

Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 9, 2 Corinthians 8, Grace of Giving

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 9, 2 Corinthians 8, Grace of Giving.

In the next two sessions, we'll be looking at 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, but then, because the two sections are connected together, we want to make a general introduction.

In these two chapters, 8 and 9, Paul discusses the issue of the collection, something which played a very important role in his apostolic ministry. Although Paul did not in any way solicit funds for himself, for personal support, he nonetheless spent about 10 years soliciting funds for what is commonly referred to as the collection. Like 2 Corinthians 7:1, these two chapters take the form of a digression, but they express the practical point of the letter as a whole.

As such, they are significant in Paul's theology. More specifically, these passages are relevant to Paul's relationship with the church at Corinth as a part of his overall argument in defense of his integrity as an apostle. In fact, Ben Witherington, a New Testament scholar, calls them a daring rhetorical move.

That's the way he sees 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. I think I agree with that. Up to this point, Paul had kind of been walking on eggshells, to put it that way, in his relationship with the Corinthians. And, of course, their most recent misunderstanding has just been resolved.

But the Apostle Paul is willing to risk it all in the interest of his larger vision for the relationship between his Gentile churches and the Jewish Mother Church in Jerusalem. So, what we find in chapters 8 and 9, Paul offers the Corinthians another opportunity to demonstrate their genuineness and their confidence in him by responding to his urging to complete the long-delayed offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. You see, what happened is that because of the frayed relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, the Corinthians have stopped for some time now.

Paul had taken up a collection among Gentile churches, and it was specifically meant for the Jerusalem church, where the believers were facing hard times due to the famine that ravaged the area during the mid-to-late 40s. The purpose of the collection was twofold. First, it is designed to alleviate the needs of the Jerusalem church, therefore constituting an expression of the interdependence of believers worldwide.

Second, it was to demonstrate the nature of the church as a body that transcends national and geographical boundaries, something we still need to bear in mind today. The collection relates to the Jewish expectation that in the last days, the Gentiles would come to Jerusalem with gifts, so it was a tangible representation of the essence of the gospel, that all are equal in Christ. That is, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor barbarian nor Scythian, neither slave nor free, nor male nor female, as we see in Galatians 3:28. The timing of the collection itself is very instructive.

Paul chose not to write about the collection until he was sure that some of the outstanding issues between him and the Corinthians have now been resolved, the result of which is the confidence that he exuded in 7.16. You see, that's pastoral wisdom right there. You don't raise funds when things are not going well in the church. When there are problems to solve, it is important that Paul waited until things are settled, and then it's also important that the section begins and ends with what God has done in Christ.

And that's very important. That seems to be an *inclusio*. It begins with what God has done in Christ.

It begins with the grace of God in 8.1 and then ends with the grace of God in 9.15. So you'll find those two verses forming what we call an *inclusio*. These things need to be borne in mind. So, in chapters 8-9, Paul turns to the collection now, which he's been promoting among his missionary churches in Galatia, Achaia, Asia, and Macedonia, for the aid of the poor or relief for the economic situation in Jerusalem community.

Let's make another point before we go. Here is Paul trying to meet the needs of the believers in Jerusalem. There had always been this conversation about whether it should be evangelism or social action.

That's a false dichotomy. Evangelism and social action go hand in hand. It's important.

Let me borrow the words of John Wesley. There's no holiness without social holiness. When we talk about holiness, there's social holiness.

In other words, we need to be involved. Here is Paul getting involved in what we'll call relief work. I mean, there is a section of Christendom today that would downplay relief work and say, well, all we just need to do is take care of the souls of the people, and God will take care of what they need.

It's not either or; it's both, and. Like I sometimes put it, before you preach a sermon to the people, give salmon to the people. You give salmon fish.

You see, before a sermon, provide them with some salmon. After eating the salmon, maybe they'll be ready to listen to a sermon. That's just an aside.

But at least we learn this thing from Paul. It is very important. But definitely, things have gone down south with the Corinthians in their attitude towards the collection.

Because things were not all right, they stopped it. But this offering is very important. It appears to have been very significant in Paul's apostolic ministry.

