

# God Loves a Cheerful Giver

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[ 0:00 ] seated. I encourage you to open the Bibles to page 941. Today we're continuing our sermon series through Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and we're actually looking at all of chapters 8 and 9 and that begins on page 941. And let's pray. God our Father, your word is light and life and we pray that you'll shine your word into our hearts that we may respond to it with love, with faith, with hope, with generosity and that we may bring glory and honour to your name through your son Jesus Christ. Amen. Almost every day in the mail I receive some request for money from some organisation or other. Almost all, if not all, I'm sure, are good causes. Many are Christian, not all of them are Christian, but almost every day there is some appeal from someone somewhere. Most weeks, somewhere where you stop at a red traffic light in the city of Melbourne, somebody will shake a tin by your parked car. I assume they're good causes, it's not always obvious to me what they're for, but again we're being asked to give. These days, almost every day seems to be a day for a special cause. So most people in Victoria now think that Good Friday is a holiday so that we can give money to the children's hospital. There are poppy days, daffodil days, I imagine if I look hard enough there'll be dandelion days as well. And there are pink ribbon days, blue ribbon days, red ribbon days and every other colour of ribbon as well and when we run out of colours they'll invent something else that you can buy and wear or put on your head or foot or something to raise money for a particular worthy cause. And to top it all off, we come to church on Sunday and every Sunday a bowl will be passed in front of us because again we're being asked to give money.

So you may want to zip up your wallets and your purses because in these two chapters Paul, having addressed a variety of issues to the Corinthians, is dealing at length with the issue of giving money. About a year before Paul wrote this letter, he wrote what we call 1 Corinthians, the previous letter in the New Testament. And in that letter, towards the end, right at the end of that letter, he mentions to them, already he's mentioned it before, but he mentions to them again a collection that he's taking for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. And he said in 1 Corinthians 16, Now concerning the collection for the saints, you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. On the first day of every week, seems there already Christians are meeting on the Sunday as we would call it, not on the Jewish Sabbath, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn. So the collections need not be taken when I come. And when I arrive, I'll send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. And if it seems advisable that I should go also, they'll accompany me. Well, it's clear that there were poor Christians in Jerusalem and in the surrounding area of Judea under Roman control. We know there was a famine in probably about the 40s AD in that area. And this is also mentioned in other parts of the New Testament, in Galatians chapter 2, for example. And it seems that the Corinthian church had been keen to be part of this collection from the various churches in what we would call today Greece and maybe Turkey as well.

But it seems that they haven't followed up on that initial enthusiasm. They've said, yes, yes, we'll give, but they haven't yet done so. And Paul has sent Titus to that church, as we've seen in the last week or two. Titus has come back to Paul. And it seems that one of the things that he said about the Corinthian church is they're still keen to give, but they haven't actually done anything about it yet. Well, it's typical, isn't it, of us, really? We're often keen to give, but, you know, the actual effort of unzipping our wallet or purse or writing a check is pretty painful sometimes.

The will might be there, but sometimes we don't always follow through on it. So we can understand the Corinthians not quite getting around to making the gift that they initially say they want to do.

Well, Paul has finished the previous chapter by saying that he has absolute confidence in the Corinthians and their church. He said that a number of times during this letter. Now comes the time, having expressed that confidence, hopefully in a sense he's helped bring them a bit more on side with him. He now goes on to challenge them again about this issue of giving. Remember, Paul is writing from Macedonia in the north of Greece. We're not sure exactly which city, but it could be Philippi, it could be Thessalonica or Berea, three places where we know that Paul had earlier been to. It may be, for example, something completely different in that area.

[ 5 : 05 ]

But he's writing from the Macedonian area, and he obviously is impressed by their generosity. He begins chapter 8 saying, we want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia. Now, when we read that, we might think, oh, this means that a number have become Christians, and that's true. But what Paul's comment about the grace of God now is about is their giving. For during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy in the midst of their affliction, that is, something that Paul himself has testified to in chapter 1 of this letter, and indeed we see that joy in the letter to the Philippians, and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. Now, that's an astonishing combination.

