

## 2 Corinthians Ch8v16-Ch9v5 - Generous Grace, Generous Giving: Part 2

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[0:00] On page 1164 of your church Bible. So that's 2 Corinthians chapter 8, beginning at verse 16.

! And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.

What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honour the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.

We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift, for we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of man.

In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you.

[1:21] As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you. As for our brothers, they are representatives of the church and an honour to Christ. Therefore, show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.

There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people, for I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you and Achaea were ready to give, and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.

But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be.

For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we, not to say anything about you, would be ashamed of having been so confident.

So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

[2:51] Thank you so much, Chris. Let's keep our Bibles open there at 2 Corinthians 8. Thank you. We've been looking at these couple of chapters, 8 and 9, which have a theme of giving.

So I couldn't come up with another title, so I just put part 2. And you'll get part 3 next week, because it is generous grace, generous giving.

Let's ask for our generous Father's help as we look at his word together. Let's do that. Our Father God, you are so good.

You are so kind. We have received much from you today already. the blessing of gathering together as your people, being able to sing together, to be reminded of truth and of your love.

And we ask now that you would continue on giving to us according to our need. You know us individually.

[4:14] You know us corporately as your people. And we ask that you would speak to us in a way that causes us to marvel at your grace and respond in generosity.

Help us now, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we could call them the three musketeers. Three good men who are out to help a life-saving, life-changing cause. I wonder if you spotted them as we listened to God's word being read.

In the three musketeers, the first we have Titus. Have a look at verse 17. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, we'll come to that in a minute, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative.

Well, Titus isn't going to travel on his own. Look at verse 18. We have the second member of the team. And we are sending along with him, that's Titus, the brother who is praised by all the churches.

[5:32] And then to make up the team, the third member, verse 22. In addition, we are sending with them our brother who is often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous.

So here we have these brothers, this team, and they're on a mission. Chapter 9, verse 3. Paul, the writer says, I am sending the brothers.

And what we got to know is, is that Paul is currently in the north of Greece, and he's going to send these three brothers to Corinth, to the city, and to the church there, which is in the south of Greece. So why does he have to send them? What's their mission? Well, we see in 9, verse 5. He says, I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised.

Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. You see, what's going on here is that the church in Jerusalem was in financial need.

[6:55] They were suffering severe persecution. There was a famine in the area. People had lost their jobs and their homes. The church was suffering desperately. And so as Paul went around visiting these churches and writing letters to them, he reminded them of their need and the plan that he was going to take up a collection and bring it all together and give it to the church in Jerusalem.

Verse 17, For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, he was on board. Yes, this idea of getting together a collection is a good idea.

Now the church in Corinth knew all about this collection. They had heard of the needs and they knew the plan. They knew their brothers and sisters were suffering, but they had become complacent.

In fact, they had even promised that they were going to give, but so far it was all words and not action. All a lot of hot air.

Now I don't know about you, but if I counted up all the times I have promised myself to give to something and fail to do so, I would be embarrassed.

[8:15] You know how it is. A special collection is organized or there's an event or something's happening and you feel in that moment compelled to give.

You want to give, but it just doesn't seem to happen. Well, not all the time. Well, enter into this our three brothers.

Chapter 9, verse 5. I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised.

Now we need to be careful how we understand this role. It's not like Paul is sending the three heavies down into Corinth, you know, to sort them out.

You know, you promised to give, we're coming, to apply a little arm twisting. No, it's not that. Their planned visit was to help the church to be generous givers.

[9:21] So the first thing we want to see this morning is that gospel partnerships encourages our giving.

Gospel partnerships encourages our giving. The brothers are sent to encourage the partnership that existed. So look at Titus, verse 16.

Thanks be to God who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. Well, Paul's heart for the church was deep and it was extraordinarily wide.

And so it was for Titus. Titus had come to love the people in Corinth. And so when he thought of the church he was compelled into action.

He was moved by compassion. His heart was for them. But look at the other brother, verse 18.

We're sending along with Titus, the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.

[10:30] We're not given his name but all the churches know him. He's the gospel guy. The one who's always talking to his friends and neighbours about Jesus.

Don't you remember him? His constant longing and desire to see the gospel proclaimed. And then there's the third brother, verse 22.

We're sending him with our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous. And now even more so because of his great confidence in you.

This guy is passionate for Christ and he's eager for the church to know more of Christ. Christ. What a great team.

Wouldn't you love if these three characters turned up in Carigoline Baptist Church? Wow, you'd sure know they were in the congregation, wouldn't you?

[11:27] Here are three men who have a concern for the church, a love for the gospel, and are zealous for Jesus.

Look at the end of verse 23. They are representatives of the church and an honour to Christ. You see, these three brothers were travelling not to be heavy-handed but to express their gospel partnership.

They want to remind the church in Corinth of what truly matters because gospel partnerships encourages giving. Verse 24.

Paul writes in the light of their visit and going down to encourage them. Verse 24. Therefore, show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you so that the churches can see it. Go on. Welcome the three brothers who are coming to you, who love you, who are devoted to you, who pray for you. Show them their love and give.

