CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 Corinthians Chapter 8 — Excelling in the Grace of Giving

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 Corinthians Chapter 8 turns to a very practical subject.

Money.

More specifically, giving.

Paul was gathering an offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

Many Jewish Christians there were suffering from poverty and hardship.

Paul asked the Gentile churches to help.

This offering mattered deeply to Paul.

It met real needs.

And it showed that Jewish and Gentile believers were one family in Christ.

The Corinthians had started well.

A year earlier, they had been eager to give.

But they had not finished.

Now that the relationship with Paul was restored, he gently encourages them to complete what they began.

He does not use pressure or guilt.

Instead, he gives them examples.

First, the churches of Macedonia, who were very poor, yet gave with overflowing joy.

Then, the greatest example of all:

"Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor."

Paul also explains how the money will be handled.

He is sending Titus and two trusted brothers.

Everything will be done honestly, before God and before people.

The chapter moves through four movements:

- The Example of the Macedonian Churches (verses 1–5).
- Call to Excel in Giving (verses 6–9).
- The Call to Complete Their Commitment (verses 10–15).

- Titus and Trusted Brothers Sent (verses 16–24).

The central truth of 2 Corinthians 8 is:

Generous giving is a grace from God, modeled by Christ who became poor for us, flowing from hearts first given to the Lord, completed in faithful action, handled with integrity, and offered as proof of genuine love.

I. THE GRACE OF GOD IN MACEDONIA

2 Corinthians 8:1 — Grace Given to the Churches

“Moreover, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.”

Paul begins with a report about other churches.

The churches of Macedonia included Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

“The grace of God that has been given.”

Notice how Paul describes their generosity.

He does not first praise the Macedonians.

He praises God's grace.

Their giving was something God had done in them.

Generosity is not natural to the human heart.

It is a work of God's grace.

Cross References

Romans 15:26

> The believers in Macedonia and Achaia were glad to collect a gift for the poor among God's people in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1

> Now about the money being collected for God's people: do the same thing I told the churches in Galatia to do.

Philippians 4:15

> You Philippians know that when I first preached the gospel and then left Macedonia, you were the only church that shared with me in giving and receiving.

Spiritual Principle

Generosity is a fruit of God's grace working in the heart.

Application

Do you see your giving as something God's grace produces in you?

II. JOY AND POVERTY OVERFLOWING

2 Corinthians 8:2 — Rich Generosity

“In the midst of a severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.”

This verse describes a surprising combination.

“In the midst of a severe trial.”

The Macedonian believers were suffering.

They faced persecution and pressure.

“Their overflowing joy.”

Yet they were full of joy.

“And their extreme poverty.”

They were deeply poor.

The word Paul uses describes poverty that goes all the way down.

“Welled up in rich generosity.”

Trial, joy, and poverty mixed together and overflowed in giving.

Their wealth did not produce their generosity.

Their joy in Christ did.

Cross References

James 1:2

> My brothers and sisters, whenever trials of every kind come your way, count it as pure joy.

Mark 12:44

> The others gave out of what they had left over. But she, out of her poverty, gave everything she had to live on.

Revelation 2:9

> I know your troubles and your poverty, but you are actually rich.

Spiritual Principle

Generosity flows from joy in Christ, not from the size of a bank account.

Key Truth

The poorest believers can be the richest givers.

III. BEYOND THEIR ABILITY

2 Corinthians 8:3 — Of Their Own Accord

“For I can testify that they gave according to their ability, and beyond their ability, entirely of their own accord.”

Paul was an eyewitness.

“They gave according to their ability.”

They gave what they could.

“And beyond their ability.”

Then they gave more than seemed possible.

They gave sacrificially.

“Entirely of their own accord.”

No one forced them.

No one pressured them.

They chose freely to give.

This is the heart of Christian giving.

It is not a tax.

It is a willing response to God.

Cross References

Exodus 35:29

> All the Israelite men and women whose hearts moved them brought gifts to the Lord of their own free will for the work He had commanded through Moses.

1 Chronicles 29:9

> The people were full of joy because their leaders had given so freely, and they had given to the Lord with all their hearts.

Mark 12:44

> Everyone else gave from their extra, but she gave from what little she had. She put in all she had to live on.

Spiritual Principle

God loves giving that is free, willing, and sacrificial.

Application

Is your giving a choice of the heart, or a reluctant duty?