In the midst of affliction and in poverty, they have overflowed in generosity. Their affliction, we're not sure what it is. It could be persecution for being Christian. We know that many times in the early centuries, in little towns or villages or cities, if people became Christians, they'd be economically ostracized. Oh, I'm not giving you my business if you've become Christian. I'll go down to the pagan butcher or the pagan accountant or whoever it is. And so economic ostracism and therefore poverty was probably common for many Christians in these early years after Jesus. But out of their poverty and affliction has come an extraordinary generosity. Paul testifies in verse 3, they voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints. That is, they weren't tight-fisted having to have their arm twisted to let go of a bit of money. They actually said to Paul, we want to contribute.

It could be, the implication is, that Paul wasn't going to ask them because they were poor. They said, no, no, no, we want to be part of this. And they are abundantly generous and enthusiastic and zealous to give. Begging us earnestly, he says in verse 4, for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints. The word for sharing there is the word fellowship.

And what they recognise, these Macedonian Christians, is that they are in fellowship with Christians back in Jerusalem. The Macedonian ones may be Greek and Gentile background, the Jewish, the Jerusalem ones would be Jewish background mostly. But nonetheless, they recognise a fellowship belonging together in Christ. And they want to express that fellowship in the generosity of giving, even for Christians whom they don't know from a different racial or ethnic background in another country, in another part of the Roman Empire. Paul's been amazed by this example, and he uses it to spur on the Corinthian church to give more generously. Corinth was a more wealthy city. The Corinthians were more wealthy, as we'll see a little bit later on. And so he goes on in verse 5 to say that they gave themselves first to the Lord and by the will of God to us, so that we might urge Titus that as he'd already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Paul is saying here that the example of the Macedonian Christians' generosity, he is using to spur on the Jerusalem Christians, the Corinthian Christians themselves to be more generous in their giving and to fulfil the promise of giving that they'd made at least a year before.

Also, the language of verse 5 shows that giving is to be part of our spiritual life. Sometimes people think that it's not part of our spiritual life, that it's something that is unrelated in a sense to being a follower of Jesus. There are some people who take offence when money or money issues are approached. But here it's clear that our giving flows out, it ought to flow out, of our relationship with Almighty God. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in the ministry and for this gift.

[ 9 : 20 ] That is, they're expressing this as an act of love from the Lord. They're not sort of reluctant givers, but their giving comes out of their relationship with Almighty God and the grace that he's given them.

And that's why Paul opens this chapter in that way. Here's a testimony of God's grace. They are generous in their giving, even though they're poor. That's the effect of the grace of God in giving his son Jesus in the hearts, minds and lives of believers and followers of Christ.

And so Paul uses their example to spur on the Corinthians. In verse 7 he says, Now as you excel in everything, faith, speech, knowledge, utmost eagerness, and in our love for you, so we want you also to excel in this generous undertaking. The things he lists are partly things that the Corinthians boasted in. He's saying, okay, you excel in these things, excel in the generosity of giving as well. But not as a command. Paul says, I'm testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. That is, our giving is meant to flow from a willingness, a voluntariness, an enthusiasm within us, within our hearts. That it's not just an obligation to a rule or a law, but ought to flow from generous hearts responding to the generosity of God's grace. And certainly hearing the stories of especially poor Christians who give so much for the sake of the gospel and to others in even greater need is often very moving, profoundly challenging to our own generosity, I find. Well, having used the Macedonians as an example to spur on the Corinthians, Paul turns to the greatest example. He says in verse 9,

Paul is referring to the fact that before he was born as a baby in Bethlehem, the Lord Jesus existed in the glory of heaven with God the Father. He left that glory, not just for an impoverished life on earth, but ultimately for the poverty of the cross and his death for us. Back in chapter 6, we saw this last Sunday morning. Paul said in verse 10, at the end of a long sequence of things that characterized his ministry, he said, we are regarded as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything. Paul is recognizing that though physically he was impoverished, he had the treasure of the gospel, treasuring clay jars, he called it back in chapter 4, and therefore through the gospel, making many rich. And that's in effect what he's alluding to here as well. The richness that Jesus comes to bring us is through the gospel of his death on the cross. That's in particular the poverty that is in mind. And so for the sake of gospel ministry, the example of Jesus should drive us and inspire us to greater and greater generosity. The issue for the Corinthians is that they've expressed a willingness to give but are yet to do so. Paul goes on to say in verse 10, I'm giving my advice, it's appropriate for you who began last year, not only to do something, but even to desire to do something.