[12:41] Make sure the gift is ready. You see, gospel partnerships are so precious in the means of giving. Now, as a church here, Karagaline Baptist Church, we have chosen people and specific churches and mission organisations to support financially.

We prayed for some of them just now. People like Amy in Sheffield working amongst the Pakistani community and Leticia who's down in Marseille in the south of France working amongst students, many of whom who have come from North Africa.

Mickey and Kennet in a country where no Westerner can go, but yet they're there working away, seeking to plant churches.

We support mission organisations like Asia Link who supply resources and Bibles to people who don't have it. Pastors, churches that don't have the word of God.

They are smuggling and bringing God's word to them. Radstock. Churches helping other churches to plant churches in some of the most difficult places in the world.

[14:02] And Christian Unions Ireland. students on campus seeking to reach their fellow students with the good news of Christ. And churches like Kinsale where they persevere and keep on holding out the light of the good news of Christ.

And other churches in the Cork Kerry project. Not to mention the ministries of this church. Sunday school happening right now. Polo on Thursday.

The Rock and Rooted on Friday. Core on Sunday evening. And of course our gathering here now. All these great ministries.

And why do we support them? Why do people give? Because together they have a deep concern for the church. A great love for the gospel.

And they're passionately zealous for Christ. They long to see the church grow and mature. They desire that the gospel will be spread.

[15:07] They're unashamed in their longing for Christ to be honoured. Who wouldn't want to give to gospel partnerships like this?

These are the things that truly matter most. These gospel partnerships are what cause us to open our wallets and set up that direct debit and reduce our own personal spending.

You might like to consider giving to Christian Unions Ireland today. We prayed about it starting on the 9th of February this month. They're going to have a mission week.

Reaching students through different activities. for their costs to cover or to cover their costs it'll take 450 euro.

So maybe today right now you want to give to that. Click on the QR code talk to our treasurer Joy this morning and give to the work of CUI as you are able.

[16:19] But maybe you're thinking wider and broader and the things that we're doing together as a church helping support those in the different places we just mentioned. Maybe you haven't given.

Maybe you want to start giving with a direct debit. Seeking to give ways so that the gospel continues to go around the world.

You see gospel partnerships encourage our giving. gospel integrity strengthens our giving. Gospel integrity strengthens our giving. Gospel integrity strengthens our giving.

You see sadly and all too often we hear about financial corruption in the local church. Maybe you've heard of it. People claim to have a concern for the church, a love for the gospel and a passion for Christ but in reality they're only stuffing their own wallet.

[17:26] We see it in extreme cases with what we call prosperity teachers. You've maybe seen them or heard of them on television. Benny Hinn, Joe Lustine, Creeflo Dollar.

I mean the names just give it away. What about Johnny Euro or something like that? Paula White, Joyce Meyer. Between them they've earned hundreds of millions taking money from people when they're saying it's for Christ.

And this was something that could be common in Corinth. Have a look back to chapter 2 verse 17. Chapter 2 verse 17. Paul wants to make it abundantly clear that he's above board in the work that he's doing.

Chapter 2 verse 17. Unlike so many we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary in Christ we speak before God with sincerity as those sent from God.

We're not peddling the word, we're not trying to make money out of it for ourselves, rather we're wanting to see Christ proclaimed. Let's go back to chapter 8 and 9.

[18:55] You see these so called preachers were coming into town but rather than serve God's glory they saw it as a way to get wealthy. So you could imagine when Paul was saying I'm taking up a collection for the church in Jerusalem.

Oh I? Really? You see Paul had a concern for the church, a love for the gospel. He was zealous for Christ and he was concerned for gospel integrity.

That people knew where the finances were going and how it was being conducted. Look at verse 20. chapter 8 verse 20.

We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this generous gift for we are taking pains to do what is right not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.

You see a preacher of the gospel who lines his own pocket brings the gospel into disrepute. How can we expect anybody to listen to the word of God to trust Christ if they can't trust the preacher?

[20:16] So Paul sends these brothers to make sure there's complete transparency. Paul is putting himself at distance between himself and the gift and sending others on his behalf to gather it together.

He's ensuring that the gospel he preaches is for God's glory not for his own means. Now this is extremely practical for us and I think there's lessons we can learn.

Here's three that I could come up with as we think about gospel integrity. Here's the first one.

Ensure the pastor keeps away from the church's finances.

So the practice of this church is that the pastor which presently is me I do not collect gifts from people. I don't have access to the church's account.

I don't set or have any input on salary or wage. In fact we don't even call it a salary. It's support to enable me to do what I'm doing.

[21:29] The members of the church are the ones that set the wage or the support. So make sure that the pastor keeps away from the church's finances.

That brings about the right way of thinking of finances. Second, ensure that the church maintains transparency.

transparency. The church's finances should not be a secret. So again the practice of the church here is that at least four times a year as we gather together for our members meeting the accounts

are presented to all the church.

Full disclosure. Everybody can see where every penny was given and every penny was spent. We want to have transparency.

we're not hiding things. And the third one is this. Ensure that the church does not build up a reserve. [22:37] The church is not about saving but about being good stewards. The people of this church, the members of the church, those who come and give, give generously.

