

2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 – “Administering The Gift”

When bank robber Willie Sutton was asked why he robbed banks, his reply was: ‘Because that’s where the money is!’

And 2 Corinthians 8-9 is where the money is, at least this is a section of Scripture that really focuses in on giving! Yay. The doors are locked, there’s no place to go for the next 30 minutes, so just sit tight, this shouldn’t be too painful.

The Bible talks a lot about money and giving not because God is desperate for money or because He wants us broke, but simply because it becomes a great indicator of where our hearts are. Are we trusting in material things more than in Him? God is a giving God, there’s blessing and joy in giving. And He wants us to experience not only the blessing of giving, but the benefit of seeing Him provide for us.

So here in 2 Corinthians 8, which Pastor Randy started us off in a couple weeks ago, we are looking at this gift (an offering) that was being collected for the church in Jerusalem. The context or background is in **1 Corinthians 16:1–4**, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ² On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. ³ And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me."*

- Remember, though the church began out of Jerusalem, they were hit hard and hit first with persecution and difficulty. A person giving their life to Jesus did so at the expense often times of disinheritance by their family, excommunication from their religious community, loss of business, they would be cut off socially and economically.

So seeing the need of the Christians and churches in that area, those in other areas (like Macedonia and Achaia) that were blessed by their ministry and by them sending people out with the gospel, had it in their heart to send an offering to those around Jerusalem.

But now remember, Paul's been dealing with false apostles that have crept into the church at Corinth that have been trying to discredit him, delegitimize his ministry, and bring him into disrepute.

Now Paul has to think about how he will get this money from these churches in the area of Greece, down to Jerusalem without people thinking he's pocketing some of it for himself. So, this section of Scripture provides some great insights of good stewardship.

- Though much of this may seem like trivial housekeeping matters of this offering, it does shed light on the importance of managing well what we have from the Lord and for the Lord.

8:16-21 - *But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, ¹⁹ and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind, ²⁰ avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—²¹ providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

We're introduced first of all to Titus. Titus really needs no introduction as he's a faithful companion of Paul and co-laborer of the gospel. Titus had visited the church in Corinth previously and was refreshed by all that God was doing there (7:13).

Titus wasn't someone that was drafted for this role of collecting this offering from the Corinthian Church, he didn't draw the short straw, he went ***of his own accord***. What was motivating him?

It was ***earnest care*** that he had for them. Notice, it wasn't earnest care for the suffering Jewish believers in Jerusalem (although I'm sure he had an earnest care for them too) but we read that it was an earnest care for the church of Corinth – the ones that were giving.

- You see, Titus didn't just want to see them talking about raising funds for those in need, he wanted to see this come to fruition. He knew that this gift giving would benefit those in Corinth as much as it would benefit the recipients in Jerusalem.

Along with Titus was another unnamed brother who would accompany him to Corinth and then accompany the group returning to Jerusalem with the gift.

- Some have thought this anonymous brother could have been Luke.
- But his identity is less important than the lesson we learn behind it. And that is that our work and service for the Lord is not about making a name for ourselves, it's about bringing glory to God. This is what he was all about.
- In fact, Paul makes that clear in verse 19 when he says they are administering this gift **to the glory of the Lord Himself**... This may have seemed like an insignificant task when it comes to other works we would esteem as more weighty. Things like sharing the gospel, serving the poor, or helping widows and orphans. These guys are just couriers – yet it's a legitimate opportunity to bring glory to the Lord in how they conduct themselves in this process.
- All we do becomes opportunities to bring glory to God through our motives and attitudes in which we carry out that task.
- **Colossians 3:23**, *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,"*
- **1 Corinthians 10:31**, *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
- No task is insignificant when it's done with an attitude to glorify the Lord through it.

The churches knew this anonymous brother was a dependable and trustworthy brother. That's what matters.

These churches saw in this brother a real heart for the gospel (vs. 18 – **whose praise is in the gospel**). He was not about making a name for himself, but he was about passing on the name of Jesus and the good news of Jesus. This is why he was chosen by the churches to accompany this group delivering the gift (vs. 19).

