

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Giving is an appropriate response to grace.

The one true God, who reveals himself in creation, in the Scriptures and in his Son, is 'the giving God' (**James 1:5**).

Nowhere is that seen more wonderfully than in His gift of his Son to be our Saviour, (**John 3:16; 1 John 4:10**).

Paul refers to the unspeakable gift of God in His Son (**2 Cor 8:9; 9:15**).

It is the foundation of all he now writes about giving and generosity in giving.

When we receive the grace of the Lord Jesus in salvation, grace gets to work in us making us more like our heavenly Father. We are children of our heavenly Father.

That inevitably means we become more like him in generous giving.

Generosity is a Christian grace.

The proper response to grace is gratitude, and where gratitude exists there is invariably joy; the joy of thankfulness and appreciation.

The joy God gives us in his Son is an 'overflowing joy', and it wells up 'in rich generosity' as we become aware of the needs of others (**2 Cor 8:2**).

Since such joy is not inhibited by poverty, so its generosity is not limited.

Christian joy prompts us to give as much as we are able, and even beyond our ability.

It should not need to be prompted by others (**2 Cor 8:3**).

Giving is an essential ingredient of Christian service. By giving we are able to help fellow Christians who are in need, whether close at hand or abroad. It is a privilege to give, since in giving to them we express thankfulness to the Lord himself

As we receive fresh glimpses of God's goodness to us in his Son, our joy prompts renewed devotion to the Lord Jesus.

We first give ourselves to him and then to others, according to God's will.

Summary

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-24, we see that generous giving is an appropriate response to grace and is an essential ingredient of Christian service.

1. Benevolence Need

An emergency had arisen in Judaea.

A severe famine had left many believers struggling in conditions of extreme poverty.

Through Paul, a benevolence fund was set up for contributions to help the struggling believers in Judaea.

Paul saw the emergency in Judaea as a wonderful opportunity for believers to demonstrate the essential unity at the heart of the gospel which bound them together. Superficial and secondary matters might divide them, but love showing itself through practical care united them!

2. Excelling Examples vv. 1-6

The believers in Corinth had already decided to do something about the need in Judaea (2 Cor 8:10). It appears, however, that energy had flagged and the initiative had run out of steam (2 Cor 8:11).

This was not the case elsewhere. The churches in Macedonia had been very active in this benevolence project (2 Cor 8:1).

Paul attributed the generosity of those churches to the work of God.

Their own resources were meagre and they were in the midst of great persecution. Yet there had been no need for any coercion, or emotional blackmail or pressure. The Christians in those churches responded of their own free will (2 Cor 8:3-4).

How much should a Christian give?

Let us give as we are able!

It all came from the Lord in the first place. It is all his anyway!

What does it mean to give as we are able?

It does not mean giving after we have given everything to ourselves and our family.

The Macedonians exceeded Paul's expectations and had given more than anyone had a right to expect (2 Cor 8:5).

The actual sum was probably not all that much but, like the widow's two mites (Luke 21:12), the gift was immense because it was offered by people who had little in the first place.

The value of a gift it is not measured by its cost in dollar terms.

It should be measured instead by what it costs in terms of sacrifice.

The Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord' (2 Cor 8:5) and, as a consequence of doing so, gave themselves to the Lord's people too.

This is a great challenge to us as believers.

Paul cited the Christians in Macedonia as a challenge to their brothers and sisters in Corinth.

He had encouraged Titus to spur them on with the example of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8:6).

Do those first-century believers in Macedonia show us up too?