

# Faith Promise Giving

## II Corinthians 8:1-15

Pastor Michael Lynn / West Hampden Baptist Church

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**Introduction:** We are all familiar with the story of the widow's mite in Luke 21:1-4. Christ testifies of her, "*Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*" We can conclude from this, "The most genuine liberality is frequently displayed by those who have least to give. Christian giving is estimated in terms not of quantity but of sacrifice" (Hughes). Chapters 8 & 9 of II Corinthians give us the most detailed exposition of true Christian giving. We considered in a previous message the ungrudging giver, the unlimited grace, & the unspeakable gift in 9:6-15. Note with me tonight faith promise giving here in verses 1-15 as we center our attention on the principles of faith promise giving & the purposes for faith promise giving. Consider this: "Gracious, generous giving is the result of genuine, grateful surrender."

### I. The principles of faith promise giving (:1-5)

#### A. Giving is **enabled** by grace (:1)

##### 1. The expressions of God's grace:

- a. Magnifications of grace (in song – "Amazing Grace, Saved by Grace, Wonderful Grace of Jesus, Grace Greater Than Our Sin" & etc.).
- b. Manifestations of grace (in spirit) [saving grace > Eph. 2:8-9; serving grace > Heb. 12:28; sustaining grace > I Cor. 15:10; suffering grace > II Cor. 12:9; succumbing grace > Heb. 4:16 (cf. Acts 7:59-60); sharing grace > II Cor. 8:1, 7 & 9:8.]

##### 2. The experience of God's grace:

- a. By the churches of Macedonia (:1) - Philippi, Thessalonica, & Berea.
- b. By the church at Corinth (9:13-14).

#### B. Giving is **exercised** (even) in poverty (:2-3)

##### 1. The Macedonians' condition (:2a)

- a. Their persecution - "*great trial of affliction*" (see I Thess. 1:6, 2:14 & Acts 16:20). [Because of their Christian faith, they suffered loss of job, exclusion from trade guild, etc.]
- b. Their poverty - "*deep poverty*" - "Extremely deep (poverty)... the most severe type of economic deprivation, the kind that caused a person to become a beggar."

##### 2. The Macedonians' compassion (:2b-3)

- a. Their liberality extended (:2b)
  - (1). "*Liberality*" means generosity, sincerity, single-hearted.
  - (2). "The Macedonian believers were rich in their single-minded, selfless generosity to God & to others." [Note the formula: Great affliction + deep poverty = abundant joy & abounding liberality.]
- b. Their ability exceeded (:3) - Three elements of freewill giving:
  - (1) "*For to their power* (ability)" > Proportionate giving - 8:12 & I Cor. 16:2.
  - (2) "*Beyond their power*" > Sacrificial giving - Mark 12:41-44 (the widow's mite).
  - (3) "*Willing of themselves*" > Voluntary giving - II Cor. 9:6, Pro. 3:9-10.

#### C. Giving is **evidenced** through fellowship (:4)

##### 1. There is spiritual fellowship > in the bonds of Christ:

- a. There is unity in the bonds of the Gospel - II Cor. 9:13-14.
- b. There is unity in the body of Christ - I Cor. 12:13 & Gal. 3:27-29.

##### 2. There is material fellowship > in the blessings of Christ:

- a. The principle of sharing material blessings - Gal. 6:10, I Cor. 9:11.
- b. The privilege of sharing material blessings - II Cor. 8:4, & 9:7.

Summary: Verse 4 begins, *"Imploring us with much urgency"* (NKJV) or *"Begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints"* (NASB). They 'begged' Paul because of their strong desire to have a part in ministering to the saints in Jerusalem (sad to say, it is oftentimes just the opposite today).

D. Giving is **expected** after dedication (:5)

1. Surrender means recognizing God's sovereignty (God's ownership, our stewardship):
  - a. Dedicated to be God's sacrifices > Romans 12:1-2.
  - b. Dedicated to be God's servants > Romans 6:18-22 [see I Chronicles 29:10-13].
2. Surrender means realizing man's dependency:
  - a. Able to live only as God gives life > Acts 17:25, Isaiah 42:5, & Daniel 5:23.
  - b. Able to give only what God has given > Philippians 4:10-19 [see I Chronicles 29:14-17].

Summary: How did they give? *"By the will of God."* They gave "at the direction of God. In spite of their own desperate circumstances these saints exhibited faith in God to care for them while they attempted to care for their brethren (Nutz). "Generous giving follows personal dedication."