IV. BEGGING FOR THE PRIVILEGE

2 Corinthians 8:4 — Sharing in the Service

“They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”

This is remarkable.

Paul did not have to plead with the Macedonians.

They pleaded with Paul.

“Urgently pleaded with us.”

They begged to be included.

Perhaps Paul hesitated to take money from people so poor.

But they insisted.

“For the privilege of sharing.”

They saw giving as a privilege, not a burden.

“In this service to the saints.”

“Saints” means God's holy people.

Here it refers to the poor believers in Jerusalem.

Giving was a way to serve fellow believers they had never met.

Cross References

Romans 15:25

> Right now I am on my way to Jerusalem to serve God's people there.

Acts 11:29

> The disciples decided that each of them would send help to the believers in Judea, as much as each one was able.

1 Corinthians 16:1

> About the collection for God's people, follow the same plan I gave the churches in Galatia.

Spiritual Principle

Giving to God's people is a privilege to pursue, not a burden to avoid.

Key Truth

The Macedonians did not ask, “Do we have to?” They asked, “May we?”

V. FIRST TO THE LORD

2 Corinthians 8:5 — They Gave Themselves

“And they went beyond our expectations: first they gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us, by the will of God.”

Here is the secret of the Macedonians' generosity.

“They went beyond our expectations.”

Paul expected a small gift, if any.

They gave far more.

“First they gave themselves to the Lord.”

Before they gave money, they gave themselves.

They surrendered their lives to Christ.

Once God has the person, He has everything the person owns.

“And then to us, by the will of God.”

They also gave themselves to Paul and his ministry.

This was God's will working in them.

Cross References

Romans 12:1

> Brothers and sisters, God has shown you great mercy. So give your whole selves to Him as a living offering, set apart and pleasing to Him. This is the worship that makes sense.

Galatians 2:20

> My old self died with Christ on the cross. Now it is not really me living, but Christ living in me. I live my life here by trusting in God's Son, who loved me and gave His life for me.

2 Corinthians 5:15

> Christ died for everyone, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

Spiritual Principle

The first gift God wants is not our money, but ourselves.

Application

Have you given yourself fully to the Lord?

VI. FINISH WHAT WAS BEGUN

2 Corinthians 8:6 — Titus Sent to Complete It

“So we urged Titus, that just as he had begun, he should also complete this act of grace among you.”

Titus had already started the collection in Corinth.

Now Paul asks him to go back and help them finish it.

“This act of grace.”

Again, giving is called a **grace**.

It is a gift God works in us.

And it is a gift we give to others.

Paul did not want the Corinthians' good start to fade away.

Cross References

Titus 1:5

> I left you in Crete so you could finish putting in order what was still undone.

Philippians 1:6

> I am sure of this: God, who started a good work in you, will keep working until it is finished on the day Christ Jesus returns.

Galatians 6:9

> Keep on doing good and do not get worn out. When the time comes, we will bring in a harvest if we keep going.

Spiritual Principle

A good start must be followed by faithful completion.

Application

What good work have you started that God wants you to finish?

VII. EXCEL IN THIS GRACE ALSO

2 Corinthians 8:7 — Abounding in Giving

“But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in the love we inspired in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

Paul begins with genuine praise.

The Corinthians were richly gifted.

- Faith.
- Speech.
- Knowledge.
- Diligence.
- Love.

They were proud of their spiritual gifts.

“See that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

Paul places giving right next to faith and knowledge.

It belongs on the same list.

A church can be strong in teaching and still weak in generosity.

Paul wanted them to be complete.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:5

> Through Christ you have been made rich in every way, in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.

1 Corinthians 12:31

> Eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the very best way of all.

1 Peter 4:10

> Each of you has received a gift from God. Use it to serve others as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Spiritual Principle

Generosity is a spiritual grace just as important as faith, knowledge, and speech.

Key Truth

Spiritual maturity includes an open hand.

VIII. TESTING THE SINCERITY OF LOVE

2 Corinthians 8:8 — Not a Command

“I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.”

“I am not commanding you.”

Paul could have used his authority.

But forced giving is not true giving.

“I want to test the sincerity of your love.”

Love is easy to talk about.

Giving shows whether it is real.

“By comparing it with the earnestness of others.”

The Macedonians had shown their love.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to show theirs too.

This was not to shame them.

It was to encourage them.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 7:6

> I am saying this as permission, not as a command.

James 1:3

> You know that when your faith is tested, it produces endurance.

