**THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Key Verse 8:9

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.

**Introduction**



 In this passage Apostle Paul gives spiritual instruction to Corinthians regarding their offering for brothers in Jerusalem. Corinthians stated the offering first voluntarily basis. But they didn’t complete offering as much as they had decided. Paul introduced Macedonian churches’ good example of offering that they could follow. Most of all he encouraged them to follow Jesus’ example who made sinner rich by becoming poor. May God help us to understand the grace of giving so that we may share what we have with other brothers and sisters in need and make others rich through our offering.

**1. Read verses 1-7. What grace did the Macedonian Churches receive? (1-2) How did they set an example by their offering? (3-5) What is Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians? (6-7)**

**1-1.** **Read verses 1-7.**

 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. **2** In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. **3** For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, **4** they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. **5** And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. **6** So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. **7** But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians+8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28940a)]—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

**1-2.** **What grace did the Macedonian Churches receive? (1-2)**

***And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.***

· We want to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches : God gave grace to Macedonian church regarding the offering for believers in Jerusalem

- Paul wanted Corinthians to know about the grace so that they may seek the same grace and follow their example.

· In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity

- Macedonian churches: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

- Macedonian churches were in trial ( Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14, 3:3, 4)

- **14** For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews (Thessalonians 2:14)

- Macedonian churches were in a very severe trial but they had overflowing joy.

- It is God’s grace to have overflowing joy even in the midst of severe trial. The joy comes from God that the people in the world don’t know about.

- **33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”(John 16:33)

- **10** sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.(2Co 6:10)

- Macedonian churches had the spiritual maturity that they could overcome the severe trials with the joy from God.

- Believers could be in severe trials but God gives us joy and peace to overcome them.

· Their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

- Macedonian Churches offered in rich generosity even though they were in extreme poverty.

- Their extreme poverty didn’t discourage them to be poor in their offering. Rather their extreme poverty made them have more generous heart and do more offering.

- It is God’s grace to make us have more generous heart and help others more in our poverty.

- When we are poor we become more self-centered and it is not easy to take care of others’ need. But God’s grace makes us more generous in the time of poverty.

- We need to ask for such grace to God. Instead of thinking that we can help others or do offering more if God gives me something enough or more, we’d better to ask God to let us have more generous heart in the time of poverty.

· Through Macedonian Churches’ case we can learn what kind of grace we need to ask for and what kind spiritual maturity we need to have. And we can learn how we believers can be different from unbelievers through God’s grace.

**1-3.** **How did they set an example by their offering? (3-5)**

***For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.***

· They gave as much they were able, and even beyond their ability: They offered fully as much as they could without being stingy.

- Sometimes we don’t give as much as we are able. We should offer fully as much as we are able.

· Even beyond their ability – They gave more than they were able with great generosity. It was God’s grace. By God’s grace they did what ordinary people could not do. It is grace and blessing to be able to offer and serve beyond our ability and we need to seek such grace because we can grow to God’s generosity and experience his power and provision.

· Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this services to the Lord’s people.

- Entirely on their own : They offered voluntary basis. Even though they were not told to do the offering, they participated voluntarily.

- Urgently pleaded with us : They even pleaded to participate in the offering. Usually we want to avoid offering or helping other with the sense of burden and loss. But they pleaded for the offering.

- For the privilege of sharing in this services to the Lord’s people : They considered offering for Lord’s people as great privilege not burden or loss. It is great privilege to participate in the service to Lord’s people and church because we are participating in Lord’s work and service to Lord’s people whom God loves.

- We have to know that it is great privilege to serve God’s work and his people offering all we have even taking suffering instead of avoid it with sense of burden and loss.

- Participating in fishing and 1:1, campus mission, and world mission is great privilege for us even though it requires some cost. We are supposed to plead with God that we may serve this mission beyond our ability instead of avoiding it.

· And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

- They exceeded our expectation : They gave more than Paul and his coworkers expected. It clearly shows that they gave beyond their ability.

- They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us : Their offering for other believers came from their heart toward God.

- Their great thanks to God for his grace for them led them to give offering for other believers.

- Our offering and service for others and church came from our thanks to God and our heart for him.

- Their offering for other believers were pleasing offering and aroma to God.

