**The Grace of Giving**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

**Introduction**

1. Paul quoted Jesus as saying, ***“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* (Acts 20:35)**
2. This is true in many contexts of our personal lives, but God has designed the church with a function that causes this truth to blossom before our eyes.
3. The “contribution” is an act of worship and activity of the church according to God’s plan that is sorely misunderstood, and often abused.
4. We need to understand this activity we are obligated to participate in as the blessing it is.
5. The Command
6. The Collection for the Saints – Background
	1. Jerusalem saints in need – **1 Corinthians 16:1, 3-4**
	2. Paul had traveled to Jerusalem to discuss problems concerning Judaizing error that had reached Antioch – **Acts 15**
		1. Defending the truth, and showing his appointment to the Gentiles, Paul departed.
		2. **Galatians 2:9-10** – Jerusalem brethren asked Paul to remember the poor.
	3. Paul started a collection for the saints in Galatia and Corinth – **1 Corinthians 16:1**
	4. The Macedonian brethren were involved – **2 Corinthians 9:2; 8:1, 4**
	5. Mentioned the collection to the Romans – **Romans 15:25-26, 31-32** – to bear the gift to Jerusalem before going to Rome. (to pray for the success of the effort)
7. The Work of the Church – Financial Implications
	1. **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** – represents the pattern for the accumulation of church funds.
		1. Specific work in context – benevolence.
	2. Other work – Edification (**Ephesians 4:11-12**); Evangelism (**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:4**)
		1. Involves finances – **1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:14**
			1. **NOTE: generic authority involving a place to assemble for worship, teaching materials, etc. (expediencies)**
		2. Ex: **Philippians 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8** – Paul received wages from churches as he preached the gospel.
			1. **Where did the money come from?** – the churches (collective – i.e. not simply individual Christians sending to Paul, but individual churches) – treasury/store implied.
			2. **How did they collect the money?** – **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** (only example for the method of a treasury) (**cf. Hebrews 7:14** – silence excludes – specific method revealed in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** necessarily excludes other methods).
		3. **Implication – any financial need for the execution of the work the church (collective) is commanded is provided for in the revealed method of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. (Edification, Evangelism, Benevolence)**
	3. This weekly ***“collection”*** is a part of the commanded pattern – **1 Corinthians 16:1** – ***“so also you MUST do”***
		1. **1 Corinthians 4:17** – as he teaches everywhere in every church.
8. The Pattern (Cogdill, Roy E., *The New Testament Church*, 105)
	1. Periodic – ***“On the first day of the week”***
		1. “*kata* (*“On”*) is distributive so that we may translate: "Sunday by Sunday let each of you lay by," etc.” (Lenski)
		2. ***“On the first day of every week” (NASB)***
	2. Personal – ***“let each one of you”***
		1. Like each act of worship is personal, even if involving collective action – Each must personally sing, listen, discern the Lord’s body, and pray – amen the prayer.
	3. Provident – ***“lay something aside, storing up”***
		1. ***“lay by him” (ASV)***
		2. “Lit put by himself” (NASB, fn)
		3. I.e. within personal funds, each individual is determining a portion to separate unto this collection.
		4. Implies forethought, not hasty and random action – **2 Corinthians 9:7** – purpose.
			1. Priority in budget for Christians.
	4. Proportionate – ***“as he may prosper”***
		1. NOTE: Not the OT tithe (1/10).
		2. I.e. the giving is resulting from having prospered.
		3. I.e. the amount given is proportionate to the amount prospered.
		4. Prosper much – give much; Prosper less – give less.
		5. **2 Corinthians 8:12** – according to the relative ability of each.
			1. One who has much will give more than one who has little, but each will give in proportion to his ability/what he has prospered.
	5. Preventative – ***“that there be no collections when I come”***
		1. The purpose of this weekly ***“storing up”*** was to prevent unpreparedness in the face of a need.
			1. Here – benevolence – **cf. 2 Corinthians 9:5**
		2. **Implication from other passages** – store continually available to draw from for the work of the church.
