

BASED UPON SEPTEMBER 20, 2020'S SERMON

# CHURCH PEOPLE ARE GENEROUS



**OLD MADE NEW**

2 CORINTHIANS

# PRAYER

*One of the major ministries of Paul's 3rd missionary journey was the taking up of a special "relief offering" for the poor Christians in Judea. Paul had assisted in this way before (see Acts 11:27-30), and was happy to do it again. Paul was motivated by Jesus' own words "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Paul wasn't only concerned with the physical and financial support being shared, but also with the unity of the individual Christian churches, and the hearts of the Corinthians. All of these concerns would become blessings through cheerful generosity.*

*Today, we pray for the same things Paul cared about so deeply: that real needs would be met through the church's generosity, unity among Christians would grow, and that we would find our greatest joy in heavenly treasures, rather than earthly ones.*

Eternal Word, only begotten Son of God, teach me true generosity. Teach me to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor without thought of any reward, except to know that I do Your will. Amen.

St. Ignatius of Loyola  
1491-1556

# READ

This week, as we are covering a larger section of scripture, you may choose to read all of 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, or you may simply want to read selections as you move through this week's questions.

**8:1** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,  
**2** for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

**3** For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

**4** begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

**5** and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

**6** Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

**7** But 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.

**8** I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

**9** 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.

**10** And 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.

**11** So 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.

**12** For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

**13** For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness

**14** your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

**15** As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

**16** But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.

**17** For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord.

**18** With him we are sending[e] the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel.

**19** And 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.

**20** We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us,

**21** for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

**22** And 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.

**23** As 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.

**24** So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

**9:1** Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints,

**2** for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them.

**3** But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.

**4** Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.

**5** So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

**6** The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

**7** Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

**9** As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

**10** He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

**11** You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

**12** For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

**13** By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,

**14** while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

**15** Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

# DISCUSS

Lead your group through the following discussion questions. Help them thoughtfully reflect and respond to God's direction.

1 | What is one lesson about money you can recall learning from your parents? Who, in your life, has influenced you most when it comes to finances (could be a person you know personally, or a popular speaker, such as Dave Ramsey, or another)?

**READ 2 Corinthians 8:1-5** *Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*

In the clearest explanation and call for generosity in the entire Bible, Paul appeals to one single motive for giving: “the grace of God in Christ.” Christians don’t give because they are commanded to or because it frees one’s life from materialism. Christians give because they know that God has given everything to redeem them from the penalty of sin and death - giving his own son as a ransom for all humanity. That grace, the free gift given by God through Jesus, is the motivation for all Christian giving. Jesus said that those who are forgiven much also forgive much. The same applies for generosity; those who have been given much give generously in return.

2 | The way we treat others and handle our material possessions speaks volumes about our belief in the gospel and our commitment to God’s mission. Second Corinthians 8-9 is written to members of the church in Corinth who, at one time, had responded favorably to helping others, but had not yet “put their money where their mouth is.” So, Paul tells them about another church in their region, the Macedonian church, that responded generously and joyfully to the needs of others while in a difficult time of their own.

What does the Macedonian churches example suggest about income and the ability to give? Reflecting on Paul’s description of the Macedonian churches, what do you count as the most important factor for their generosity? Has your time with Legacy shaped your view of living a biblically generous life in any way; if so, how?

**3 | READ 2 Corinthians 8:6-9** *So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 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 through His poverty might become rich.*

Looking at verses 6-7, why is it important to grow as a complete disciple, not neglecting any aspect of life? How does a proper understanding of the gospel actually increase our love for God and people while decreasing our focus on self and possessions?

**4 | READ 2 Corinthians 9:6-8** *Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;*

Reluctant or guilt-driven gifts are not generosity. A generous lifestyle, however, produces a life of freedom, simplicity, joy, fruitfulness and purpose. A gift should be given with a smile, not with a reluctant grasp on the offering as we “hand it over.” For the Christian, giving is like a roller coaster ride: it feels adventurous and risky, but it’s really safe because God is holding tightly onto us no matter the twist or turn. Consequently, anything that much fun becomes contagious.

What giving experience has taught you the most about God? What do you make of the “alls” in verse 8? Sometimes our giving becomes a substitute for our living. Besides our financial resources, what other gifts should we use for God’s glory? How do we see others using these gifts in our church? In our community? In other parts of the world?

# CONCLUSION

This week, consider re-reading all of 2 Corinthians 8-9, and note the emphasis on the grace of God throughout. You and I can only be saved because God Himself believed in grace giving. I wonder how much we truly believe in grace giving.

*How can your group work together to take new steps in growing an enthusiasm for cheerful & generous giving? Brainstorm ideas to help "stir one another up to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24).*

**Pray together**