- Then by the will of God also to us : our love for God and thanks to him will be expressed through our service for others. This is God’s will. Even if we thank God for his grace if we don’t serve others we are not serving God’s will.

**1-4.** **What is Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians? (6-7)**

***So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.***

· Paul urged Titus to encourage Corinthians to complete the act of grace on their part which was to complete their offering.

- Corinthians started the offering first but they didn’t complete.

- The act of grace: participating in offering for Lord’s people itself is grace from God. Paul urged the Corinthians to complete the act of grace by participating in the offering so that they may bear fruit of it.

- Paul wanted Corinthian churches to follow Macedonian churches example and complete what they decided to do.

· since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

- Corinthians excelled in everything with much spiritual gifts. But they didn’t excel in sharing and offering. Paul wanted them to excel in grace of giving just as they excel in all other things.

- Paul encouraged them to excel in grace of giving as well not to push them to do offering but the let them receive and enjoy more grace because giving is grace from God.

- The grace of giving has no less value than other grace or gift. Even though we have many spiritual gifts and received God’s grace, if the grace of giving is lacked we are missing important grace. Grace of giving is expression of love. If we miss this grace all other gifts could be nothing.

**2. Read verse 8-15. How is making an offering one way to follow Jesus’ love? (8-9) Why did Paul tell them to finish this work? (10-12) What is God’s good purpose for making offerings? (13-15)**

**2-1. Read verse 8-15.**

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. **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. **10** And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. **11** Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. **12** For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

**13** Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. **14** At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, **15** as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

**2-2. How is making an offering one way to follow Jesus’ love? (8-9)**

***8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.***

· I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

- Paul considered the grace of giving as love. Giving is action of love.

- Test Sincerity of your love : our love can be tested by checking how much we express our love for other through practical service such as giving something that they need practically. Even if we say we love someone but we don’t serve them providing what they need we cannot say our love for them is sincere enough.

James 2:15-16 reads

 **“**Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?”

- Paul wanted Corinthians to follow the earnestness of Macedonian believers’ love.

***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.***

- Now Paul finds the true motive and principal of offering for others from the grace of Jesus Christ. The grace of Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of our offering for others.

- He was rich, yet for our sake he became poor: It is Jesus’ incarnation, his poor life on earth, and his death on the cross.

Philippians 2:6-7 reads,

 “Who, being in very natureGod,did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29399b)] of a servant,being made in human likeness.”

- Instead of keeping his richness for himself, Jesus gave up the richness and became poor to make sinners rich with all kind God’s grace and blessings; rich in righteousness, eternal life, all spiritual gifts, the inheritance of kingdom of God, and glorious mission so on. Before we were so poor and miserable like a beggars and homeless people. Now we are so rich in Jesus Christ.

- Through his sacrifice, Jesus made us rich. This is the way how Jesus made us rich. Without sacrifice, we cannot make others rich. If we keep our richness for ourselves we cannot offer for others.

- Paul encouraged Corinthians to follow Jesus’ example remembering what kind grace they received through Jesus’ sacrifice. As the ones who received Jesus’ much grace, it is right to show same grace to others by offering what we have for them.

- Offering is the way to participate in Jesus’ grace which is so glorious and beautiful.

**2-3. Why did Paul tell them to finish this work? (10-12)**

***And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11 Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.***

· Here I my judgment about what is best for you in this matter – Paul was in the position to commend them. But instead of forcing them or commending them, he guided them by sharing his judgment and advice so that they may make their own decision and do the offering according to their willingness.

· Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so- Corinthians started the offering first than any others according to their willingness. Their starting was good but they might discontinue or even stop doing it in the middle even though others were doing it more eagerly.

- UBF ministry started world mission with great vision to pioneer all nations in the world but we seem to get slow down to carry on the mission in the middle. Once we started we should continue and complete it. Mission from God should be completed.

· Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

- Paul encouraged them to finish the work. Once we start work of God, we should finish it. If we don’t finish it there is no fruits. We should not stop the work in the middle. Jesus finished his salvation work on the cross and said, “It is finished” (John 19:30)

- Our world campus mission should be completed. We should run the race to the end until we complete the mission. We should not stop in the middle.

- Satan always tempted us to stop our work for the Lord in the middle. We should not follow his temptation.

- Willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it. Just having eager willingness is not enough. It should be completed through practical action.

