



## 2 Corinthians 8:8-9:15

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 20th March 2022 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Matthew 25:14-30

**Good evening. Let's pray.**

### Introduction

We're in our 7th out of 10 studies in 2nd Corinthians, going through verse by verse, and last time we got as far as chapter 8 verse 7. Tonight, we'll look at the rest of that chapter, and all of chapter 9 - both of which deal with the same topic, which is giving.

It's a topic that we can sometimes feel awkward about - but if we're honest I think we probably only feel awkward about it if there's something that needs changing in our lives, or if there's something that needs changing in how it's being taught. So I'll do my best to teach faithfully, and to let the Bible speak for itself. And I encourage you to do your best in listening, and then checking in your Bibles whether the things I'm saying are true - just as the Bereans in Acts 17:11 did when they heard Paul speak.

### Overview of 2 Corinthians

As our weekly reminder, this letter can be summarised by breaking it down into 3 parts...

- Chapters 1 to 7 - Christian living
- Chapters 8 to 9 - Christian giving
- Chapters 10 to 13 - Christian guarding

## Overview of chapter eight

Last week, we began chapter 8, and I summarised the first 7 verses as *giving* - but to expand that a little, I think it's fair to say those verses speak of *giving our all*. And so following that, the rest of the chapter can be summarised as...

- ~~Giving our all (v1-7)~~
- Jesus, our example (v8-9)
- Do what you said (v10-15)
- Great care in giving (v16-24)

## Overview of chapter nine

Then in chapter 9, there are two summary points:

- Be men of your word (v1-5)
- Reaping & sowing (v6-15)

## Chapter eight

So let's get stuck into chapter 8. We read in verse 8...

### 2 Corinthians 8:8

I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

That is, Paul wanted to see how much the church really loved. He wasn't prescribing the details of what they should do, but as we'll see, he was both encouraging them in this area, and reminding them of what they'd already committed to do. This wasn't Paul saying they should tithe exactly a tenth of their salaries to appease their consciences - no, it was far deeper than that.

### 2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

And so, he says, Jesus is our example and standard in giving. And what an example!

Jesus, who created all, came to earth and lived a life with so little - born in a borrowed manger, and buried in a borrowed tomb. He had no property, preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, ate His Last Supper in a borrowed room. And died in our place that we might become joint heirs with Him of all that God owns!

And that's how we should give. Not through compulsion, but through love. Jesus didn't die in our place because He was told to, but because He wanted to.

#### **2 Corinthians 8:10-11**

And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.

Paul is saying, start what you finished. Run the whole race. See it through. Don't promise to give, and then fail to do so. I think this happens in the life of many Christian's - that in the enthusiasm that follows their conversion, they say "Lord, I'll do anything for you!" - but when that is put to the test, they're less enthused. Maybe that's true of us.

And maybe it's true of us as a church. Remember how we were literally given this building, along with the finances to restore it to good condition?! We spent a month or two investing countless hours decorating, cleaning, repairing - with the intent that we'd get it done, so that we could really get on with real ministry. But what now? Are we as enthusiastically giving our time? Are we really getting on with ministry like we said we would? It's a healthy question to ask ourselves.

To the Corinthians, Paul is saying "do what you said you would" - specifically with regard to the financial gift they had said they would give. And he continues...

#### **2 Corinthians 8:12**

For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

That is, give what you can. That's what God is asking for, and what you should do. Don't think you need to give beyond your means. But likewise, if you can afford much, don't offer little, for God's design for the church is that there should be provision for each person and each church family through the collective whole. That the body would support itself. We read...

#### **2 Corinthians 8:13-14**

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.

So, do what you can, with what you have, where you are - at times others will meet needs you can't, but only if they give out of their seasons of abundance - likewise the other way round! That is, others will have need in time of your abundance, my abundance, and our abundance as a church family. And we should not be slow to meet that need - whether within a church, or between churches (as was the case here).

Paul says there should be an equality - a fairness within the church! And he quotes from Exodus 16:18, writing...

### **2 Corinthians 8:15**

As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

That is, we are to be faithful in our giving. Not beyond our means, but probably not within our comfort zone. For we have a God who will always be faithful to us. God will not see us short of what we need, if we don't see others short in their need.

But should we give as we ought to give, especially in times of abundance, then it is of course important that any gift is handled well. And Paul now writes...

### **2 Corinthians 8:16-17**

But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.

That is, God who indeed places burdens on our hearts for others, placed a love for the Corinthians on Titus' heart. But note that Titus was also faithful to act upon that, going of his own accord to visit them. Not waiting for someone to tell him, but taking the initiative in love - not only to visit them, but to ensure the Corinthian's gift, that they had already promised, would reach those Christians in need in Jerusalem. But he didn't go alone...