Now finish doing it so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. But only if you're willing in verse 12. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. That is unwilling or reluctant giving. That's not actually ultimately pleasing to God. The money may be well used. It may not be a bad thing. But actually what God wants is willing, enthusiastic, generous givers responding to his generosity in giving his son, Jesus Christ. And that's according to our means. Some will be able to give much more than others. Paul goes on to say in verse 12, in verse 13, I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it's a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need so that presumably one day the tables may be turned, their abundance may be for your need in order that there may be a fair balance.

[14:05] Well, this is a biblical principle, in fact. Paul, at the end of this paragraph, quotes from the book of Exodus in verse 15. The one who had much did not have too much. The one who had little did not have too little. They may not have exactly equal amounts, but they had sufficient. And the quote comes from the time in the wilderness where Israel was receiving each day the odd substance, the manna from heaven.

Every day in the morning, they'd go out and collect this substance. It would last them a day. The next day they would go and collect more. The principle of giving there was that everyone would have sufficient. It may not be exactly the same, but there is enough for everyone.

The principle applies when Israel later arrived in the promised land. We saw last year in some passages that we looked at on Deuteronomy, that the land itself would have an abundance for everybody, but that carried with, to the people, the obligation of sharing. So that those who perhaps had too little, to them you'd be open-handed and generous in your giving. But overall, God's provision is sufficient, indeed abundant. Well, now for the church of God, the same thing. The church, of course, is not geographically centered in one nation like ancient Israel had been, in the promised land.

But the church scattered throughout the world received sufficient from God. But the obligation is still there to share with those in need. The Corinthians are wealthy, Paul is saying, others are in need. Your sharing to them will have sufficient for all. And there may be times when the tables are reversed and they share back to you in your need out of their abundance as well.

And notice again, this is sharing with Christians you don't know. See, they're not saying within your little church of Corinth, some of you are pretty wealthy and some of you are poor. So, you know, give to those who you're sitting next to in the pews so that they've got sufficient. No, I mean, that's in a sense part and parcel too. But here the focus is giving to Christians from another country whom you've never met, from another racial background, who are in need. But even though you don't know them, you've never met them, you probably never will meet them. There is a bond in Christ across the racial and geographical boundaries. And that obligates Christians to share out of their abundance with those in need. In the verses that follow, Paul says he's going to send Titus to forewarn them, maybe with this letter in fact, that he's going to collect this gift that they have said that they would contribute to. And in these verses, he commends Titus and two other brothers who will go to do this. Part of what's behind this is the issue of integrity.

[16:55] Paul is wanting to be very clear that it is not only above board in God's eyes, but that it is irreproachable in human eyes. That the gift that he's collecting for the Jerusalem Christians, he's not siphoning off for himself in any way or for anyone else for that matter.

So Paul says in verses 20 and 21, we intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we're administering. For we intend to do what is right, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the sight of others. Well, we know from this letter already how much Paul has been attacked for all sorts of things and how much he's defended his integrity and motives. Well, here, Paul is making sure that there is no opportunity for such attack to stick. So he's saying, in effect, I've got other people who collect the money. Indeed, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 16, if you want to send someone with the money, go for it. That is, this is very clearly above board. I'm not collecting money for myself. So if you hear rumors of that, it is completely unfounded and untrue. Of course, Paul knows that there are temptations with money. Many of us face those sorts of things. And so being accountable not only to God, but to each other, being above board honestly and openly is an important part of financial management, not least within a church and within giving to others as well. Paul finishes the chapter again with the exhortation to complete the task. Openly before the churches, he says at the end of chapter eight, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

Something that he'd said back in chapter eight, verse eight. This is a test of the genuineness of your love. Well, he thinks the Corinthians are loving. He certainly hopes they are. But remember, this is the church to whom he wrote a year or so before that famous passage, 1 Corinthians 13. Love is kind, love is patient, love is not boastful and so on. Famous words, beautiful words, but actually words of rebuke to a loveless church. Now perhaps they're learning the lesson and Paul is pushing them to prove the genuineness of their love for other believers in another place who are in greater need than they.