And Paul is showing upmost wisdom here when it comes to such a delicate thing like finances. He's letting these churches select delegates that will be a part of this transfer of the money. There's accountability and transparency with this. Paul's not the guy putting together *his* team, he's letting others have a say. And verse 20 makes it clear what he wants to avoid – any blame being cast their way of mishandling the money.

It's a sad thing when we've seen ministries get dragged through the mud because of a mismanagement of finances, or not having proper safeguards in place. You can have the most godly person collecting the offering and counting it out after church but if there's not accountability with other people working alongside you you're opening yourself up to blame.

- "It is not enough to say, "Well, the Lord sees what we're doing!" We should make certain that *men* can see what we are doing. I like the way J.B. Phillips translates 2 Corinthians 8:21: "Naturally we want to avoid the slightest breath of criticism in the distribution of their gifts, and to be absolutely aboveboard not only in the sight of God but in the eyes of men."¹
- We're putting ourselves in a dangerous position when we handle these things on our own. And it's not that we're saying we don't trust the person doing it, but we cannot trust those looking on and looking for a reason to blame and criticize. If someone accuses you of doing something wrong, and if you don't have someone with you, you have no way of proving your innocence.
- Paul had come to know too well the accusations from those who were suspicious and critical of his ministry unjustly.
- So Paul was displaying some good wisdom that needs to be followed today.

8:22-24 - *And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.²³ If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.²⁴ Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.*

And we have another anonymous brother that's been ***diligent in many things***. He's a guy again that has a proven track record of being reliable and trustworthy. Paul vouches for Titus and the other companions.

He says that they are the ***glory of Christ***. This is a wonderful commendation that should be our aim.

And he encourages the church at Corinth to be faithful in their giving as it will be evidence of their love. He's been boasting about them and sharing of their care

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 658). Victor Books.

for others. This is a last push for them to finish strong so that his boasting is not in vain.

9:1-4 - *Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous [redundant] for me to write to you; ² for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. ³ Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; ⁴ lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.*

Paul didn't want to unnecessarily go through this need to take up the offering. The folks at Corinth knew the need and they saw the need to give. Paul is simply wanting them to carry out what they had already intended to do. They had every intention to give, but now it must be brought to completion.

- You know the saying: 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'. We've all been there, where we want to be diligent in a certain work or activity, we fully agree with it, but actually completing it can be another story altogether.
- Their intentions to do this work was not in question. In fact, Paul says their zeal has been the catalyst for others to get involved.
- Isn't that what we should be doing for others? Hebrews 10:24 says to *consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*. This is why it's important to gather together as we do.

But now after boasting of their zeal and desire to give, Paul wants to be sure they're following through and actually carrying out this good work. He doesn't want to have to show up and be embarrassed, or have them ashamed that they've not been diligent to have this offering for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem ready to go.

9:5 - *Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.*

Paul sends some brethren ahead of time to encourage these Corinthians in this gift and in the preparation of it so that there will be no pressure to give, or a feeling of manipulation when Paul comes.

Paul doesn't want anyone giving out of a sour attitude, or in a resentful way.

- Biblically speaking, the idea of generosity is more linked to the attitude in giving than it is the amount. Paul's not trying to put the squeeze on them to

really empty their pockets. It's more about giving with an attitude of gladness and gratefulness.

How about you today? Has your zeal for the things of the Lord continued on? Has it decreased or increased over the last couple of years? May our zeal be more that good intentions, but rather be carried to completion that it may bear fruit both in our lives and in others.

Secondly, has your giving become a grudging affair, or has it been one of gladness and gratefulness. There is a blessing that comes as we minister to one another through our giving.

Acts 20:35, *"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "*

When we come to the end of our lives, we're going to be held to account not on how much we've gotten, but on how much we've given – in every aspect of our lives. Let's be faithful with what God has given us. He's calling us to steward well what He's given us.