			1. ***“storing up”*** – verb – *thēsaurizō* – “(1) to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up; (1B) to keep in store, store up, reserve” (THAYER)
				1. This action (verb) implies the result (noun) of a treasury.
				2. When you treasure up (verb) you then have a (store).
			2. This treasury, or store, is the collective result of individuals laying by themselves portions of their prosperity.
	6. **Summarized – Each Sunday, every individual Christian who has prospered is to contribute to the storing up of church funds what he has personally determined in proportion to his prosperity.**
9. The Diligence of Others (**2 Corinthians 8**)
10. The Approach of Paul Manifests the Nature of the Activity
	1. **2 Corinthians 8:8** – ***“not…but”*** structure – it is indeed a command, but he is prioritizing the motivation from sincere love by using examples of others.
		1. The synergy is interesting in this giving as Paul used the Corinthians to motivate the Macedonians (**2 Corinthians 9:2**) who he now uses to motivate the Corinthians.
	2. It is commanded that Christians give, but it is a free-will offering seated in sincere love and devotion.
		1. **This manifests the worshipful nature of the activity.**
		2. It is not a mindless/heartless matter of expediency, but one of sincere obeisance/devotion/reciprocity to God which ascends as an offering (**cf. Philippians 4:18** – an offering as well retrospectively by the regular collection before the opportunity made available for the specific sharing with Paul).
11. The Churches of Macedonia (**2 Corinthians 8:1-5**)
	1. **(vv. 2-3)** – gave much even in their affliction and from their poverty.
		1. Beyond – i.e. they gave astoundingly more than what Paul could have expected.
		2. In more ways than one – i.e. it reached deeper than their pocket books. 🡪
	2. **(v. 4)** – ***“freely willing” (v. 3)*** is expounded by this verse – whereas Paul moved to request their participation HE WAS MET WITH AN EAGER REQUEST BY THEM TO PARTICIPATE.
		1. “NU, M omit *that we would receive*” (NKJV, fn)
		2. ***“begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints” (NASB); “grace” (LSB)***
		3. Changes idea from eagerness for Paul to receive a gift from them to the brethren **to eagerness for Paul to give them the gift of being able to participate in the good work.**
	3. **(v. 5)** – before a dollar sign ever emerged it was made obvious that their entire being was one with the Lord’s will, and thus the apostle’s (and his companions) work in this ministry.
		1. **First** – i.e. in manner of time and importance.
		2. **Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:5, 7** – their gift was not as a grudging obligation, but as a byproduct of their profound faith and devotion to the will of God.
		3. EX: ham and eggs breakfast – the chicken is involved; the pig is committed.
		4. **It is an understatement that your monetary contribution corresponds to your devotion of faith to the Lord’s will.**
12. Our Lord Jesus Christ (**2 Corinthians 8:9**)
	1. **Cf. Philippians 2:5-8**
	2. Where the Macedonians’ liberality is manifested in regard to their present poverty, Christ’s liberality is manifested in regard to His prior wealth abandoned by the choice to embrace profound poverty for our sake.
13. The Grace of Giving (**2 Corinthians 8-9**)
14. Grace in Context
	1. This context especially shows the deep spiritual nature of the contribution – the act of worship that is giving. It is an incredible privilege of fellowship with God, and a product of His great grace He bestows on His children.
	2. **8:1, 7; 9:14-15** – the context is framed in grace.
	3. God’s grace is the source of the Macedonians’ liberality – **8:1-2**
		1. **Cf. Acts 11:23** – “(4) exceptional effect produced by generosity” (BDAG)
		2. **(v. 2)** – Despite affliction they had an abundance of joy (**cf. Romans 5:2-3**).
			1. **The prevailing joy despite affliction combined with their poverty TO PRODUCE AN OUTFLOW OF LIBERALITY.**
			2. **Liberality**– *haplotēs* – “from *haplous*, “single, simple,” in contrast to *diplous*, “double” (VINE)
				1. “singleness, i.e. (subjectively) sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking)” (STRONG)
				2. “(2) not self seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generousity” (THAYER)
				3. **Idea – undivided, so without reservation, not grudgingly.**
				4. **ONLY THE GRACE OF GOD COULD PRODUCE SUCH CONTENTED BLISS THAT WOULD LEAD TO SUCH LIBERAL GIVING WHEN ALREADY THERE IS LITTLE TO GIVE. (Cf. Luke 21:1-4 – widow and her two mites.) (An intense manifestation of faith in God)**
	4. Such an ability by God to give, and the practice of it, is itself a gift of grace – **8:7**
		1. Faith, speech (logos – word – content of what is said, doctrine/truth), knowledge, diligence, love – all gifts of God which we receive fully through participation in them (i.e. they involve our activity).