Why do we know that? He persisted in his personal delivery in spite of the dangers he knew awaited him in Jerusalem. We see that in Acts chapter 20, verse 3 and verse 23, and chapter 21, verse 4, verses 10 to 15. As Paul sought to fulfill his promise of financial aid to the mother church, the collection project was in continuity with the Old Testament covenant ethic.

We see that in Leviticus chapter 19, verses 17 to 18, and Micah chapter 6, verse 8. And, of course, the practice of charity in Judaism. You see that in Matthew chapter 6, verse 2. More importantly, the collection was in agreement with Jesus' teaching on assistance to the poor. In Matthew chapter 5, verse 42, chapter 6, verse 2. Jesus taught about the nature of mutual relations between his disciples.

So, what does Paul do? Paul kept such spontaneous brotherly love, which is now effected by a new relation to God through the Holy Spirit at the heart of the Christian ethic. Paul's concern for the needs of fellow believers was an expression of a unique fellowship they all enjoyed in Christ. You see, beyond this basic practical significance, the collection was theologically significant for Paul.

It would be a theological demonstration of the solidarity of the church made up of both Jews and Gentile believers. Their interdependence, their spiritual indebtedness, the spiritual indebtedness of the Gentiles to the church in Jerusalem, as well as the unity and equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ, would be concretely manifested or displayed. Paul probably hoped that the collection would allay Jewish suspicions concerning the Gentile mission.

Yet, it was not a kind of Christian temple tax. That's not what it is. This is not an implicit recognition of the superiority of the Mother Church, no, nor was it primarily an eschatological pilgrimage of Gentile Christians to Jerusalem in order to confront unbelieving Jews with the reality of salvation, the gift of salvation to Gentiles, or to move them through jealousy to accept the gospel.

That's not the purpose of this gift at all. Paul was just doing what he needed to do as he helped the churches. Paul believed that the Gentiles who shared in the spiritual blessings of the Jews had an obligation to be of service to them in material blessings, and he hoped that the church in Jerusalem would move to glorify God.

We see that later in chapter 9, verses 12 to 14. The collection had the potential to compel them to see the reality of the bond of fellowship between them as equally privileged members of the body of Christ. In fact, Paul would ask the Romans to pray with him that the offering complete by the time he wrote would be accepted in this spirit.

Furthermore, Romans suggests that the Corinthians cooperated fully in the collection. We see that in Romans chapter 15, verses 23 to 28, and chapter 16, verse 1. Luke's account in Acts 21, 17 to 20 appears to indicate that it was accepted with gratitude. Paul gives instructions in 1 Corinthians 16.

So, we see all this going on. I mean, we need to make all this introduction because we're looking at these two chapters. What we see Paul employ here is what we'll call rhetorics deliberative rhetoric, which is directed toward the collection, but it also serves the interest of his credibility with the Corinthians.

Paul's own innocence and honesty and the Corinthians' confidence and trust in him. See, the completion of the collection by the Corinthians will demonstrate both of those things. Corinthians' confidence and trust in Paul.

That's very, very important. Now, we bear in mind this. Let's say this.

You see, in the social and economic relationships of Paul's day, there was what we call patronage and clientele. You have patrons and clients. It often takes place between people who are not of equal social status because of financial need.

There were no lending institutions at that point, no banks, no cooperatives, no financial agencies, and the social safety nets that were taken for granted were not in place. Therefore, personal patronage was a practical necessity at that point in time. So, for all the economic benefits accompanying patronage relationships, there were social consequences as well.

Issues of honor and shame were involved in the patron-client relationship. So, the giving and acceptance of gifts or favors placed the recipients in an inferior role and under obligation to respond to their patrons with gratitude and honor. Such relationships were called friendships as if between equals, but the label was just a polite covering for what was really a patron-client relationship.

Paul seems to have concluded that he could not take financial help from the Corinthians as he did from the Philippians. To have done so would have placed him in a socially inferior power relationship under the domination of the wealthy Corinthian patrons. You see, that's part of the problem Paul had with the Corinthians.

He was not going to get money from them, and because he was not going to receive support from them, they thought he did not love them. Whereas Paul was not ready to place himself under these Corinthians as their client. I mean, there's a lot to look at in this chapter, and of course, the next one as well, in chapters 8 and 9. Based on the reconciliation and personal warmth, which we have now seen in chapter 7, verses 14 to 16, Paul seeks to motivate the Corinthians to complete their part of the offering for the Jerusalem church.

