

Paul had been asking the churches he was visiting to give to the poor saints in Jerusalem and he uses the example of the Macedonians sacrificial giving to motivate the Corinthians to complete the offering that they had begun collecting a year before. This passage paints a picture of the kind of Christian giving that God loves and blesses.

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit [to make known]” – The odd phrase “we do you to wit” is a KJV English way of saying “we wish to make it known to you.” Paul wants the Corinthians to be aware of something.

“of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia” – The thing that Paul wanted the Corinthians to be aware of was that God had blessed the churches of Macedonia with a particular “grace” that had allowed them to do something remarkable.

“How that in a great trial of affliction” – God had bestowed this grace on the Macedonian churches during a time of great trial and affliction, making it all the more remarkable and gracious.

“the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality [generosity]” – God graced the Macedonians with the ability and desire to raise a remarkable amount of money for the saints in need in spite of their own deep poverty. Being able to do this brought them great joy, which is why Paul described it as “the grace of God.”

3 For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

“For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power” – Paul understood how poor the Macedonian Christians were, so he was testifying to how they had given even beyond their means to the needs of other saints.

“*they were* willing of themselves” – No one “twisted the arms” of the Macedonians, nor were they deceived or shamed into giving. They gave out of their own free will because of the love they had for God and other Christians.

“Praying us with much intreaty [encouragement; urgency]” – Paul may have hesitated about accepting the gift of the Macedonians, knowing their poverty and the hardship that that degree of giving might place on them. However, they earnestly begged Paul and his companions to accept the gift to be given to the needy saints.

“that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” – The Macedonians wanted Paul to accept their gift and allow them to take part in the “fellowship” of those who were ministering to the saints. They considered it to be a privilege to be able to give to other Christians.

5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

“And *this they did*, not as we hoped [expected]” – Paul had expected the Macedonians to give in proportion to their limited resources, but instead they gave far beyond his expectation.

“but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” – One of the reasons they exceeded Paul’s expectations was because they first gave themselves to the Lord. They had surrendered themselves to the will of God and were willing to give what He wanted them to give rather than what they thought they could spare. They had also submitted themselves to Paul and his companions, being willing to obey the will of God as commanded by Paul.

“Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also” – Paul was so encouraged by seeing the joy and blessing that resulted from the Macedonians’ giving that he asked Titus, who had previously begun to take an offering from the Corinthians, to return to Corinth and complete the offering so that the Corinthians could enjoy the grace of giving as well.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

“Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*” – After stating that the Corinthians abounded in other “graces” that God had blessed them with, Paul then lists several of them.

“*in faith*” – Their trust in God for salvation, spiritual growth, and in meeting of their needs.

“and utterance” – They were not silent concerning their faith, but shared it with others.

“and knowledge” – They were growing in their knowledge of the things of God.

“and *in* all diligence [earnestness]” – As stated in the previous chapter (2 Cor. 7:11), the Corinthians had purged the sin from their ranks and were endeavoring to please God.

“and *in* your love to us” – The love that the Corinthians had for Paul and his companions was growing once again.

“see that ye abound in this grace also” – Just as the Corinthians abounded in these other graces, Paul urges them to also abound in the grace of being generous in their giving to the saints in need.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

Paul was not commanding the Corinthians to give to the needs of the saints, but he wanted to put the sincerity of their love for the saints to the test by challenging them with the example of the generosity of others (the Macedonians). Paul did not doubt the Corinthians because he already stated that he had confidence in them (2 Cor. 7:16). Rather, Paul wanted the evidence of their love to enable him to continue to boast about the Corinthians, as he did to Titus (2 Cor. 7:14).

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” – Paul uses Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of giving to others who had need.

“that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” – As God, Christ owns everything and enjoys all authority, power, glory and honor due to Him. And yet He set all of that aside temporarily to become a “nobody” at the bottom of the social ladder in order to be the Savior of those who would believe (**Phil. 2:5-8** “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*”).

“that ye through his poverty might be rich” – Christ did not die as God but as a man so that He could be an appropriate substitute for us. The fact that He bore our sins on the cross enables all who believe to be made spiritually rich through faith in Christ.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

“And herein I give my advice” – Paul is not commanding them to give (v. 8), but is giving them his recommendation of what he thinks they should do.

“for this is expedient [profitable; beneficial] for you” – Paul knew that God would bless the Corinthians for giving and he didn’t want them to miss out on this opportunity. We do not give to be blessed (which would be a selfish reason for giving), but God will bless us (not necessarily in monetary terms) when we give to others in need. We may not receive some of these blessings until we enter heaven.

“who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward [to intend; to have a desire; to take pleasure in doing] a year ago” – The Corinthians had already started taking up an offering for the needy saints a year before, but for some reason had not finished doing so. Paul acknowledges that they had not been compelled to begin collecting this offering but had done so willingly. Paul wants them to complete the offering so that they will be blessed by God.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

“Now therefore perform the doing of it” – Paul urges them to complete what they started.

“that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also” – They should perform that which they had willingly started to do a year ago. Their willingness to begin the collection should also motivate them to complete it.

“out of that which ye have” – Paul had used the Macedonians as an example of giving, who had given above their means (v. 3), but he’s not insisting that the Corinthians give to the same extent. He recommends that they give “out of that which ye have.” God does not expect us to give to others beyond what we are able, which Paul explains in vs. 12-15.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

When it comes to voluntary giving, it is an accepted practice for your giving to be within your means. Giving in the Bible is always from your excess because God does not expect us to impoverish ourselves for the benefit of others (**v. 13** “*For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened*”). However, if He has blessed us with more than we need, it is so that we can share that excess with those who have less than what they need (**v. 14** “*But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality*”). Paul quotes Ex. 16:18 to demonstrate God’s intention that everyone have what they need (**v. 15** “*As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack*”).

Verses 16-24: Paul describes Titus’ desire to return to Corinth to receive the Corinthians’ offering and that an unnamed brother in the Lord would accompany him. This unnamed brother was well known throughout the churches as being a man faithful in the gospel ministry, which may be why Paul does not name him. When they arrive in Corinth, Paul urges the Corinthians to prove their love and show that Paul’s boasting of the Corinthians was true through their welcoming of Titus and the brother and through a generous offering for the saints.