- According to your means : we can offer according to our means meaning as much as we have and we can do. God doesn’t tell us to offer or do more than we have. He just wants us to offer what we have now. We can offer what we have by faith.

· For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

- Our offering for others are given to God even though we offer it to others. When we offer for others, God accepts it as offering for him. So we have to offer for others with mind that we are offering to God.

- God accepts what we have not what we don’t have. We don’t need to worry about what we don’t have. We can just offer what we have even though it might be so small.

**2-4. What is God’s good purpose for making offerings? (13-15)**

***13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.***

- The purpose of encouraging believers to do offering not to make them poor while those who receive their offering get relieved.

- The purpose is that there might be equality among believers sharing things equally as brothers and sister. Under one father, it is right that brothers and sisters share their belongings equally but not by force but willingness with brotherly love. It is different from communism.

- It is not right to have brothers who are suffering poverty even though there are brothers who have more.

***14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, 15 as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”***

- Paul wanted Corinthian to provide believers in Jerusalem so that they may be provided when they are in need.

- The goal is equality : God wants his people to live in equal by sharing what they have instead of living unequal condition. As parents, we wants all our children to live in equal condition by supporting each other. It is not good to see some children so rich and some so poor.

· On the desert, God didn’t allow people to keep too much manna more than they need and those who gathered manna little did not have too little.

- God doesn’t want us to keep more than we need for ourselves. Rather he wants us to share what we have with other brothers who don’t have so that we may keep equality among us.

- We need to remember that all things came from God and share with other brothers and sister who are in need. This is right before God.

**3. Read verses 16-24. Why did Paul give thanks to God? (16-17). Why were they sending the brothers along with Titus? (18-22) What did Paul encourage the Corinthians to do? (23-24)**

**3-1. Read verses 16-24.**

Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. **17** For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. **18** And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. **19** What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. **20** We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. **21** 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. **22** 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. **23** As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. **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.

**3-2. Why did Paul give thanks to God? (16-17).**

***16 Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. 17 For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative.***

· Paul was thankful because God put the same concern he had for Corinthians into Titus’ heart.

- Titus was the one who could help Corinthians to do offering with the same heart that Paul had.

· Titus did not just welcomed Paul’s appeal but he also had much enthusiasm on his own initiative.

- Titus is the one who served God’s work not just based on other’s direction or encouragement but also based on his personal conviction and calling before God.

- Paul hoped that Corinthians may accept Titus and follow his encouragement just as they followed Paul.

**3-3. Why were they sending the brothers along with Titus? (18-22)**

***18 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. 19 What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. 20 We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. 21 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.22 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.***

· As Paul sent Titus to Corinthian church, he sent two more brothers with him.

· First brother: The brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. He was chosen by the church

- Paul sent other brothers together with Titus to avoid any criticism such as people’s doubt or curiosity about the purpose of collecting offering or how to use the offering.

- To what is right not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man- when we do the work of God, our work should be right and fair both before God and man.

· Second brother:

- 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.

- He was proved to the people and had great zeal for God’s work and had great confidence in Corinthians.

· It is important to do God’s work with wisdom so that the work may be done in the right way both before God and man.

· It is also important to choose right person who can carry out certain task- The servant should be recognized by church people and be proved and have passion and confidence for the work. We should choose the best person to take care of God’s business.

**3-4. What did Paul encourage the Corinthians to do? (23-24)**

***23 As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. 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.***

· Titus : my partner and co-worker : Paul put his deep trust in Titus. He was reliable coworker to Paul. It was great help for Paul

· Two brothers: representatives of the churches.

· Therefore show these men the proof of your love : Paul encouraged Corinthians to welcome the servants and follow their instruction and complete the offering.

**Conclusion**

 Macedonian churches made an offering in their severe trial and extreme poverty. They offered even beyond their ability with great joy and willingness. It was because they remembered God’s grace for them and considered the sharing as great privilege in the Lord. Once we stated work for God we should completed. The ultimate example of offering for other is Jesus Christ. He made poor sinners rich by becoming poor through his sacrifice. This is the grace of the Lord. Only by sacrificing and sharing what we have we can make others rich. By sharing what we have with other brothers and sisters we can participate in the grace of the Lord. May God help us to be rich in offering for others so that the grace of giving and grace of the Lord may be abundant among us.

**One word: “ The grace of the Lord”**