I know that to be true, people are faithful in their giving. You are generous people. And I know that you give so that the gospel can be proclaimed, that gospel workers can be supported, that gospel needs can be met.

The church receives in one hand and gives out with the other hand. We're not to be savers but stewards. Now why is this so important?

Well, look at verse 21. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, we want to honour him, but also in the eyes of man.

You see, if I know that what I give to is trustworthy and transparent, if I know that what I give to is going to be used for gospel work and God's glory, then it's going to strengthen my giving.

[23:59] But if on the other hand I haven't a clue what the church does with the money, or if there's some shady dodging dealing going on, then I'm going to keep my money in my pocket.

I'm not going to give. So gospel integrity is crucial for the local church. And it's an encouragement to us all to make sure that the church behaves rightly, God honouring, with our spending and our using of it.

So second, gospel integrity strengthens our giving. There's another reason, our third reason, why these brothers visit.

Gospel grace ensures our giving. Gospel grace will ensure our giving. The brothers are going ultimately to remind the church in Corinth of God's grace.

Look at chapter 9 verse 3. Paul says, I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready as I said you would be.

[25:25] You see here he's boasting about the church in Corinth. He's delighting at God's grace in their life, how God has worked in them. You received God's grace.

Now you in turn be gracious. Make sure that your response to God's grace is not empty or doesn't prove to be hollow.

To help us understand this, the same idea is seen in chapter 6 verse 1. Have a look at that verse with me. Chapter 6 verse 1.

This business of making sure that it's not empty or hollow. Look what it says, chapter 6 verse 1. As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. He's saying make sure that when you receive God's grace, it's not in vain.

[26:33] It doesn't prove to be empty or hollow. Make sure that when God's grace is in your life, it actually takes effect in your life.

We urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. Let's go back to chapter 9 and verse 3. You see, he's saying here, you've experienced God's grace in your life.

Now prove it. Show it in your giving. In other words, make sure that what you promised will be fulfilled. Your readiness to give is the evidence that you have received God's grace and that it hasn't been in vain.

So let's ask ourselves the searching questions. Have I received God's grace in vain or is it taking effect in my life?

do I say I have a concern for the church but actually do nothing in terms of giving to the church?

[27:49] Do I say, oh, I love the gospel but actually have no interest in gospel workers? Do we express on the outside a passion for Christ but keep my bank account far from Christ?

If you were to cut me open right now, would I be hollow and empty or would I be filled with generous grace? You see, the evidence that we have received grace is that we are generous givers.

Look at verse 5. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance to finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised.

Then it would be ready as a generous gift, not one grudgingly given. Literally, it won't become a stingy gift, the few coppers that we find in the bottom of our pocket.

Rather, it will be free and generous. for haven't we received freely so that we can freely give?

[29:12] Remember the verse that we looked at in Romans 8? That God did not spare his son but gave him up for us all? How will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

We have the very best gift in Christ and he has given to us so much more on top of that. And that's why the brothers were ultimately sent to remind the church of gospel grace, of God's kindness and goodness.

And isn't that what we are to do with each other? To remind each other of God's grace to each one of us. I need you to take me back to the cross and I need to bring us back to the cross.

Don't we see it in chapter 8 verse 9? Let's read it there together. Do you see it? Chapter 8 verse 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 through his poverty might become rich?

You see it's as we come back to the cross and see Christ taking our sin on himself and giving us forgiveness and his righteousness how rich we truly are.

[30:51] You see without God's grace we're empty and hollow but as we come to Jesus again and again so we are filled afresh with his grace.

Do not receive God's grace in vain. Make sure it takes effect. Make sure it gets worked out in our life so that we like the church in Corinth would become generous givers.

I'm sure you all remember and know the story of Zacchaeus in Luke's gospel. Do you remember Zacchaeus? The one who was the tax collector?

The one who kept scooping off the top for his own pocket? And there he encountered Jesus. And Jesus said to Zacchaeus, today I'm coming to your house.

And what was Zacchaeus' response to the welcome, to the grace that Jesus showed to him? He says right now I give half of all that I have, 50% right now to the poor, done and dusted.

[32:08] And I will give four times back to anyone I have cheated. Jesus said today salvation has come to this man's house.

he had received grace and it wasn't in vain. He generously gave and it was evidence that salvation had become his experience.

How good and kind our God is to us. Let us pray that God will work in each of our lives and as us as a church.

Let's pray together. Amen. Father, thank you for all that you have done for us and all that you have given.

Thank you for the kindness of your grace to us as a church family, for faithfully providing for us in all of our needs, in giving to us the finances so that we can support and encourage workers across the world and at home.

[33:35] Thank you for those who give generously so that the ministries of this church can continue. Father, we pray that you would fill us afresh with a concern for your church, a love for the gospel, that we would be passionately zealous for Jesus.

Father, thank you for all that you are doing amongst us and we ask that you would kindly and generously give to us that we may be good stewards of all that we have and that it may be all for your good and for your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We're going to sing about the grace of the Lord and the effect that it has in us that it calls us to follow him.

And as we follow him it's to give us a love. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.