1 Peter 1:7

> These trials come so that your faith, which is worth far more than gold, can be proven real and bring praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Spiritual Principle

Giving is one of the ways genuine love is proven.

Application

What does your giving reveal about your love?

IX. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

2 Corinthians 8:9 — Rich, Yet Poor for Us

“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.”

This is the heart of the chapter.

Paul points to the greatest Giver of all.

“Though He was rich.”

Before He came to earth, Christ shared the glory of heaven.

He owned everything.

“Yet for your sake He became poor.”

He left heaven's glory.

He was born in a stable.

He had no place of His own to lay His head.

He died on a cross.

“So that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Our riches are not mainly money.

They are forgiveness, eternal life, adoption into God's family, and every spiritual blessing.

Christian giving begins here.

We give because Christ first gave Himself for us.

Cross References

Philippians 2:6

> Though Christ was God by nature, He did not think being equal with God was something to hold on to for His own advantage.

Philippians 2:7

> Instead, He gave up everything and took the role of a servant, becoming a human being.

Luke 9:58

> Jesus answered, “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest His head.”

Spiritual Principle

Christ became poor to make us rich; His giving is the pattern for ours.

Key Truth

The cross is the greatest motive for generosity.

X. FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED

2 Corinthians 8:10 — Paul's Advice

“And in this matter I give my advice: it is to your advantage to finish what you started a year ago—not only to desire to do it but also to complete it.”

“I give my advice.”

Again Paul gives counsel, not a command.

“It is to your advantage.”

Finishing would be good for them.

“To finish what you started a year ago.”

The Corinthians had been first to want to give.

But a year had passed, and the work was not done.

“Not only to desire to do it but also to complete it.”

Good intentions are not enough.

Desire must turn into action.

Cross References

Philippians 1:6

> I am confident that God, who began His good work in you, will carry it through to the end.

Ecclesiastes 5:4

> When you make a promise to God, do not be slow to keep it. God takes no pleasure in fools. Do what you promised.

Galatians 6:9

> Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, because in time we will reap a harvest if we do not quit.

Spiritual Principle

Good intentions honor God only when they are carried through.

Application

Is there a promise you made to God that you have not kept?

XI. MATCH YOUR EAGERNESS

2 Corinthians 8:11 — According to Your Ability

“Now therefore complete the work, so that your eagerness may be matched by your completion, according to your ability.”

“Now therefore complete the work.”

It was time to act.

“So that your eagerness may be matched by your completion.”

Their eagerness had been real.

Now their actions needed to match it.

“According to your ability.”

Paul was not asking them to give what they did not have.

He asked them to give in proportion to what God had given them.

Cross References

Philippians 1:6

> God started a good work in you, and I am sure He will bring it to completion.

Luke 14:28

> Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and figure the cost, to see if you have enough to finish it?

James 1:4

> Let endurance finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Spiritual Principle

Let your actions catch up with your good desires.

Key Truth

God measures giving by what we have, not by what others have.

XII. A WILLING HEART

2 Corinthians 8:12 — What One Has

“For if there is a willing heart, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.”

This verse brings great freedom.

“If there is a willing heart.”

God looks first at the heart.

“The gift is acceptable according to what one has.”

God accepts a gift based on what the giver actually has.

“Not according to what one does not have.”

God does not expect us to give what we do not possess.

A small gift from a willing heart pleases God.

A large gift from an unwilling heart does not impress Him.

Cross References

Mark 12:44

> The rich gave out of their extra money, but this poor widow gave everything she had.

Exodus 25:2

> Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. Receive it from everyone whose heart makes them want to give.

1 Chronicles 29:17

> My God, I know that You test the heart and are pleased with honesty. I have given all these things willingly and with an honest heart.

Spiritual Principle

God values the willingness of the heart more than the size of the gift.

Application

Are you holding back because you think your gift is too small?

XIII. NOT A BURDEN ON YOU

2 Corinthians 8:13 — Fairness

“For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened,”

Paul wants to be clear.

He was not asking the Corinthians to become poor so others could be comfortable.

Christian giving is not meant to crush the giver.

It is meant to share the load fairly.

Cross References

Galatians 6:2

> When someone is weighed down, help carry the load. That is how you keep Christ's command.

Acts 4:34

> No one among them was in need, because those who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money.

Acts 2:45

> They sold their property and belongings and gave to anyone who had a need.

