



Study 7: Getting Rich

2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

How can talk about giving money to church make you feel? Why?

We can have all sorts of reactions when someone gets up the front at church and talks *again* about giving money to church. If our reaction is a negative one, it may actually be understandable. But we need to realise that financial giving is something the bible doesn't shy away from. In fact as we'll see in 2 Corinthians, Paul has lots to say about it. Perhaps it's not giving money that is wrong, but the reasons and motives we offer when asking people to give.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15. As you read through, what do we learn about the purpose or project that the money will be used for?

As it says in 8:4, the money is for 'the service of the saints', and 9:12, for 'supplying the needs of God's people', which in the original language it actually says again 'saints'. We learn from Paul's other letters (1 Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:25-26) that this was to be collection from the gentile Christians to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. We don't know precisely why the church in Jerusalem was in need, but obviously Paul saw that the Gentiles Christians had opportunity to help. From 8:10-11, it seems it was the Corinthian Christians who led the way in their desire to give, but since the influence of the super-apostles and Paul falling out of favour, their enthusiasm has waned.

To motivate the Corinthians to restart the process of contributing to the collection, Paul offers a couple of examples that they should look to.

1. What is the example that Paul offers in 8:1-5?
2. What is so surprising about the Macedonians behaviour?
3. Why are the Macedonians so willing to give?
4. What is the example that Paul offers in 8:8-9?

5. How is our attitude to giving related to our understanding of the gospel?

When you think about the topic of Christians giving money—all sorts of words may come to mind—guilt, manipulation, pushiness, greed. But in this passage a completely different word keeps coming up—'grace'. Take note of these occurrences:

8:1—And now, brothers, we want you to know about the *grace* that God has given the Macedonian churches...

8:4—...they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege (lit. *grace*) of sharing...

8:6 —...to bring also to completion this act of *grace* on your part.

8:7—...see that you also excel in this *grace* of giving.

8:9—For you know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ...

9:8—And God is able to make all *grace* abound to you...

9:14—...because of the surpassing *grace* God has given us.

6. What does this say about the perspective on giving money that we can have?

7. According to this passage, how is the amount to be determined?

8. God's promise to us is that he makes us rich through Christ (8:8-9). It's a promise in which we look backwards to what God has given. But in 9:6-11, there is a promise in which we look forwards to what God will give us. What is that promise?

We should think about how this passage challenges us in our own lives now.

9. How would you assess your own pattern of giving—to church and further field?

10. If someone complained that they felt lacking in generosity, what remedy would you suggest?

11. 2 Corinthians 9:7 urges each of us to decide in our hearts about our giving, not reluctantly or under compulsion. Have you done this? If not, consider the different areas in which you might give, make a decision (cheerfully!) and write it down.