He also applies the grace of Christian giving to their situation. He divides his plea into three phases. Number one, he softly asks for the offerings to be completed in chapter 8, verses 1 to 15.

Then, number two, he makes adequate provision for the offering to be delivered to Jerusalem in chapter 8, verse 16 to chapter 9, verse 5. Then, lastly, he emphasizes the blessings of such generosity in giving in chapter 9, verses 6 to 15. So, you see Paul's rhetorical strategy. He plays on the word for grace, *charis*.

Throughout these two chapters, Paul plays on that word. He uses the word *charis* with different denotations, which we will notice as we proceed. As we look at chapters 8 and 9, we'll be looking at it because he uses it in chapter 8, verse 1, verse 4, verse 6, verse 7, verse 9, verse 16, verse 19, then in chapter 9, in verse 8, verse 12, verse 14, verse 15.

So, these two verses are permeated with grace. You see Paul's rhetorical strategy right there. He uses grace, as we said earlier on, to form an *inclusio*, placing it like literary book ends.

That's what inclusion means in the passage. And, significantly, all of Paul's letters include some form of *charis* at the beginning and the ending. All of Paul's letters.

It begins with grace, and ends with grace. So, in chapter 8, let's go there now, he encourages the completion of the offering. Beginning from verse 1. We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia.

For during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. Think about this. There are three important things that we'll look at the start of this chapter.

Paul does not make a direct appeal until he gets to verse 7. So, he just went and started talking. He appeals to them; he does not appeal until verse 7. He begins by saying, we want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia. So, the appeal does not come until verse 7. Two, he uses the word of endearment.

He begins by calling them brothers and sisters, agapetoi, beloved ones. That's how he started. Now, he definitely knew what he was doing.

He began with the liberality of the Macedonians. He moves delicately, gingerly, to the new and touchy subject of money. And we all know that even now, the subject of money is still very, very important in ministry.

If a minister can have integrity when it comes to finance, we have to give kudos to such a person because this is where many ministers have tripped and fallen. And so, Paul was very, very careful. Integrity in money, integrity in finances, and integrity in financial stewardship are very, very important and are key to the success of a ministry.

Again, Paul already said in chapter 7, in chapter 6, that we should not offend anyone. We don't put any stumbling blocks in front of anyone. We need to make sure that when it comes to finance, we get it right.

So, he did not begin by asking for the money. He moves delicately. He identifies the subject of grace.

So, the first thing we need to note is that he does not make a direct appeal until verse 7. He appeals to them. He uses the word of endearment. Second is the first use of the word grace as it relates to giving.

The offering of the Macedonians is grounded in their relation to God. As such, Paul labels it as the grace of God. And the third thing is that he gives an example of the Macedonians who, though they underwent persecution and were extremely poor, gave generously.

This, indeed, is proof of love and grace, both of which constitute sufficient motivation for giving. Love and grace shall be the motivation for giving. So, we begin looking at the passage from verse 1. He identifies his subject as the grace of God.

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God. That is, the grace that has been given or the grace that comes from God to the Macedonian churches. It is very interesting here that Paul uses a word in perfect tense.

And you know, when we talk about perfect tense, we're talking about something which has been done but which has a continuing effect. It's been done in the past, but the effect continues. And then he says, you know about the grace of God that has been given.

The Greek word there is in the perfect tense. That is, it indicates that grace was still operative in their lives. It was not just a one-time grace.

It's the grace that continues. And like sometimes we say, the key, the gift that keeps giving. That's exactly what is happening in the life of the Macedonians.

It's the grace that keeps on giving. It's the grace that is continuous. So, it's not that when they gave, they had grace, but the grace is gone.

No, it was a church that was filled with grace and filled with grace. We know that Paul planted churches in northern Greece of the province of Macedonia, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Berea.

And Paul appealed now to the example. He rises to the brothers and sisters. Adelphoi.

Here, rather. Adelphoi. Brothers and sisters together.

Now, usually, people translate that as brothers, but these are brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters in Corinth may know in their own experience the grace of God that motivated and enabled the churches of Macedonia to give generously and enthusiastically toward the collection. Grace as God's freely offered gift of salvation in Christ is at the very heart of Paul's theology.