Spiritual Principle

Christian giving is about sharing burdens, not shifting them.

Key Truth

God's family carries its loads together.

XIV. THERE MAY BE EQUALITY

2 Corinthians 8:14 — Abundance and Need

“but that there may be equality: your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may also supply your need, that there may be equality.”

“That there may be equality.”

Paul means fairness and balance.

He is not describing a forced system.

He is describing believers caring for one another freely.

“Your abundance at the present time should supply their need.”

Right now the Corinthians had more.

Jerusalem had less.

“So that their abundance may also supply your need.”

Times can change.

One day the Corinthians might be in need.

Then others could help them.

Some also see a spiritual side to this.

The gospel came to the Gentiles from Jerusalem.

The Gentiles could now share material blessings in return.

Cross References

Acts 2:44

> All the believers were together and shared everything they had.

Acts 4:34

> There were no needy people among them, because those who had property sold it and brought the money.

Acts 4:35

> They placed the money at the apostles' feet, and it was given to each person as they had need.

Spiritual Principle

In God's family, those who have more help those who have less.

Application

Where has God given you more than you need, so you can help someone else?

XV. NOT TOO MUCH, NOT TOO LITTLE

2 Corinthians 8:15 — The Lesson of the Manna

“As it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.””

Paul quotes Exodus 16.

In the wilderness, God fed Israel with manna.

Some gathered more, and some gathered less.

But when it was measured, everyone had exactly what they needed.

No one could hoard it.

Extra manna spoiled overnight.

God's provision was meant to be shared, not stored up selfishly.

Paul applies this to the church.

God provides enough for His people when they share.

Cross References

Exodus 16:18

> When they measured it, those who had gathered a lot did not have too much, and those who gathered a little did not have too little. Each one had just what they needed.

Exodus 16:17

> The Israelites did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, and some gathered only a little.

Proverbs 30:8

> Keep lies far away from me. Do not make me poor or rich. Just give me the food I need each day.

Spiritual Principle

God provides enough for all when His people share what He gives.

Key Truth

What we hold on to selfishly, we lose; what we share, God multiplies.

XVI. THANKS BE TO GOD FOR TITUS

2 Corinthians 8:16 — Earnest Care

“But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.”

Paul now turns to the men he is sending.

“Thanks be to God.”

Paul gives God the credit.

“Who put the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.”

Titus cared for the Corinthians just as Paul did.

God had placed that love in his heart.

Every good desire for others comes from God.

Cross References

Proverbs 21:1

> The king's heart is in the Lord's hand like streams of water. He turns it wherever He wants.

James 1:17

> Everything good that we receive, every perfect gift, comes down from God above. He made the lights in the sky, and He does not change the way shadows do.

2 Corinthians 7:6

> But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us when Titus arrived.

Spiritual Principle

God puts genuine care for His people into the hearts of His servants.

Application

Thank God for the people He has given a heart to care for you.

XVII. EAGER TO GO

2 Corinthians 8:17 — Of His Own Accord

“For he not only accepted our appeal, but being very eager, he went to you of his own accord.”

“He not only accepted our appeal.”

Paul asked Titus to go.

“But being very eager, he went to you of his own accord.”

Titus did not need to be pushed.

He wanted to go.

Titus served willingly, just as the Macedonians gave willingly.

Cross References

1 Peter 5:2

> Take care of God's flock that is under your care. Watch over them willingly, as God wants, not because you must and not for money, but because you are eager to serve.

Philemon 1:14

> I did not want to do anything without your agreement, so that your kindness would come from your own choice and not from pressure.

Psalm 110:3

> Your people will gladly offer themselves on the day You lead Your army.

Spiritual Principle

The best service flows from a willing and eager heart.

Application

Do you serve God eagerly, or only when you are pushed?

XVIII. A BROTHER PRAISED BY ALL

2 Corinthians 8:18 — Service in the Gospel

“Along with him we are sending the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service in the gospel.”

Paul is sending a second man with Titus.

He does not name him.

Bible students have suggested several names, such as Luke or Barnabas.

But no one knows for sure.

What matters is his character.

“Praised by all the churches.”

He had a good reputation everywhere.

“For his service in the gospel.”

He was known for faithfully serving the gospel.

Cross References

Acts 15:22

> The apostles and elders, together with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

Philippians 2:22

> You know that Timothy has proven himself. Like a son working with his father, he has served with me in spreading the gospel.

