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2 Corinthians 8

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Learn the Bible with Friends

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

2 Corinthians 8.

Topics.

- The Corinthian church and giving.
- Three godly aspects of giving.
- New Testament giving.
- Church buildings and giving.
- Though he was rich, yet for you he became poor.
- An act of grace.
- The glory of Christ.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke of the eternal promise of God, a true shepherd and the God who comforts the downcast. He talked of feigned love and true love, godly grief and worldly grief and repentance that leads to salvation and repentance that leads to death.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-8

The Corinthian Church and Giving.

- **2 Corinthians 8:1-8:** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints ⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you— see that you excel in this act of grace also. ⁸I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

The words, "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (v5) means that first in their heart was the Lord Jesus Christ and then Paul and those who ministered with him. The churches throughout Macedonia have given an abundance of money for the relief of the brothers and sisters at Jerusalem. Paul prior to sending Titus to the Corinthian church had told him to ask the Corinthian if they also would also be willing to give financial aid for the relief of others in Christ who are suffering.

NOTICE: they gave from their own free will and that they were only expected to give according to their means, meaning what they could afford after paying their daily living costs, but they willingly and joyfully chose to give beyond their means (v3) desiring intensely to be part of the collection for the relief of their brothers and sisters.

Following are three reasons for giving:

1. It helps those who lack and are suffering.
2. It proves the genuineness and honesty of a person's faith (v8).
3. When used to help the poor and those who are suffering it brings a good testimony to the name of Christ and to the church which in turn results in winning the favour of those who do not know the Lord.

New Testament giving: is called an "Act of grace" (v7) because it comes from a person's free will, it is not something a person is commanded or has to do (v8). All giving in the New Testament went to the relief of the saints and the poor. Love without action is not love action proves the genuineness of a person's love. If people say they love, but there are no actions to manifest that love they are deceiving themselves and the one who believes them is being deceived by empty flattery.

Church buildings and giving: it is interesting to notice that there is no mention of money going toward church buildings anywhere in the New Testament especially excessively opulent ones, rather all giving in the New Testament went to aid the poor and those less fortunate. This means that we should never make the mistake of limiting the church to only the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings, they may be a part of the body of Christ but they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt 7:21-23). When the Bible uses the term church it primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is summed up in Jesus words:

- Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37-39) (Mark 12:29-31).

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law (James 2:8) and means do-good to others. Those (especially those who belong to Christ) who deliberately harm people physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and those who use others for their own selfish gain and greed are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity. The Bible teaches that some will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use God's grace, Jesus good name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. (Matt. 8:12) (Matt. 22:13) (Matt. 25:30).

- Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

Building God's house is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather it is about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation etc.), but if it is

built by cleverly twisting and distorting Scriptures to manipulate the congregation to give from guilt or built upon vast amounts of borrowed money so that the oversight and the congregation are put under extreme financial oppression then the building is not in the will of God. The book of Proverbs states:

- The borrower is the slave of the lender (Prov. 22:7).

Building God's House (Temple) is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, thus the New Testament house of God is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. For further information see the title:

- Church (The Definition of a Church) in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9-15

Though He was Rich, yet for You He became Poor.

- **2 Corinthians 8:9-15:** 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 by his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

The words, "Jesus though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" has been totally abused by some teachers of religion today. Jesus was rich in the sense he was the sinless Son of God and as such had a relationship with his heavenly Father that was unique to any other man on earth. Certainly while on earth Jesus in a worldly sense had the power to become the most powerful, famous and richest man on earth, there is no doubt people especially the noble, the rich and wealthy would have paid enormously large sums of money to be healed, even Satan offered Jesus the world, but Christ rejected it all, why? Paul says it is, "So that those who believe in Christ could become abundantly rich." But what does this really mean? Some religious teachers use this Scripture to teach their followers that if they trust in Christ they become a child of God and therefore if their faith is strong enough they will not only be abundantly blessed with the riches of this world (i.e., money, success and material possessions), but also live a charmed life. Sadly, this kind of teaching robs what Paul is saying in the following verse of all its majestic splendour and royal glory:

- Jesus though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (v9).

So, what does this verse mean some might ask? Simply this: Jesus was without sin and therefore had no need to suffer and die as he did, nevertheless he willingly laid down his life not for himself, but so that all mankind could be united to God. Not one of us are able to stand without sin before God's Holiness, we are all a result of the fall and since we are all descendants of Adam, our human nature is forever corrupted with selfishness, pride, lust, greed, jealousy and envy etc., which means that

the expression, Christ became poor means, he gave his life to poverty to serve those not only suffering, but separated from God and ultimately made the greatest sacrifice of all, Paul beautifully expresses this sacrifice in the following words:

- God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

The riches we have in Christ by far supersede anything this world has to give, since in Christ we have divine forgiveness of sin, God's favour, grace that supersedes our own selfishness, ego, pride, greed, lust and sinful aberrations and dysfunctions etc., and God's promise of eternal life in everlasting glory, not because we deserve it by our own self-effort, but because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ thus it was in this manner Jesus became poor and we became rich.

Ponder for a moment: if the medical scientist of this world could invent a pill that would give immortal and eternal life almost every man and woman existing today would sell everything they had to possess one, this is what the riches of Christ is about, it has nothing to do with worldly wealth, success and material possessions, the riches of Christ by far supersede the temporal things of this world. The riches of Christ refer to the following three things:

1. To God's divine forgiveness of our sin.
2. To the spiritual relationship we have with God through our faith in Christ.
3. To our mortal body putting on immortality and being raised to eternal life and everlasting glory with the Lord Jesus Christ

This is the Good News of the Gospel.