Paul's theology is a theology of grace. Bear in mind, as we said before, this is a responsible grace. Everything flows from that, from the grace of God.

Paul's theology, above all, is a theology of grace, a theology that informs even the most practical of his writings. His greetings in the letter openings include grace to you from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. His farewell prayer was, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

So, after announcing the grace in verse 1, Paul now explains in verses 2 to 4 how that grace was manifested in the life of the Macedonians. Grace that was evident. C is description of their situation.

In the midst of a severe ordeal of affliction. Severe ordeal of affliction. What does that mean? A severe ordeal which is caused by affliction.

And then, talks about deep poverty. Deep poverty, as we have it in the New American Standard Bible. Deep poverty.

In the Macedonians, persecution produced joy. We see that in chapter 7, verse 4. And this is interesting. Persecution produced joy, and poverty produced generosity.

How so? That's another power right there. That's what the grace of God does. You know, when there's persecution, that's not a time to have joy, but for the Macedonians, that's what happened.

And then, poverty led and produced generosity because the grace of God was at work. You see, the extent of their poverty was probably due to various factors. Maybe one of these is that they were socially ostracized.

They had experienced a lot of harassment because of their Christian faith, as well as the general economic condition of Macedonia. So, in two ways, they had it really bad. In terms of their Christian faith, they were isolated, ostracized, and harassed.

In terms of the general economic outlook of Macedonia, it was very bad. I mean, that's what's suggested by Margaret Thrall in her international commentaries on the New Testament. You see that on pages 522 to 523.

And it says the economic situation was very dire. But it's interesting. It says it talks about the extreme poverty of overflowing in wealth of generosity.

In wealth of generosity. The word generosity here means liberality. Generosity means liberality.

It's something that they gave in abundance. The term that is used here is very unique to certain polling contexts. Its normal meaning is usually simplicity, sincerity, or frankness.

But here, generosity is an extended meaning of that word. They were very generous. Abundant joy, and extreme poverty have overflowed in wealth of generosity.

You see two contrasts here: affliction and joy, poverty and riches. The contrasts provide a valuable lesson that we need to learn.

What is it? The believer's joy has no correlation with outward circumstances. Christians can experience joy in the midst of suffering and persecution. We need to learn that from this passage.

And we see that all over the scriptures. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 in the Beatitudes, blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake. He said rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

We see the example of the apostles, of the early disciples, in Acts chapter 5, verse 41. They went out after they were beaten and all that. They went out with joy.

And, of course, in James chapter 1 verse 2, Paul was writing to the exiles and to those who were dispersed abroad. Remember, exiles are those who are displaced from the comfort of their own homes, those who are poor, those who are suffering. And he told them to rejoice.

And 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 6 to 7, said the same thing. We're saying all this to know that, for us to know that this was not limited to the Macedonians alone. It's something that should be characteristic of our lives as believers.

We must refuse to become creatures of circumstances. This is true of the Macedonians. Hence, Paul holds up their supreme sacrifice as a motivation for the Corinthians.

Paul says in verse 3, for I testify that the liberality of the Macedonians was evidenced in four ways. I testify, number 1, that they voluntarily gave according to their means, even beyond their means. Number 1, they gave as much as they were able.

And even beyond their ability. They gave. They gave beyond their limited resources would normally allow.

You know, sometimes today, ministers in the church will say, you don't have to give. You don't have to, if you don't have, you don't have to give. Now Jesus could have told the woman who gave the widow's mite, or they could have told the woman, keep your mite, don't give, you are too poor to give.

No. Learn a lesson. No one is too poor to give.

Here were the Macedonians. The language that was used for them was very, very strong. They gave according to their means, even beyond their means.

So, number 1, they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Number 2, they gave entirely on their own. They were not cajoled.

They were not manipulated. There were no gimmicks involved. They don't have to give to buy something.

No, not at all. Today, we see how giving is done in ministry. I mean, well, you send this to me, and I'll send this back to you.

This is an offering. If you give an offering of so many dollars or whatever the denomination of the money is, then we send this book to you. Well, that's not giving as it were.

You are just buying a book. If you give, you just give. And they gave entirely on their own.