### **2 Corinthians 8:18-19**

And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, 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,

Who is it that went with Titus? We don't know for sure. It could be Luke, it could be Timothy or Silas. But what we do know for sure is their character - a character worth aiming for! And we see already here, a pattern of accountability in handling the finances. That Titus wasn't to handle this on his own, but with at least this other godly man.

And that's something we take seriously as a church - both in that any cash offering is never counted by an individual, but in pairs, but also in the manner in which money is spent. That there might be accountability and integrity. Paul states the reason...

### **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**

avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us— providing honourable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

That is, church finances should be handled wisely, and for the purpose for which they are given - to further the Lord's ministry through that church - done in such a way that it is pleasing to both God, and without any controversy of scandal before men.

And so Paul now adds...

### **2 Corinthians 8:22**

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.

So we see Titus, plus another trusted man, and now this other trusted brother - with a good reputation - also travels with them. And as such, the Corinthians can have confidence that which they give, which they'd already promised, will indeed reach the church in Jerusalem.

I remember an anecdote of a man who entrusted a large amount of money, let's say £1,000,00, to another person to take to his relatives in a distant country.

The person he entrusts it to thinks "well, I don't want anyone to have the impression that this man who's sending me on his behalf is cheap, so I better book a first class business flight. And I should really have a layover, stopping somewhere in another country before I then travel on with the gift. Because I don't want to be tired when I get there, and then when I get there I should stay in a decent hotel again to represent this person well."

And so this went on to the point that by the time he passes on this gift, there's less than half of it left. Now, do we do that with that which God gives us, in that he gives us so much, and then we spend so much on ourselves? That we don't actually leave very much leftover to do that which God wanted us to do with it in the first place.

In this case here, there was a confidence that the Corinthian church could have that their giving would get to those in need in Jerusalem.

Verse 23...

#### **2 Corinthians 8:23-24**

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. Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

Paul is saying once again, do what you said you would do. Show your love to the Christians in Jerusalem, who are in much need, out of the abundance that you have - that Titus and these others would see what we've said of your character, and willingness to give is true.

## **Chapter nine**

As we move into chapter 9, it's a good reminder that there were no chapter breaks on the scroll that Paul would have been writing on here. And so he simply continues saying...

#### **2 Corinthians 9:1-2**

Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 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.

That is, the Corinthian's willingness to give was causing others to re-assess how much they gave. But here's the thing, we should be an example in giving - but not for our own ends. We should not give to impress men, or be foolish enough to try and impress God.

That's what Ananias and Sapphira did in Acts chapter 5 - they sold a piece of land, publicly declared how much they got for it, and said they were giving it all to the ministry. However, what actually happened was they only gave part of the money they received for it, but pretending they were giving all. And God struck them both dead.

Needless to say, they are not an example to follow. Don't give out of pride. It's quite ridiculous how many church halls, rooms, stones and such are named after the people that financed them. That's not how it should be done! But what's the opposite of pride in giving? It's humility of course. Humility that all we have comes from God anyway, so we're only distributing what he's giving us.

While preparing I read one commentator noted this: He said; I know a wealthy man who was asked, "How in the world did you become so rich when you give so much away?" "Well," he answered, "The Lord shovels it in and I shovel it out and God has the bigger shovel."

Let us give, let us be examples in it, but not for our own ends, but only for the ends God would have us give. For His work, for His glory.

Now, having commented on the Corinthians willingness, Paul writes...

### **2 Corinthians 9:3-5**

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; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 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.

So he's saying, I don't want you to be red-faced when I come to visit - but rather I want you to see through what you've committed to do. And to do it now.

And I think we can relate to this in a simple way. For we've probably all signed up to sponsor children or adults for sports days, marathons and the like, and then completely forgotten about it - only to then have them ask us for our donation some time later. In that moment, it can not only feel awkward for them to chase, or us to be chased, but our giving becomes a burden like a bill we forgot to pay, rather than a joy to support that person or that cause in the way we'd originally intended. That's what I believe Paul is saying here.

So then, having written that they should give their all, follow Jesus as their example, see through what they've promised, and have confidence in how their giving will be handled, he's once again calling them to be men of their Word.

But finally, as he concludes these two chapters, he speaks of reaping and sowing - many have often referred to this as the law of reaping and sowing. Not that it puts us under any kind of law, but rather that the results are predictable - much like with the law of gravity. He writes...

### **2 Corinthians 9:6**

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

What a promise this is! But how contrary to this world's approach - that the surest way to reap bountifully, is to give bountifully. It's as simple as that.

