



This Act of Grace

2 Corinthians 8

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Overview: Paul encourages the Corinthians to provide an offering for Christians in Jerusalem, a task they had committed to earlier but never quite completed. In order to prompt their participation, he cites the Macedonian churches as an example of faithful stewardship. Goodness of God they gave when it was difficult to do so; they gave according to and beyond their means; they gave eagerly without being asked; and they gave themselves first to the Lord. Additionally, Paul reminds the Corinthians how giving is connected to the gospel as an act of grace. Goodness of God it flows from their relationship with the Lord, it demonstrates the gospel in action, and it brings God's people together. Paul then announces that a team of trusted individuals will arrive to receive their offering, thus providing them with an opportunity to give and ensuring that the collection is managed properly.

01. Giving is an act of grace because God gives everything to us before requiring anything from us.

02. Giving is an act of grace because God gives us the opportunity to give, the desire to give, and the ability to give.

03. Giving is an act of grace because God uses our gifts to bless those in need and blesses us in return for blessing others.

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1. What is the occasion for Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem according to Romans 15:25-29 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4? How does Paul envision this offering assisting those in Jerusalem according to 2 Corinthians 9:12-14? What do these texts suggest about giving for kingdom causes above and beyond our regular giving?

2. How much time passed between the Corinthians' commitment to give and Paul's reminder to complete their giving (see 2 Corinthians 9:1-2)? Paul could have decided not to mention their failure to give, but instead, he prompted them to follow through with their earlier commitment. What reasons do we find for this prompting, according to 2 Corinthians 8:6, 11-14, 24?

3. Note the characteristics of the Macedonians' giving in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. Why is it important to give even when we face hardships or suffer affliction? What does it mean to give according to our means and even beyond our means? When might the former be too safe in giving? When might the latter be irresponsible giving?

4. Note the Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord (verse 5). With reference to giving, why is it important for us to remember that God wants us, not our money? And yet, how does our reluctance to give financially to the Lord's work demonstrate an unwillingness to give ourselves to the Lord fully? For an illustration of sacrificial giving that demonstrates giving oneself to the Lord, see Mark 12:41-44.

5. What steps did Paul take to ensure that the collection of the offering would be above reproach (verses 16-23)? How does such financial accountability engender confidence for those who give and promote good stewardship on the part of those who distribute the gifts? Pray that the Lord will continue to use our gifts to be used wisely for kingdom purposes.

For Further Reading: Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (IVP Academic, 2000)

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