3 John 1:12

> Everyone speaks well of Demetrius, and the truth itself agrees. We speak well of him too, and you know we tell the truth.

Spiritual Principle

A good reputation earned through faithful service is valuable in God's work.

Key Truth

God's work needs people whom others can trust.

XIX. CHOSEN BY THE CHURCHES

2 Corinthians 8:19 — For the Glory of the Lord

"And not only that, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us in this act of grace, which we administer for the glory of the Lord Himself and to show our willingness."

"He was chosen by the churches."

This brother was not just Paul's choice.

The churches themselves appointed him.

This added accountability.

"To accompany us in this act of grace."

He would travel with the offering.

"For the glory of the Lord Himself."

The goal was not Paul's glory.

It was God's glory.

“And to show our willingness.”

It showed Paul's eagerness to help the poor.

Cross References

Acts 20:4

> Several men went with Paul, including Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia.

1 Corinthians 10:31

> Whatever you are doing, even eating a meal or having a drink, do it in a way that honors God.

Acts 6:3

> Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this work.

Spiritual Principle

God's work should be done for His glory, with the church's trust and involvement.

Application

Who gets the glory for the good you do?

XX. AVOIDING BLAME

2 Corinthians 8:20 — A Wise Precaution

“We take this precaution so that no one should blame us for how we handle this generous gift.”

This was a large amount of money.

Paul knew people could make accusations.

Some in Corinth had already questioned his motives.

So he took careful steps.

Several trusted men would handle the money together.

No one could say Paul kept it for himself.

Paul did not just avoid wrongdoing.

He avoided giving anyone a reason to suspect wrongdoing.

Cross References

Romans 14:16

> Do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:22

> Stay away from every kind of evil.

Titus 2:8

> Speak in a sound way that no one can criticize, so that those who oppose you will be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Spiritual Principle

Handling money in God's work requires safeguards and transparency.

Key Truth

Integrity guards not only our hearts but also our reputation.

XXI. RIGHT BEFORE GOD AND PEOPLE

2 Corinthians 8:21 — Doing What Is Right

“For we are careful to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of people.”

“We are careful to do what is right.”

Paul thought carefully about how to act.

“Not only in the eyes of the Lord.”

First, God sees everything.

Paul wanted to be right before Him.

“But also in the eyes of people.”

Paul also wanted his actions to look right to others.

The gospel's reputation was at stake.

A clear conscience before God is essential.

But a clear testimony before people matters too.

Cross References

Proverbs 3:4

> Then you will win favor and a good name with God and with people.

Romans 12:17

> Do not pay anyone back with evil for evil. Be careful to do what everyone sees as right.

1 Peter 2:12

> Live such good lives among unbelievers that, even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your good works and give glory to God when He comes.

Spiritual Principle

Believers should be honest before God and visibly honest before people.

Application

Would your handling of money stand up if everyone could see it?

XXII. A TESTED AND DILIGENT BROTHER

2 Corinthians 8:22 — Proven Many Times

“And we are sending with them another brother whom we have often tested and found diligent in many matters, but who is now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you.”

Paul sends a third man.

Again, he is not named.

“Whom we have often tested.”

He had proven himself many times.

“And found diligent in many matters.”

He was hardworking and faithful.

“Now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you.”

He believed in the Corinthians.

That made him even more eager to go.

Cross References

1 Timothy 3:10

> They must first be tested. Then, if no one can find fault with them, let them serve as deacons.

Philippians 2:22

> You know how Timothy has proved himself, serving with me in the gospel like a son with his father.

Romans 16:1

> I am recommending to you our sister Phoebe, who serves the church in Cenchreae.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful people are proven over time.

Key Truth

Trust is built one faithful act at a time.

XXIII. THE GLORY OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 8:23 — Partners and Messengers

“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.”

Paul gives credentials for each man.

“Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker.”

Titus worked side by side with Paul.

“Our brothers, they are messengers of the churches.”

The word **“messengers”** is related to the word for apostles.

Here it means men sent on a mission by the churches.

“The glory of Christ.”

What a description.

Their faithful lives brought honor to Christ.

Cross References

Philemon 1:17

> So if you think of me as your partner, welcome him the way you would welcome me.

Philippians 2:25

> I think I need to send Epaphroditus back to you. He is my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier, and the messenger you sent to take care of my needs.

Philippians 1:11

> I pray that your lives will be filled with the good fruit of right living that comes through Jesus Christ, to bring glory and praise to God.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful servants of the church bring glory to Christ.