This is very important. They gave entirely rather than pleading. Paul uses that word only here and in 8:17 where it describes Titus, the word that is used here.

Apart from any coercion on Paul's part, the Macedonians voluntarily gave. It's always important to know that we give voluntarily. What does that mean? It means two things.

On their own initiative, and number 2, of their own free will. On their own initiative and of their own free will, they gave. In spite of the extreme poverty of the Macedonians, they gave generously.

They did not only give according to their ability, but they gave unto it your heart. What mattered to Paul was not the amount or the quantity of what they gave. It was the spirit in which they did.

You see, with God, a couple of cents, sacrificially given, can far outweigh billions of dollars. That's the truth. This was the reason Paul used them as an example for the Corinthians to emulate.

But he did not stop there. Look at what he did. Third, the Macedonians had urgently pleaded with Paul for the privilege.

Listen, the word used again is caring, grace. The Macedonians had urgently pleaded with Paul for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. You see, Paul's words are very carefully chosen.

Unlike what Mark says, they are dense but significant. The word urgently, or earnestly, paraphrases the Greek words, which means, in the Greek, is *metapolis paraklesios*, with great encouragement. They gave urgently, with great encouragement.

Why is Paul repeating that? Just to let them know what grace means. I mean, Paul uses grace in verse one, then in the second sentence, now as a privilege of favor. And then he says, Paul defines favor as a sharing, of sharing in the ministry to the saints, that is, in relieving, in providing relief for the needs of the poor saints.

Very, very important. He said, begging us earnestly. You know, when you read this, you ask yourself, they begged to give.

How can, how, how does somebody beg to give? Isn't it that we beg people to give, but these people are begging to give. Apparently, Paul was sympathetic, apparently.

Paul was sympathetic, and he knew their situation, and he was not expecting much from them.

Or maybe Paul was saying, now we understand your situation; you yourself need some help, and therefore, you don't need to, but they begged to give. I mean, he said, they begged to give, and then he goes on in verse five, and this, not merely as we expected, they gave themselves first to the Lord, and by the will of God to us. So, this is the fourth evidence of the liberality of the Macedonians.

They did more than what Paul expected. They exceeded his expectations, both in the amount they gave and in the manner of their contribution. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us, in keeping with God's will.

Very important, very important. Paul talks about the importance, the priority, in importance, giving to God, and then giving to them, giving by the instrument of God. So, we see Paul saying quite a number of things here.

He described the emotional state of the Macedonians as they gave. They prayed or begged with much entreaty to give. They considered it a privilege to give.

Look, others would have made their own situation an excuse by giving and saying, well, Brother Paul, you understand. I mean, even God himself understands that we just don't have. That's why we don't give. No, they didn't make their situation an excuse.

As a matter of fact, Paul would probably have gladly excused them, but they refused. They were not going to be deprived or denied the opportunity to minister grace to others despite their own difficult situation and spite of their own needs. The eagerness of the Macedonians to participate allows Paul to use them as a model for the Corinthians.

It is to be noted that Paul puts the giving of the Corinthians in the context of their commitment to God and their loyalty to him as their apostle. So intense was the desire of the Macedonians to serve the Lord that they would not allow their economic achievements to keep them from being involved in ministry opportunities that were opened to them. You know what? The Corinthians can draw the inferences.

Without telling the Corinthians to give yet, Paul laid the ground and said, look at the Macedonians. The grace of God is manifested in their lives. Now, remember, he told them in 2 Corinthians 6, which we looked at before, that do not receive the grace of God in vain, which we said spoke about reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians.

This is another opportunity for them to demonstrate the grace of God in their lives, and Paul uses the case of the Macedonians and says, look, here are the Macedonians. They were poor. They were in a dire situation.

Their economy is bad, but because the grace of God is in their lives, they give. But not only did they give, they gave generously, and they gave liberally. Not only did they do that, they gave more than we expected.

But listen, not just that they gave more than we expected, they first of all gave themselves to God, and then gave themselves to us. Paul is saying to draw conclusions. If they could do it, you can do it.

It's not shaming them, but it's encouraging them. So, in verse 8, it begins. We see that up to verse 6. Verse 7, verses 1 to 6, actually, by the way, is one sentence in Greek.