Well, having used the Macedonians as an example and Jesus as an example, Paul now goes on to another principle about biblical giving and generosity. And this is, and he mentions this in verse six of chapter nine. The first paragraph of chapter nine that I'm skipping over reiterates again that I want you to be prepared so that when I come, the gift is ready so that you're not embarrassed and I'm not embarrassed. But now he gives them another motive for generous giving. He says in verse six, the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Behind this agricultural sort of image is the idea of scattering lots of seed. Now you take a dumb person like me and you buy a packet of lawn seed. You think, oh, well, I need one seed to grow a lawn and you put it in the garden and well, the bird comes and eats it anyway and you don't grow a lawn.

[ 20 : 19 ] Apparently, apparently, I've seen this occasionally, people sort of throw seed all over the place. I think they're feeding the birds. But anyway, often a lawn grows. Well, the idea is sow generously and reap generously. That is a dangerous principle. Well, it's not a dangerous principle, but it's been interpreted in dangerous ways. There are those around who would say that if you tithe, if you give generously, God will make you wealthy. God will make you so prosperous beyond your dreams. I've heard of a church where they say if you tithe and give this amount or this percentage or whatever it is, tithes or beyond, and if you're not satisfied with God's generosity to do in three months, we'll refund the whole lot. I actually think that's a fairly appalling thing to do. But I think it's a very appalling motive to twist verses like this to say, if you give generously, then you'll become wealthy as you reap abundantly as a result. Let's pay attention to what Paul then is actually saying in these verses.

He says in verse eight, God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance. Now, if we stop there, we might think, well, the blessings must be, you know, lots of children and crops and animals and big houses and cars and luxury and so on. But in the New Testament, blessings have got much more of a spiritual and heavenly focus than they do in the Old Testament.

They're expanded into a bigger dimension. Not that there is no blessing in this life now, not at all, but we should be careful to understand the nature of blessing here.

But even more, if we keep reading that same verse, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. Now, the principle here, we must get right.

So generously, that is, give generously, and you will reap blessing generously back from God, not in physical luxury and opulence and wealth, but at the level of having enough so that you may share in every good work as you give more and more. That is, it's a blessing of sufficiency, not prosperity, but it's a blessing of generosity that flows out of generosity. What Paul is saying here, give generously and God will reap back to you blessing, a blessing of sufficiency, you'll have enough, so that you may share abundantly in every good work, so that you can share abundantly and even more abundantly, more and more with generosity. He quotes from Psalm 112, speaking there of God, and alluding there to a blessing of righteousness, which comes out more clearly in the next verse, as Paul explains that passage from Psalms, he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, that is God, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. That's spiritual blessing, fundamentally.

[ 23 : 52 ] So if our giving is motivated by becoming rich, if we think that our Christian generosity is like an investment scheme, then we're failed on the basic motivation.

The blessing that comes back to us is that we will have sufficient and we'll have even more to be able to give and give and give as we share abundantly in every good work.

And that will be righteousness. We will reap a harvest of righteousness, as indeed we become more and more like God, the generous giver. Well, this is a deep Christian principle to get right.

Often I think our giving is out of our surplus. We work out what we think we need, and a bit more for safety measure, and a bit more for building a bigger barn, and then if there's some leftover, well, let's give that.

Christian giving, under the principles of both the Old and the New Testament, are that in effect our giving comes first and of the best. And as we give generously, significantly generously, it will actually test us and strengthen our faith that God will provide sufficient.

[ 25 : 06 ] You see, our economics is usually, this is sufficient, oh, and I've got a bit left over I can give. But actually the economics here is, this is what I will give, and I will trust that God will provide what is sufficient.

And beyond that, even more, that I can give in generosity. That's very clear in the Old Testament, but they're principles that Paul is using here as well. It challenges us in our economics of giving, that we're not giving out of a surplus, but we're giving as a primary commitment, and therefore trusting God to provide for us what is sufficient.