The attitude of giving: Paul tells the Corinthian brothers and sisters if there is an attitude in their heart that is willing and prepared to give but they do not have much to give it is acceptable to God, since if the readiness to give is in the heart God sees it. Paul did not expect the Corinthians to give to the collection if they could not afford it all he expected was for them to give according to what they were able. He did not expect any brother or sister to put themselves into hardship by giving what they do not have or could not afford so that others might be eased. The idea of New Testament giving is to give out of abundance for the relief of others, then when those others come into an abundance themselves, they can give to those in need so that everyone is helping each other and there is fairness for all. The principal was that whoever gathered much had nothing left over because he or she gave the surplus to the relief of others who lacked, therefore whoever had little had no lack because the one who had much was giving from his or her surplus to those that had little

Christ's Kingdom and the kingdom of this world: if Christ was on earth today ruling this world's business and trade there would be no such thing as CEOs being paid million dollar salaries, while cleaners and check out staff etc., are paid a wage they can barely support a family with, nor would Christ allow companies in the western world to use the poor and less fortunate in third world countries as cheap labour simply so they can make greater profits. God's spirit is about doing what enhances everyone's life and happiness and not about a select few taking excessively extreme and offensive wages or making a profit of billions while their workers struggle to raise their children.

An act of grace: giving is called, "an act of grace," (v19) because it is giving from a willing heart and freewill, not a command or clever speech, i.e., through mood enhancing music and twisting Scriptures or lifting them out of context to motivate congregations through guilt before the Lord to dig deep into their pockets or bank account. For further information on New Testament giving, see the title: "Tithing," on (ON WEBSITE MENU).

God put into the Heart of Titus Love for the Corinthians.

- **2 Corinthians 8:16-24:** But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. ¹⁹And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. ²⁰We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹for we aim at what is honourable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. ²²And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

Titus had the same love for the Corinthian brothers and sisters as Paul had and is going not by compulsion but willing to visit the Corinthian church. It is interesting to notice Paul's words:

- Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you (v16).

When we love and enjoy brothers and sisters in Christ mostly we see it as a natural response of our human emotions since we are united in Christ and therefore take it for granted, but Paul does not take any good thing for granted, no matter how normal an emotion or circumstance may seem to be or how natural Titus love for the Corinthian brothers and sister may appear Paul still credits God for the love in his heart. Naturally those in the secular world view life through worldly eyes (i.e. natural, normal human understanding), but Paul, though he no-doubt understood the worldly view, transcended it and saw everything through a heavenly mind and through God's eyes.

The famous preacher: here Paul mentions a brother, "Who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel (v18) the King James Bible translates it this way, "Whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches" (v18). Who this famous brother was we cannot tell; some suppose it was Luke, who wrote a Gospel, and who was the companion of Paul in several of his travels; others think it was Silas; others, Barnabas; others, Mark; and others, Apollos. Neither ancients nor moderns agree in either; but Luke, John, and Mark, seem to have the most probable opinions in their favour. Whoever this famous preacher was we learn by what the Paul says that he was well known and a highly esteemed preacher who was celebrated for making known the Good News of the Gospel; a brother in the ministry, and one greatly admired, and much commended, for his excellent talent in preaching and for this he was famous, throughout all the churches.

Added to this he was so well respected throughout the region that he was appointed not by a few private brothers or even by a single church, but by several churches (v19) to take the money from Macedonia to the poor at Jerusalem, such was the great commendation and high respect the churches had of this man.

No one should blame us about this generous gift: the words, "We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us" (v20) means that Paul is taking the gift of money with others that the churches trust so that no-one can be accused of taking any of it for themselves. Though each one of these men could be trusted in themselves Paul understood the power of suspicion,

gossip and false accusations so to prevent this no one person was left with the responsibility of taking the gift to the poor at Jerusalem. (This offering had been collected over time from many churches so it would be a large amount of money).

We are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest: the following words of Paul to the Corinthian brothers and sisters, "We are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters (v22) give wonderful insight into an eternal principal of God, i.e., Paul like any secular employer has observed the behaviour, actions, and integrity of this brother they are recommending to the Corinthians and concluded he is a man that can be trusted. Our lives as they go through the trials, troubles and hardships of life give God an opportunity not only to see if our faith is genuine, but also to see whether we have compassion for our neighbour (those outside the Christian faith) or lack mercy and forgiveness. This does not mean that God purposely sends adversity and hardship to us, but it does mean that he observes our response to them, i.e., do we turn resentful and bitter toward God or do we stand in the same amazing, great faith as the prophet Habakkuk expressed in the following words:

- Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Habakkuk's faith in God was so great that storms, floods and crisis's in life was not going to put even the slightest dent in his love for God, he understood that hardship comes to those who love God as they do to those who deny God.

NOTE: this does not mean that Habakkuk never felt sorrow or grief, or even despair and depression during times of loss and troubles since these are all natural human emotional responses to times of great sorrow and great loss, but it does mean that while in his sorrow, his grief, despair or depression he remained strong in his faith and his love toward God. Even David a man after God's own heart throughout his writings in Psalms expresses how he at times experienced depression and despair so great he was suicidal, but his love and faith never wavered in these enormously dark moments.

The glory of Christ: when someone refers to the, glory of Christ most of us immediately think of the Lord Jesus Christ, his life and his miracles, but here Paul is calling brothers in Christ, 'the Glory of Christ' (v23) this is because they are men of compassion, kindness, integrity, honesty and faithfulness and therefore reflect the character of Christ himself. Every faithful and compassionate brother and sister in Christ can be referred to as, the glory of Christ since they are a good reflection of the Lord to others. This no-doubt is why Paul said he and those ministering with him, "Aim at what is honourable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man" (v21).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