Application

Does your life bring honor to Christ?

XXIV. SHOW THE PROOF OF YOUR LOVE

2 Corinthians 8:24 — Before the Churches

“Therefore, show them proof of your love and the reason for our boasting about you, so that the churches may see it.”

Paul ends with a final appeal.

“Show them proof of your love.”

Love must be shown, not just felt.

“And the reason for our boasting about you.”

Paul had spoken well of them.

Now they could prove him right.

“So that the churches may see it.”

Their generosity would be a testimony to other churches.

Love that acts encourages the whole body of Christ.

Cross References

1 John 3:18

> My dear children, our love should not be just something we say. It should be real and shown by what we do.

Philippians 1:11

> May your lives be full of the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, for God's glory and praise.

James 2:18

> Someone might say, “One person has faith, and another does good works.” But you cannot prove faith that does nothing. I will prove my faith by the things I do.

Spiritual Principle

Genuine love proves itself in action.

Key Truth

Love that never acts is not yet complete.

XXV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 8

1. Giving Is a Grace

“See that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

Principle:

Like faith, knowledge, and love, generosity is a gift from God to be used faithfully.

2. True Generosity Is Not Based on Wealth

“Their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.”

Principle:

The Macedonians gave joyfully out of deep poverty, proving that God looks at the heart, not the amount.

3. Christ Is the Model of Giving

“Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor.”

Principle:

He became poor so that we might become rich through His sacrifice.

4. Promises Must Be Completed

“Not only to desire to do it but also to complete it.”

Principle:

Desire alone is not enough; obedience follows through in action.

5. Stewardship Requires Accountability

“We are careful to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of people.”

Principle:

Paul stressed honesty, openness, and integrity in handling offerings.

6. Love Is Proven in Action

“Show them proof of your love.”

Principle:

Generosity is a visible demonstration of genuine Christian love.

XXVI. THE MARKS OF GRACE-FILLED GIVING

Verses 1–5 show what the Macedonians' giving looked like.

It Was Joyful

“Their overflowing joy.”

It Was Sacrificial

“Beyond their ability.”

It Was Willing

“Entirely of their own accord.”

It Was Eager

“They urgently pleaded with us.”

It Was Seen as a Privilege

“The privilege of sharing.”

It Began with Surrender

“First they gave themselves to the Lord.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God has the heart, the wallet follows.

XXVII. THE GREATEST GIFT

Verse 9 shows the generosity of Christ.

What Christ Had

- The glory of heaven.
- Equality with God.
- The worship of angels.
- Ownership of all things.

What Christ Became

- A baby in a manger.
- A man with no home of His own.
- A servant.
- A sacrifice on the cross.

What We Receive

- Forgiveness of sins.
- Eternal life.
- A place in God's family.
- Every spiritual blessing.

Key Truth

We never give to God more than He has already given to us.

XXVIII. HANDLING GOD'S MONEY WITH INTEGRITY

Verses 16–24 show how Paul protected the offering.

Trusted People

Titus and two proven brothers.

Shared Responsibility

More than one person handled the money.

Church Involvement

One brother was chosen by the churches.

Avoiding Suspicion

“So that no one should blame us.”

Openness Before God and People

“Not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of people.”

What This Means for Churches Today

- Choose trustworthy people to handle money.
- Never leave one person alone with the funds.
- Keep clear and honest records.
- Be open with the congregation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faithful giving deserves faithful handling.

XXIX. WHAT 2 CORINTHIANS 8 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Is Full of Grace

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

He Was Rich

“Though He was rich.”

He Became Poor

“Yet for your sake He became poor.”

He Did It for Us

“For your sake.”

He Makes Us Rich

“So that you through His poverty might become rich.”

He Is Glorified in His Servants

“The glory of Christ.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus gave up the riches of heaven so that we could share the riches of God's grace forever.

XXX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was the offering Paul was collecting?

An offering from Gentile churches for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

Question 2

Why does Paul call giving a “grace”?

Because generosity is something God works in the heart, and it is a gift we share with others.

Question 3

What was surprising about the Macedonians' giving?

They were very poor and suffering, yet they gave with overflowing joy and beyond their ability.

Question 4

What was the secret of the Macedonians' generosity?

They first gave themselves to the Lord.

Question 5

Why did Paul not command the Corinthians to give?

True giving must be willing.