Part of this giving also is an act of fellowship. I saw that back in verse 4, when Paul, writing of the Macedonian Christians, says that they begged us for the privilege of fellowship in this ministry.

The same language of fellowship also comes in verse 13 of chapter 9. Through the testing of this ministry, you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your fellowship with them and with all others.

And as a result, verse 14 says, there will be greater fellowship and even greater unity amongst believers and amongst Christians.

[ 26 : 33 ] Christian giving, and here remember it's cross-national, it's from Gentile to Jewish Christian and so on, is an expression of fellowship and belonging to other believers and other Christians.

But there's another motive as well, and that is a motive of the praise of God. So often, you see, we tend to turn our motives back in to be selfish.

Paul is showing here that our motives are for love of others, fellowship, and above all for the praise of God. And that note rings three times at the end of this chapter 9.

In verse 11, Paul says, you'll be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God. Verse 12, the same idea.

For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. And the same in verse 13.

[ 27 : 34 ] Through the testing of this ministry, you glorify God. Sometimes we fail to remember that glorifying God, a great increasing thanksgiving to God, is a primary motive of our giving.

But as we give generously, sacrificially, then it ought to increase not only our own thanksgiving to God, as he provides sufficient for us, but the thanksgiving to God of those who receive the gifts that we give, as well as the thanksgiving to God of those who see the giving and receiving, and rejoice and praise and glorify God as well.

So a God-directed generosity is what Paul is commanding. A God-directed generosity will flow out of the grace of God, who is himself a generous giver.

It's why this chapter finishes, thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. It's why it speaks about the gift of Jesus Christ, who left the wealth of heaven for the poverty of the cross.

God's generosity is his grace to us, and as that grace impacts on our lives, we will respond with a God-directed generosity, which will bring benefit to other saints in other places.

[ 28 : 49 ] Well, there's a famous verse I've skipped over in here, and it says that God loves a cheerful giver. The happiest time of our service should be our collection. And I know when I've been in Nigeria, teaching and preaching and visiting Peter and Elspeth Young, it certainly is in Nigeria.

With all these impoverished African Christians, they dance down the aisles to give their offerings. Could we do it today? I'm very tempted to try.

But they would often have a great big bowl. Let me tell you, it's huge. And somebody would stand at the front here with the bowl. And everybody, line by line, pew by pew, would come down while they're singing a hymn, and they'll be dancing, and they'll be placing in their envelopes or gifts or offerings in the bowl with joy.

God loves a cheerful giver. And yet how often we're sort of fumbling in our pockets and what's left over, I don't really like giving, I'd rather have this money for something else. Well, someone from our church said to me a few years ago, if you're not a cheerful giver, don't give less, give more.

And if that doesn't make you cheerful, give a bit more, and keep giving more and more and more until you are really cheerful about giving. That's a great challenge. Because I think if we're not cheerful giving what we're giving now, we're not going to be cheerful giving much less.

[ 30 : 07 ] We'll actually become cheerful when we give extravagantly. So there's a challenge. There's a challenge. Paul is writing to a wealthy church in Corinth, a wealthy city.

He's using the example of a poor church and the example of Jesus and the promise of God's blessing with a harvest of righteousness. The example is forgiving to other Christians who are in need for the sake of the gospel.

Well, from the comfort of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, one of the cities that's rated highest in the world for comfort, wealth, and ease of living, from the part of the most comfortable part of the most comfortable city in the world, this ought to be a big challenge to every one of us.

How do we respond to these verses? There are certainly Christians in Australia who are worse off than we are. There are those in the western suburbs, which mostly we avoid even visiting.

There are Christians from ethnic backgrounds different from our own, often new to our country, who struggle deeply economically as they find their feet here. There are Christians in other parts of our country who are suffering deeply because of drought and some who are suffering because of flood.

[ 31 : 35 ] There are organisations like Anglicord in the Diocese of Melbourne, special appeals from time to time. We, of all people, ought to be generous in giving to those sorts of appeals.

