the “sincerity of your love.” Is your love for God limited? Then neither should your giving be limited. If God has put it on your heart to tithe – to give ten percent – then do so. Be set free, however, to give more as you see the grace of God at work in your heart.

You've seen things that grace-giving is independent of. What does grace-giving depend upon?

Grace-giving depends upon the example of Jesus Christ:

2 Corinthians 8:9 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.

Grace-giving is the gratitude you express for the grace of God that you have received because of what Jesus Christ has done in *saving* and *sustaining* you. In His incarnation, as God became man, Jesus became "poor" for you that you might become "rich" in Him. By faith in Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, you have become immeasurably wealthy in spiritual position, promises, and power. Now, as Jesus gave Himself for you, you give yourself and you give your substance so that others may know His grace in their lives.

How do you gauge your giving to see if it is grace-giving?

Grace-giving is faithful:

2 Corinthians 8:10 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;

2 Corinthians 8:11 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.

Notice again that Paul was careful to say that this was "advice," *not* coercion or pressure. The thought in these verses is that since they were motivated by grace to give, then they should be faithful to complete their giving. Grace-giving follows through. It isn't just the momentary stirring of an emotion. It is the settled desire of the grateful heart and it is proven by completion.

Grace-giving is by faith:

2 Corinthians 8:12 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.

2 Corinthians 8:13 For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened;

2 Corinthians 8:14 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.

2 Corinthians 8:15 As it is written, "*He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*"

There are some weighty thoughts on God's providence in these verses. God sees to it that some believers have a lot, and some have a little, so that those with more will share with those with less. Those with more thereby **express** the grace of God in a practical way; those with less thereby **experience** the grace of God in a practical way. The example is the manna in the wilderness. Some were able to gather more than others. But, according to the story in Exodus, when they got it all together in the camp and starting distributing it, those who had more than they needed gave to those who had less so that it came out exactly even.

If you have more than others, it is by God's providence. You may be a smart business person who applies biblical principles; but that is no guarantee you will be successful! God has given you more so that by faith you will express the grace of God. If you have less than others, it may be because you are a dumb business person who has not applied biblical principles; but not necessarily! God has given you less so that by faith you will experience the grace of God.

Let God's grace guide your giving. Then,

#2 Let God's Grace
Guard Your Giving
(v16-24)

You should not give to just any church or Christian organization; you should guard your giving. The remaining verses are about the qualities of those who gather and distribute what you give.

Those who gather and distribute your giving should be called by God:

2 Corinthians 8:16 But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.

2 Corinthians 8:17 For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.

Titus was in charge of the collection. The quality most important was that "God... put... earnest care for [the church] into" Titus' heart. He was called by God.

Churches often look to men with successful financial lives in order to make decisions about distributing your giving. That is not the first quality you want to look for. God's call upon a man's life is the

essential quality, because with the call comes the proper concern for God's people.

Those who gather and distribute your giving should have a heart for the lost:

2 Corinthians 8:18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches,

This unnamed "brother" had a heart for sharing the "gospel" with the lost. Churches must be careful not to hoard all your giving for your own comfort. There must be a heart to win the lost.

Those who gather and distribute your giving should do so with accountability:

2 Corinthians 8:19 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,

2 Corinthians 8:20 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—

2 Corinthians 8:21 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

2 Corinthians 8:22 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.

Honorable handling of the giving that is above reproach and accountable is necessary. Here at our fellowship your giving goes into the blue bags. We "receive" the offering; we don't "take" the offering! After second service the gifts are counted and accounted for. Two of the ushers are always involved in the count. They each make an independent count, then compare the figures to be sure they match. The checks are photocopied. Then someone else makes out the deposit slip, counting everything once again. The cash and checks are immediately taken to the bank in a night deposit bag. Coins from the offering and from the Children's offering are counted and accounted for, then deposited on Tuesday. Any designated offerings or offerings that come by mail or during the week are accounted for and deposited. All of these transactions are recorded in ledgers and on computer in *Quickbooks Pro*. Reports are sent out monthly to our church corporate board. Presently the corporate board consists of the pastor, an elder, a deacon, and an outside

pastor. We also have a close relationship with a local C.P.A., Mike Simas, who has advised us for the past sixteen years.

If you would like specific financial information, I invite you to come down to the church office and take a look at the annual report.

For your part, you are called upon to *respect* and *respond* to those who gather and distribute your giving.

Respect:

2 Corinthians 8:23 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.

This is the other side of what we've been talking about. If you have no reason to suspect any mishandling or misappropriation, *then don't*. Respect those whom God has ordained and placed over you.

Respond:

2 Corinthians 8:24 Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

The Corinthians were to “prove” themselves by completing what they had promised and giving to the collection. At some point giving requires you to actually give!

Conclusion

Paul didn't send Titus with a Macedonian thermometer to put up next to a Corinthian thermometer so that the believers would be motivated to give. Grace-giving is something far more glorious than that. It is your expression of gratitude for the grace of God that saved and sustains you.

We are sometimes criticized for not talking more about money. **Paul doesn't even mention money!** We believe that the more you *experience* the grace of God through His gifts to you, the more you will want to *express* the grace of God in your giving to His work on earth.