So, we see that. Verses 1 to 6 is just one sentence. So, verse 7 is a transition.

Verse 7 is a transition. It says it talks to them how to give now. So, let's move on to verse 8. I do not say this as a command.

I'm not saying this as a command. Not at all. Rather, it was going to appeal to them.

Having looked at the example of the Macedonians, the Corinthians are now prodded by Paul also to exceed, or to excel rather, in giving. The initial zeal of the Corinthians in the project evidently sagged. They were enthusiastic at the beginning.

Rather than scold the Corinthians for lack of completion, Paul praises them for their initial enthusiasm. So, Paul now appeals to their desire. That's what it says in verse 7. Now, as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you.

So, we also want you to excel in these general undertakings. This is Paul, a pastor indeed. He was going to talk to them.

He said, look, Corinthians, you excel in faith, you excel in speech, you excel in knowledge. In fact, I know you are eager. And of course, in our love for you.

So, we also want you to excel in these general undertakings. So, Paul now challenges them to liberality. And he begins to talk to them, verse 8. I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others.

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor so that by his poverty you become rich. You see, Paul's challenge to the Corinthians to complete the offering for the church at Jerusalem now continues in verses 8 to 15. The apostle links the manner in which he seeks to motivate their grace of giving directly and intrinsically with the gospel he proclaims.

As such, he presents us with the standard of all Christian giving. Paul does this with an appeal to an even more inspiring example of giving. He draws out the implications for the concrete task at hand.

It's like Paul saying, hey, wait a minute. If the Macedonians are not enough of an example for you, let me show you another example. If you say, well, the Macedonians, that's because of who they are.

Let me show you an example. So, in verse 8, he said, I'm not writing to you as a command; rather, I'm appealing to your earnestness of others, specifically the Macedonians. He talks here now. He says, I'm not writing as a command, but I just want to talk to you about what you need to do.

Paul intends the example of the Macedonians' earnestness to activate the sincerity of the Corinthians' love so they will get on with the task of the collection. In verse 8, Paul is quick to say that he was not issuing a command to the Corinthians on the basis of his apostolic authority. The collection was to be a work of love, a ministry of grace.

So, Paul would rather prefer that the love of the Corinthians be no less than that of the Macedonians. And that the example of the Macedonians should become a basis for testing the reality of their love for him and their fellow Christians. However, Paul provides a better criterion.

So, what does he do? He tells the story of Jesus, who, although rich, became poor in order that they, though they were poor, might become rich. You see, Paul's Christ decision was voluntary, without any doubt. Christ's incarnation is in view here.

In his incarnation, Christ surrendered his riches so that humanity could share in his spiritual riches of salvation. Christ's sacrifice, rather than competition with either a local church or group or denomination, must be the motive for giving. So, in verse 9, he says, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He uses the key word again, charis. And here, it reaches its apex of significance. You know what Paul does? Paul hammers on the supreme reason.

That's why it begins with 4. The supreme reason why the Corinthians should excel in the grace of giving is the example of Christ. In this instance, the grace of God is God's lavish favor displayed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is confident that Christ's example will motivate and enable the Corinthians to participate in the collection.

Now, you can't resist this. If you use the example of the Macedonians it doesn't work. And now he says, well if you don't listen to the example of the Macedonians if that does not mean so much to you, let me talk to you about Christ.

Now, how can you fault that? How can you resist that? Because you have experienced that grace yourself. He said, you know the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Paul is confident that his example will motivate and enable the Corinthians to participate in the collection.

Very important. He said he was rich, and he became poor. But the keyword is the Corinthians know that all this was for them.

The interesting thing is this. Paul puts it for you, and he emphasizes a point in that clause, which he puts at the beginning. For your sake, he became poor.

It's not he became poor for your sake but for your sake. So, Paul puts it to emphasize what he was saying. Well, for your sake, he became poor, being rich, in order that you, by that one's poverty, might become rich.

That's the way he translates literally, for your sake. So, he begins by saying, for your sake. When he says that you might become rich, he's referring to the spiritual enrichment of the Corinthians.

I mean, Paul just nails it with a kind of sledgehammer and says, Corinthians, you need to do something about this. You just don't have any excuse. For your sake, he became poor.