		2. The same for liberal giving – *the very act is a privilege of participation which God has enabled us with that itself enriches us* – **ultimately as we are privileged to partake in His nature of beneficence (becoming One with God through giving).**
	5. **The fact that such participation in giving is a product of God’s grace, and is itself a gift of grace to the one who is involved in giving is further demonstrated in the context 🡪**
15. Fellowship in a Good Work **(8:4, 7)**
	1. **(v. 4)** – ***“begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints” (ESV)***
	2. **(v. 7)** – faith, speech (logos, word – what is said), knowledge, diligence, love – all activities which work together to glorify God, and aid our brethren spiritually.
		1. ***“this grace”*** – i.e. the contribution is placed in a similar category of important and good work.
		2. Benevolence – **cf. Matthew 25:40** – doing it to Christ.
	3. **Beyond benevolence** – **Philippians 1:3-5; 4:14-20** – participation in the gospel by sending support to Paul.
		1. **3 John 5-8** – in such financial support is the fellow work for the truth.
		2. There is involvement in the work of the church in evangelism and edification through the offering we bring – must extend to intimate participation within our opportunities.
16. Bountiful Reaping for Increased Fruits of Righteousness **(9:6-11a)**
	1. **(v. 6)** – not only reap WHAT you sow, but reap HOW you sow.
		1. Bountifully – no number placed upon this.
	2. **(v. 7)** – bountiful sowing/giving is ultimately established in the heart.
		1. **Forethought** – purposes.
		2. **Cheerful** – not by necessity or reluctantly.
		3. **Liberality** – “(2) not self seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generousity” (THAYER)
			1. If the giving is cheerful then proportionally it will be bountiful.
	3. **Reap bountifully?** (**v. 6)** – this is not a “gospel of health and wealth” message. The material component of this has a very spiritual context. **(cf. Luke 16:9** – using ***“unrighteous mammon”*** in spiritual service)
		1. **(v. 8)** – the bountiful reaping is God’s grace equipping us for ***“every good work.”***
		2. **(v. 9)** – **Psalm 112** (**v. 9** is quoted) – concerns the blessed state of the man who fears God in contrast to the wicked.
			1. Specifically, as the righteous man uses what he has in loving service to others, God continues to bless him so he can continue to bless others.
			2. Used by Paul to demonstrate the same point.
		3. **(vv. 10-11a)** – as we sow bountifully (in giving) God replenishes us for the purpose of increasing our sowing of righteousness.
17. Supply of Thanksgiving to God **(9:11b-13)**
	1. **(vv. 11b-12)** – the grace of giving is evident in the fact that it blesses all involved with a Godward focus.
		1. That the giving is a product of God’s grace is made evident by the direction of the thanksgiving – to God, not man.
		2. This, then, promotes spiritual growth mutually in the giver and receiver.
		3. **Cf. Psalm 50:12-15** – it draws attention to the dependence on God.
	2. **(v. 13a)** – For fellowship/unity – ***“glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ”***
		1. **Jew/Gentile rift** – the collection was used by God to foment unity and peace among brethren.
		2. **Proof** – this service proved to the Jews that the Gentiles were of like sincere faith.
	3. **(v. 13b)** – For loving aid – ***“and for your liberal sharing with them and all men”*** – i.e. not only showing their fidelity to God, but their love for all brethren (**cf. 1 John 4:21**).
18. Supplication for the Saints **(9:14)**
	1. The brethren who heard of the Corinthian involvement moved to pray for them, and their activity in the grace of God – both for their benefit in receiving it, and for the Corinthians’ benefit in giving it.
19. **“THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT!” (v. 15)**
	1. The will of God in the collection is an act of beneficence on His part toward us.
	2. That we are blessed with opportunity and resources to give to God and those in need is a gift that we ourselves receive.

**Conclusion**

1. The first day of the week giving involves deep and meaningful spiritual value.
2. We must not make the mistake of setting this to the side, whether through total negligence, or lacking appreciation and understanding of its value.
3. Let us give with cheerful hearts of faith, knowing the extreme good that God is performing through such activity, for others, the church, ourselves, and His cause.