

Fact Sheet for “Principles for Giving”

2 Corinthians 8 & 9

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Today we come to a two chapter section of 2 Corinthians that is one of the premier passages in the NT on the subject of giving. There are several principles to be found here that can serve us all well. They should be taught to our children from their early years and should be kept in mind throughout our lives.

Rather than covering these two chapters verse by verse we will proceed in a different way. First, we will look at the background of these chapters. What is the situation Paul addresses? What are his concerns? Second, we will look at several principles about giving that he mentions. And third, we will briefly put these principles into their larger biblical context. So let's begin by setting the stage for a good understanding of these two chapters.

What is the situation here? The occasion that the Corinthians had for giving financially was a collection for the poor in Jerusalem that Paul had been organizing for several years. 3,000 had been added to the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) and 5,000 more soon afterward (Acts 4:4). But the church in Jerusalem came under intense persecution (including from Paul, then Saul) and there were many poor. And Paul was involved from the outset with this offering to the poor in Jerusalem.

ESV Galatians 2:9-10 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

ESV Romans 15:25-28 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

The Corinthians were taking part in this offering.

ESV 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 ¶ Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

The Corinthians had promised this gift (2 Cor. 9:5). I am reminded of Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. Take time to read those verses now. The churches in Macedonia had given eagerly and liberally to this but now the Corinthians were dragging their feet. Take time to read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 and verse 11.

What had interrupted the Corinthians' good intentions? No one knows for sure, but a likely possibility was their interaction with those among them who were not Christians. In fact, they may have even questioned Paul's honesty in this collection. Again, take time to read 2 Corinthians 8:16-22.

This was the situation Paul was addressing. Paul was concerned that, by deliberateness or by neglect, they were not completing this offering.

Having set the stage for these chapters let's look at several principles for giving included here.

#1 Giving May Entail Sacrifice

Review 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
Consider Christ's example in 8:9.

#2 Give According to Your Ability

ESV 2 Corinthians 8:12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

#3 Anticipate God's Blessing

ESV 2 Corinthians 9:6 ¶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

#4 Giving Should Flow from a Willing Mind and Heart

ESV 2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

#5 The Handling of Financial Gifts Calls for Honesty, Integrity, and Care

Review 2 Corinthians 8:16-22

Now, let's put these principles into a larger biblical context. These principles for giving fit the circumstance Paul was addressing in Corinth. However, they are not the only biblical passages and principles for giving. Here are some examples of others.

ESV Matthew 6:1-4 ¶ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ² ¶ "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

ESV Luke 21:1-4 ¶ Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Parallel passage: Mk. 12:41-44

ESV Malachi 3:10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

The Book of Haggai

Haggai wrote about rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity. God either judged or blessed them depending on how they gave.

The Offering for the Tabernacle

Read Exodus 35:5; 36:2-7.

There are many other passages that can be cited here, but here's the point. Although 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 include several good principles for giving they do not include all the biblical passages and principles.

Know these passages. Balance them well. Listen to the Lord. Give as He directs. And look for His blessing.