

## Exegetical Notes – 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

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(There had been a terrible famine which had hit the area around Jerusalem. The Christians in Jerusalem had faced ongoing persecution because of their faith in Jesus. Because of this, Paul was concerned and was taking an offering from the Greek Christian Churches to help alleviate the plight of the Christians in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had started to collect money for this purpose a year before Paul wrote these words to them (see 2 Corinthians 8:10-11) but they had not finished the task. In this passage, Paul writes to urge them to complete what they had begun.)

### 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

#### Verses 8:1-7

***And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. <sup>2</sup> In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. <sup>3</sup> For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, <sup>4</sup> they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. <sup>5</sup> And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. <sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. <sup>7</sup> But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.***

- Paul lifts up the Churches in Macedonia as an example to the Corinthians. Though these Churches had experienced “severe trial,” they had contributed generously to the offering to relieve the Churches in Jerusalem. They gave beyond his expectations and without any coercion. In fact, they were eager to give.
- Their willingness to give stemmed from their surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. They had surrendered their hearts to him first.

- Titus had started to take an offering for Jerusalem Christians when he visited the Corinthians the year before (see verses 10-11) but the task had fallen to the wayside and not been completed. Now, Paul was sending Titus back to Corinth to finish the task. If 2 Corinthians 8:1 to 9:15 is a separate letter to the Corinthians as some scholars believe it is, Titus probably carried this letter with him to Corinth to explain the purpose of his visit.
- Paul's remarks in verse 7 are extraordinary given the fact that the taking of the offering had gotten delayed or forgotten by the Church at Corinth. At least in this matter, they have not been faithful at all. However, these words are in agreement with 1 Corinthians 1:4-9. Apparently, Paul believes that they will respond faithfully in this matter.

### Verses 8-12

***<sup>8</sup> I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.***

***<sup>10</sup> And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. <sup>11</sup> Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. <sup>12</sup> For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.***

- Paul is careful to explain that he is not commanding the Corinthians to give. Giving is always a matter of gratitude. Christians do not give because they are commanded to do so. They give because of the great gift they received from God in Jesus Christ. Jesus died to save us. His selfless act compels us to give.
- So, Paul urges the Corinthians to complete what they have already begun.
- He urges them to give according to their means. They should not feel compelled to give beyond their means to do so.

### Verses 13-15

***<sup>13</sup> Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. <sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is***

**equality,<sup>15</sup> as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”**

- Paul does not want the Corinthians to impoverish themselves to help the Church in Jerusalem. However, at the present time, the Corinthians have enough so they can help others.
- In time the situation may be reversed. At some future time, the Corinthians may need help while others have enough. Then, those churches will be able to lend aid to the Corinthians.
- The goal is “equality” not “equity.” It is not that everyone should have the same but that all know they are the same before God, none more blessed than the other, and so should share with one another.
- Paul takes this lesson from the Old Testament (see Exodus 16). Before God, all of the Hebrews were equal. Each received all he needed from the Lord.

#### **Verses 16-21**

**<sup>16</sup> Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. <sup>17</sup> For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. <sup>18</sup> And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. <sup>19</sup> What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. <sup>20</sup> We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. <sup>21</sup> For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.**

- Paul rejoices in Titus’ desire and initiative. He had a good relationship with the Corinthians (see 2 Corinthians 7). He wanted to come to them with this appeal.
- “The brother” is also coming with Titus. We do not know who this person was. All we know is that this man’s reputation among the churches was above reproach and that he was one of those chosen to take the offering to Jerusalem.
- Paul explains that since this matter involves money, he is taking great precautions to avoid all criticism. All things regarding the offering must be done honorably in the eyes of God and in the eyes of men.

## Verses 22-24

***22 In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. 24 Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.***

- Another anonymous brother is to come to Corinth as well.
- Paul urges the Corinthians to receive these men well as representatives of the churches, not as his personal envoys. They come to bring honor to Christ.
- He urges the Corinthians to give generously so that these representatives of the churches will see why he is so confident of the Corinthians.

## Verses 9:1-5

***9<sup>1</sup> There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.***

- Paul does not need to explain the purpose of the Jerusalem offering to the Corinthians again. They already know why this offering is necessary. Their eagerness to participate in the offering the year before, shows that they saw the need and wanted to help.
- Paul told the Macedonians about the Corinthian's eagerness to give. This encouraged the Macedonians' generosity. But now, if the Corinthians do not follow through on their intentions, both he and they will be embarrassed and ashamed. He is sending Titus with this reminder so that that will not happen.

### Verses 6-9

**<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written:**

***“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.”***

- Here is the general principle behind Christian giving: Generous giving produces generous blessing (see Malachi 3:6-12 and Luke 6:38).
- However, Christian giving should be rational and not emotional. It should be freely given and not compelled. God wants a giver to be cheerful about his choice to give.
- The quotation is from Psalm 112:9.

### Verses 10-11

**<sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.**

- God, who supplies all we need, will enrich those who are generous. When we see the generosity of God’s blessing to us, we give thanks to HIM for His overwhelming blessing.

### Verses 12-15

**<sup>12</sup> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!**

- This service in which the Corinthians are being invited to join will help the Christians in Jerusalem in their present need, but it will do more than that! It will cause great rejoicing and thanksgiving throughout the Church. It will

cause people within the Church to rejoice in the bonds of love between Christians everywhere. God's blessing will overflow!

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