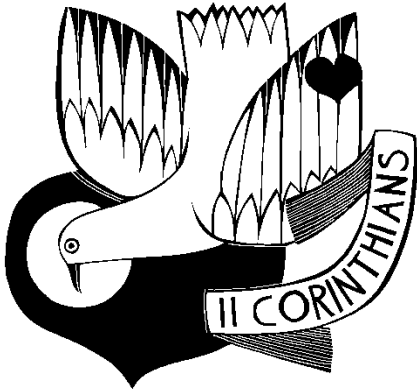


2 CORINTHIANS 8

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

A study at Faith Lutheran, Sharpsburg, Georgia, 2009 AD



Ask someone why they don't come to church, and you'll invariably get this reason, "All the church wants is my money!" Is that true? Is the church after your pocketbook?

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8, encourages Corinthian Christians to financially support poverty-stricken Jewish Christians. In this chapter, we'll see some principles for Godly giving. Interestingly enough, Paul in this chapter never mentions an amount or a percentage for the Corinthian Christians to give. We'll see that Paul isn't concerned with one's amount, but with one's attitude.

THE BOOK

Author

Paul

Purpose

Explains his change in travel itinerary
Urges completion of Jerusalem offering
Defends his apostleship against false teachers

Recipients

Mostly Gentiles of low social position
Highly gifted
Faithful believers and false teachers

Date

Fall of 57 A.D.
1 Corinthians written in spring of 57 A.D.

Place of Writing

Macedonia

Paul's Writings

Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians,
Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2
Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, and
Philemon

THE TIMES

Titus, one of Paul's traveling companions, had visited Corinth after they received Paul's first letter. He then met with Paul in Macedonia and brought back a favorable report (2 Corinthians 7:7) about the church at Corinth.

Paul's first letter dealt with many abuses in Corinth. Notice the goal that Paul had for the Corinthians. "I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you" (2 Corinthians 3:4).

Paul's second letter even more vividly shows the depth of his love for these Christians.

THE BACKGROUND

In chapters 1-7 Paul speaks about the past. He details his change in travel plans, and also remembers his ministry among the Corinthian Christians.

Chapter 8 deals with the present. He encourages the Corinthian Christians to complete their offering for the church in Jerusalem.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does 1 Corinthians 16:2 help us understand verse 3 which says “they gave as much as they were able?”
2. After looking at verse 5, how would you respond to someone who says, “I give 20% of my income to the church. That should be good enough.”
3. After reviewing verses 6 and 7, respond to this statement by Martin Luther “The last part of a man to convert is his wallet.”
4. List some ways we can apply the truth of verse 15 to our work as a church in Sharpsburg, and our work as a synod worldwide.
5. Looking at verses 18-20, what principles did Paul have for handling this offering?

Could we apply some of these principles to our own collecting of offerings in the 21st century? Why or why not?

6. Why is Paul’s point in verse 21 “taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” something we should strive for today?

Can you think of any ways we can carry verse 21 out today?

CONCLUSION

In 2 Corinthians 8 Paul encourages the Corinthian Christians in their “grace of giving” (verse 7) towards an offering for poverty-stricken Jews in Jerusalem.

He begins with the example of the Macedonian Christians, who, although they were extremely poor and under great stress (verse 2), pleaded for the privilege of giving to the Jerusalem Christians (verse 4).

How could these Christians give, when under such poverty and trial? They realized that they were giving to God and his glory when they gave to others (verse 5) and so gave to this offering in keeping with God’s will.

Paul holds up the example of the Macedonians not to shame or ridicule the Corinthians, but to highlight their attitude and willingness towards giving. These Macedonians had the same mindset of Christ, who gave up himself so that we might become rich (verse 8).

Paul encourages them to match their eager willingness to give with action. Yet, his focus is not on the amount of their giving, but on the willing attitude of the heart.

Paul then concludes this chapter outlining the plans he has to carefully carry and administer this gift to the Jerusalem churches (verses 16-24).

The people of the New Testament are supposed to be a willing people (Psalm 110:3) and “sacrifice with a free will” (Psalm 54:6), not reluctantly or under compulsion, “but from obedient hearts” (2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 6:17). For “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). In this sense and meaning it is right to say and teach that those whom the Son of God has freed do true good works freely or from a free and willing spirit. *Formula of Concord*