Except it's not that simple, for we love what we have, right? But time and time again, the Bible instructs us to lay down our lives. We read just this morning in John's gospel:

**John 12:25**

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

And Luke notes in Acts 20:35, where Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders, that Jesus had said "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That word *blessed*, is also translated happy. So that is, it is a happier thing to give, than to receive. Do we feel that way? Well, it is very much down to our hearts...

**2 Corinthians 9:7**

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

God didn't want the Corinthians to give more, or even that which they'd previously promised, because Paul told them to. He wanted them to give from their hearts. With a smile on their faces. !

And it's the same with us. Should you go home this evening and think, talk, and pray about how you should give out of what God has blessed you with? Yes - I think you should. And I think I should.

But we shouldn't give any more, or even that which we already do, because we happened to be in this passage this evening, or because of anything I've said per se. But you should give willingly and cheerfully. Or not at all.

The word for cheerful here is *hilaros* - which as you may easily guess, is where we get our word hilarious from. That's how big a smile you should have on your face as you give.

**2 Corinthians 9:8**

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

That is, you can't out give God. You just can't.

And I wonder, has anyone ever gone bankrupt giving to the Lord's work? Maybe some have, and it's possible to give beyond our means - and it wouldn't be right to give to the church and not feed your children - but I don't know of anyone that ever has gone bankrupt that way. But there are many people that have gone bankrupt while trading stocks and shares, or climbing the corporate ladder.

Next, Paul quotes from Psalm 112...

**2 Corinthians 9:9**

As it is written:

"He has dispersed abroad,  
He has given to the poor;  
His righteousness endures forever."



And that Psalm says the only who fears the Lord, and who gives to the Lord, will be blessed.

### **2 Corinthians 9:10**

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

You see, God can multiply what we give beyond our wildest imaginations. He really can.

I was thinking on this and a few examples came to mind.

First, was Chuck Smith, who many of you will know was the pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa.

While pastoring a small church of less than 30 people, on a salary that barely met their needs, God put on his and his wife's heart a love for those in the hippie culture that was in California at the time, who were very much seen as outcasts and unwanted within churches. And they just loved these people. They had them stay in their house. They taught them the Word of God. And God poured out His Spirit, resulting not only in thousands coming to know the Lord in that area of the country, but in churches planted throughout the world.

God can multiply what we give beyond our wildest imaginations.

Another example that came to mind is Steven Curtis Chapman, the Christian singer/songwriter. Many of you may know of him. But before any of us heard of him, he had the opportunity to make it in the big time as a country music singer - but he turned it down because he felt that God had given him the gift of playing music to serve God. And God has used him to impact hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people through his music.

God can multiply what we give beyond our wildest imaginations.

Then there is Nate Saint, who along with Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian travelled to witness to the Auca Indians. They lost their lives in the process, but in the years that followed, that work was continued by others, leading to the saving not only of that tribe, but a huge impact on the lives of countless others, such was the faithfulness shown.

God can multiply what we give beyond our wildest imaginations.

### **2 Corinthians 9:11-12**

while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,

In other words, when you give, it will cause people to thank God *for* you and *to* God - and it is God that will get the glory! And not only those who are recipients of the giving, but those who observe, and who hear about your giving, will glorify God too.

And indeed we even read in Hebrews 10 that there should be an encouraging of one another by the good works that we do - that more good works may follow...

### **Hebrews 10:24**

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,



Paul continues...

### **2 Corinthians 9:13-14**

while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

We can easily say - "Mine!". But what kind of character is that? What kind of family is that?

Rather, let us give. Let us give within our means, but beyond our comfort. Let us stir up love and good works, through love and good works. When we do, we'll generate thankfulness to God. We'll then find others praying for us, and longing for us. Not because of our giving, but because of our hearts.

Oh, but how much should I give? Well, look at how Paul concludes this chapter and this topic...

### **2 Corinthians 9:15**

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

There are no words to describe how much God has done for us. And God's gift not only saves us, but motivates us for the good of others.

"What has Christianity ever done?"

Apart from being involved at the beginning of science, systems of government, philosophy, art, schools, hospitals, the emancipation of women, the abolition of slavery, social welfare, helping form the basis of the moral code most people live by, and introducing popular notions of justice, mercy, decency and compassion – what has Christianity ever really done for the world?

**Milton Jones**

We cannot give like God gives, but let us imitate Him!

## **Summary**

Taking a look in the rear view mirror, this is what we've looked at this evening:

- ~~Giving our all (8:1-7)~~
- Jesus, our example (8:8-9)
- Do what you said (8:10-15)
- Great care in giving (8:16-24)
- Be men of your word (9:1-5)
- Reaping & sowing (9:6-15)

## **Application questions**

As for how we apply this, well - there are many questions we can, and probably should ask ourselves - but tonight I have just two questions for us to think on...

- Do we do what we say?
- Are we giving as we could?

**Let's pray.**