But, of course, the example here is not limited to giving within your own congregation or even within your own neighbourhood either. This is giving from Greece back to Jerusalem, from Gentile to Jewish Christians.

Certainly, as I have in recent years visited and taught in places like Nigeria and Burma and China and India, it's been profoundly moving and at times embarrassing to see the generosity of such impoverished Christians.

And their examples, I find personally hugely challenging. For example, I have a friend in China who's a pastor now of a church.

I taught him two years ago in China. He gets paid \$80 a month. It's not quite enough to live on. Thanks to the generosity of some in his church, he has food and they've given him a bicycle.

[ 32 : 40 ] But his generosity to me is embarrassing when I was in China last year and saw him. But he can't afford books, more books to buy, to read.

He wants to be a Bible teacher. He has no resources for that. I'm hoping to be able to help him in some way when I go back to China later in the year to teach. In Burma, Christians there are even more impoverished, like in China, persecuted officially.

Many of us have met through the Israel trip late last year, Ronald, who teaches at the college in Burma that we support. And they get paid about \$100 a month, which at least is a bit better economically than my friend in China, but still a great struggle.

Unable to pay some of his medical expenses. They don't have things like washing machines. Don't have any computers. There's one computer in the college, but none for the faculty.

And I'm hoping when I go back to teach to be able to help the college to buy some computers for each faculty member and other things that they really could use so much but have no money to do.

[ 33 : 45 ] In India, some of the students there have no money to go back home during their holiday breaks. Most of them are funded from organisations in the West to do their study.

I remember in Nigeria meeting pastors who lived in houses without electricity and often were not paid because they depended on the agricultural harvests for any income.

Now, over the years, this is a very generous church, and I think we have some reputation for being generous. I know that we've paid for roofs of churches in Nigeria, church buildings.

We've paid for medical expenses for some Nigerian pastors and work in the hospital where Elspeth Young works. We helped look after Jacob and Rhoda Kwashi when they were here for two years with CMS.

A number of folk here at my request have helped fund an Indian student for two years to finish his studies in Bangalore. And many have helped to fund Ronald to be part of the Israel trip to improve his understanding, learning and therefore teaching back in Burma.

[ 34 : 46 ] Many of us give food items each week to the box that's by the entry door that's taken each week into Fitzroy. Our general mission-giving budget at Holy Trinity is over \$35,000, I think, this year.

We gave significantly to Tier Fund before Christmas, Thanksgiving Sunday appeals, and then many people here I know have personal commitments to missions and others in other places. And we have a commitment to passing on the treasure of the gospel to people who do not know it.

But let me say, the needs remain enormous, and we, by comparison, are very rich indeed. We must never forget that.

Because we are. My personal aim each year is to give more money and a higher percentage of my income to Christian mission and ministry and relief. In order to do that, I need to keep records so that I don't fool myself at the end of the year.

Because I know that my default position will be more stingy than I want it to be. And whilst Paul in these chapters keeps addressing us to our heart that should be generous, our heart is deceitful too.

[ 35 : 54 ] Our heart will sometimes say to us, you can't afford to give. Don't. So we need to beware of our hearts sometimes and push ourselves to give beyond our means, like the Macedonians did, forcing us to trust even more in the generosity of God back to us.

As I've reflected this week, if God could be so extravagant to the extent of giving his son, why shouldn't I be more and more generous than I already am?

As the hymn writer says, were the whole realm of nature mine, it would be an offering far too small. For love so amazing and so divine demands my soul and my life and my all.

Well, sometime after writing this letter, Paul was in Corinth and he wrote a letter to the Church of Rome, the letter to the Romans that we have in the New Testament. And there towards the end of Romans, as he tells them about his future travels, he says to them in Romans chapter 15, At present, I'm going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints for Macedonia and Achaia.

That's the area of Corinth have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. These two chapters in this letter had the desired effect, it seems.

[ 37:19 ] They gave as they promised and Paul is about to leave Corinth here with their gift to the saints in Jerusalem. Thanks to God that the Corinthians responded to these chapters with generosity.

How will we respond? How will we be generous, maybe even beyond our means, in 2008? Avatrt.

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