II. The purposes for faith promise giving (:7-15)

A. We are to give because of our maturity in faith (:7) > **Enjoy it!**

1. The Corinthians already abounded (exhibited):
  - a. *"Faith"* – "Sanctifying trust in the Lord" (MacArthur).
  - b. *"Utterance"* – speech or sound doctrine.
  - c. *"Knowledge"* – ability to apply doctrine.
  - d. *"Diligence"* – eagerness or earnestness.
  - e. *"Love"* – for others.
2. The Corinthians are asked to abound (exhibit) the *"grace"* (gift) of giving:
  - a. They are to follow the example of the Macedonians in the grace of generosity.
  - b. "The ability to give is also a gift, but, unlike the other gifts, it is an act that demonstrates all the other intangible gifts of faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, & love" (Nutz).
  - c. The "grace" (or gift) of giving is an indication of one's spiritual maturity.

B. We are to give because of our sincerity of love (:8) > **Prove it!**

1. The example of the Macedonians:
  - a. *"Not by commandment"* – giving is not to be legalistic, but voluntary & spontaneous.
  - b. *"Occasion"* – opportunity.
  - c. *"Forwardness of others"* – earnest zeal.
2. The exhortation to the Corinthians:
  - a. *"To prove"* – put to the test; show genuineness.
  - b. *"Sincerity of your love"* – "evidence of warm-hearted liberality" (Hughes).
  - c. Giving is to originate out of a heart of love.

C. We are to give because of our conformity to Christ (:9) > **Show it!**

1. The declaration of Christ's grace:
  - a. He was rich > His prior existence & perfect enjoyment (glory & praise of God).
  - b. He became poor > His condescension & humiliation.
  - c. That we might become rich > from spiritual poverty (our helpless, hopeless, hell-bound condition) to spiritual prosperity (salvation, security, sufficiency).
2. The demonstration of our conformity:
  - a. The basis of Christian giving – "We do it for the Lord & the brethren because of the love of God within us. To give in this manner is to be like God who gave everything in Christ" (Nutz).

- b. The blessing of Christian giving - “If this love of Christ, so magnanimous in its motive & so self-sacrificing in its execution, is an active force in the believers’ heart, how unnecessary, the apostle implies, any command to practice almsgiving ought to be. What, without that love, might seem a cold moral duty has been transformed by it into a joyous privilege” (Tasker).

D. We are to give because of our generosity for others (:10-15) > **Share it!**

1. The motive for our giving:

- a. “Grace giving is a matter of faith: we obey God & believe that He will meet our needs as we help to meet the needs of others” (Wiersbe).
- b. “*Readiness to will*” – a ready & eager spirit; “*willing mind*” – a heart eager & desirous to give (cf. 9:7).

2. The measure of our giving:

- a. “*According to that a man hath*” – Paul expects the Corinthians (& us) to give according to what we have, not according to what we expect God to provide.  
Note: “The concept of giving something to the Lord if the Lord sends it in is foreign to the theology of the Apostle Paul. The true reality of giving in the N.T. church is simply this: give spontaneously to the Lord’s work from those things we possess; that expresses our love for the Lord & the brethren. Giving out of what we expect to have expresses nothing & violates the scriptural principle of giving” (Nutz).
- b. “*But by an equality*” – At this time, the church in Jerusalem has the need; in the future, it may be the Corinthians who stand in need.  
Note: The word can be translated “balance or equilibrium.” “There should be a mutual give-and-take, so that all men, particularly fellow-Christians, may be relieved of the burden of undeserved want” (Tasker).

Conclusion: The Corinthian church had made a “faith promise.” Yet they had failed to follow through on that promise. Therefore, Paul writes these 2 chapters to exhort & explain what true Christian giving is all about. We see here in 8:1-15 the principles of & the purposes for faith promise giving. The 4 principles we have seen in verses 1-5 could be summarized: Gracious, generous giving is the result of genuine, grateful surrender. We see here in verses 7-15, 4 purposes for giving: maturity in faith (enjoy it!), sincerity of love (prove it!), conformity to Christ (show it!), & generosity for others (share it!). The central verse of these chapters is 8:9 (with a parallel in 9:15). Hughes comments: “The logic implicit in the statement of this great truth is too obvious for anyone to miss it; if He did all this for me, then nothing I give or do for Him can be too much; such love constrains me; redeemed at incalculable cost, I am no longer my own; all that was mine is now His, for Him to make use of in accordance with His holy purposes.” Redpath concurs, “And because I am altogether His, then nothing I have is my own. I must give according to what I have.” What is the motive & measure of your giving?