He wanted their giving to show the sincerity of their love.

Question 6

How is Christ the greatest example of giving?

Though He was rich, He became poor for us, so that we could become rich through Him.

Question 7

What problem did the Corinthians have?

They had started eagerly a year earlier but had not finished.

Question 8

How does God measure a gift?

By the willing heart and by what a person has, not by what they do not have.

Question 9

What does Paul mean by “equality”?

Fairness and balance, where those with more help those with less, and the help can flow both ways over time.

Question 10

What lesson does the manna teach?

God provides enough for everyone, and His gifts are meant to be shared, not hoarded.

Question 11

Why did Paul send several men with the offering?

To make sure the money was handled honestly and that no one could accuse him of wrongdoing.

Question 12

What should 2 Corinthians 8 change about the way Christians live today?

2 Corinthians 8 should cause believers to live:

- Giving themselves first to the Lord.
- Seeing generosity as a grace from God.
- Giving joyfully and willingly.
- Giving even in hard times.
- Remembering Christ's gift to them.
- Following through on their promises.
- Handling money with honesty and openness.
- Proving their love by their actions.

XXXI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians 8 asks several important questions.

Have I Given Myself to the Lord?

Or am I trying to give Him things without giving Him me?

Do I See Giving as a Privilege?

Or as a burden?

Do I Give Joyfully?

Or reluctantly?

Do I Give Only When It Is Easy?

Or am I willing to give sacrificially?

Do I Remember What Christ Gave for Me?

Does His gift shape my generosity?

Have I Finished What I Promised?

Is there a commitment I need to complete?

Am I Honest with Money?

Would my handling of money stand the light of day?

Does My Love Show?

Can others see my love in what I do?

XXXII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“First They Gave Themselves”

Many people think giving starts with money.

It does not.

The Macedonians were poor.

They were suffering.

They had every reason to hold back.

But they begged to give.

Why?

Because something had happened before they ever opened their hands.

They had given themselves to the Lord.

When a person belongs to God, everything they have belongs to God too.

Their time.

Their talents.

Their money.

Giving is no longer a battle.

It becomes a joy.

This creates a powerful principle.

God does not first want what is in your hand.

He wants your heart.

When He has your heart, your hand will open.

Principle:

Give yourself to God first, and generous giving will follow.

XXXIII. FINAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians Chapter 8 teaches believers how to give.

It shows poor churches giving with rich joy.

It shows that giving is a grace.

It points to Christ, who became poor for us.

It calls us to finish what we start.

It teaches that God looks at a willing heart.

And it shows how to handle money with integrity.

2 Corinthians 8 therefore reminds us:

Never think you are too poor to give.

Never give only out of pressure.

Never forget what Christ gave for you.

Never leave good intentions unfinished.

Never handle God's money carelessly.

The church does not need people who only talk about love.

It needs:

Believers who give themselves to God.

Givers who give with joy.

Servants who finish what they start.

And stewards who handle money with honesty.

The same Savior still calls:

Tell people that Christ became poor to make them rich.

Tell people that God accepts a willing heart.

Tell people that giving is a privilege.

Tell people that God provides enough when His people share.

And as you live:

Give yourself to God.

Give with joy.

Finish what you start.

Prove your love in action.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You that though He was rich, for our sake He became poor.

Thank You that through His poverty we have become rich.

Thank You for the example of believers who gave with joy even in deep poverty.

Thank You that You look at a willing heart and not the size of the gift.

Thank You for faithful servants who handle Your work with honesty.

Forgive us when we have held on too tightly to what You have given us.

Forgive us when we have given grudgingly or not at all.

Forgive us when we have started good things and not finished them.

Forgive us when our love has been only words.

Help us give ourselves to You first.

Make us generous and joyful givers.

Help us see giving as a privilege.

Help us finish what we have promised.

Keep us honest in everything we do with money.

And let our love be seen in our actions, for the glory of Christ.

“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.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“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.” — 2 Corinthians 8:9

Central Truth

Generous giving is a grace from God, modeled by Christ who became poor for us, flowing from hearts first given to the Lord, completed in faithful action, handled with integrity, and offered as proof of genuine love.

2 Corinthians 8 in One Sentence

Paul encourages the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving by pointing to the joyful generosity of the poor Macedonian churches and to Christ who became poor to make us rich, urging them to finish what they began according to their ability, and sending trusted men so that the gift would be handled with integrity as proof of their love.