He owned everything. This talks about the whole incarnation of Christ. You see our Lord's descent from the height of riches to the depth of poverty.

Remember, he said, foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Think about the Creator himself. Because in the beginning was the world, the world was with God, and the world was God.

All things were made by him, and there was nothing made that was made without him. He made everything. He's the Creator, and yet he left the glory, left the riches above, and became poor for the sake of the Corinthians, and then Paul is telling them, you Corinthians, you know it's for your sakes that he did all he did.

He became human. He took on the flesh, and of course, he became poor. He left his glory above just for your sake, and if he did that, there's no reason for you now to hold back.

In his incarnation, Christ surrendered his riches so that humanity could share in his spiritual riches of salvation. Christ's sacrifice, rather than competition, should become our motivation for giving rather than just pleading. We give because we serve a liberal giver, God, who gives generously.

Isn't that the way James describes him? He said every good and perfect gift comes from God, the Father of lights, who gives generously. Generously. And should we say this: if we are children of God, then we need to look like our Father does.

We need to be generous givers as well. That's what Paul is saying. We need to understand that what Paul said to the Corinthians is as valid today as it is today.

Then, let's go to verses 10 to 12. Willingly and according to ability. What we found in 8 and 9 is the supreme example.

Now, in verses 10 to 12, we see that Christ gave willingly and is urging the Corinthians to give willingly and according to ability. Verse 10, and in this manner I am giving my advice. It is appropriate for you, who began last year, not only to do something but even to desire to do something.

So, rather than command, Paul gives advice again. He said, in this manner, I am giving my advice. It is appropriate for you, who began last year, not only to do something but even to desire to do something.

Verse 11, now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. If eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. What do we learn from those verses? They began to participate in the collection the previous year, perhaps over a year before Paul wrote 2 Corinthians.

It describes their initial enthusiasm for the project. They were the first of the churches to give, but also the first to express their willingness to participate in the collection. The present tense of to will refers to the Corinthians' longstanding desire.

They wanted to participate, but apparently, they had abandoned the project, probably as a result of the bad blood between them and the apostle. They abandoned it, and Paul is now saying, well, I praise you for what you've done before, but you should now finish the work. They had to bring their doing to its appropriate conclusion.

The purpose is that the completion of the collection might demonstrate the Corinthians' original enthusiasm, and as such, Paul's boasting of this to the Macedonians had helped motivate their participation—verse 12. If there is eagerness, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

So, Paul moves to a direct application of all that he has said so far to the Corinthians themselves. He encourages them to complete the effort they had begun a year previously. Once again, Paul doesn't issue a command.

He reasons with them that though their original intent was good, they needed to carry it out, otherwise their good intentions amount to nothing. It's always said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Intending something is not the same thing as doing it.

I intend to pray. Don't intend to pray. Pray.

I intend to read the Bible. Don't intend to read the Bible. Really read the Bible.

Intentions don't usually bring victory. You have to put it into action. Oh, I intend to fast.

Then, start fasting. I intend to pray. Then, start praying.

I intend to evangelize. Then, start evangelizing. I intend to give.

Then start giving. Intention is not enough. If you have good intentions, but you don't put them to action, then they don't do anything.

When we have a project in church, you know it as ministers. When we have a project in church, we say, Pastor, I intend to give. Well, you don't bring intentions to the bank.

You bring the checks to the bank. And Paul says you need Corinthians, not just intention. I need more than your intentions.

I need you to give the offerings and bring them to a conclusion. So, in verses 13 to 15 now, Paul talks about an appeal that is based on equality. He said, 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 their abundance may be for your need in order that there may be a fair balance.

As it is written, the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little. Paul did not intend to alleviate the needs of some by

impoverishing others. Among God's people, giving is to be according to the principle of equality, where those who enjoy affluence share with those in need.

This principle serves as a guideline for equalizing the distribution of necessities of life among God's people so that all have sufficient provision. You see, Paul illustrates this by the daily ration of manna in the wilderness. If you read Exodus chapter 16, verses 14 to 22, you see that where everybody gathered as they needed.

So, Paul illustrates this by the daily ration of manna, which the Israelites received during their journey in the wilderness. You see, at this point in time that Paul was writing, Corinth was one of the few cities of Greece that was expressing material prosperity. If the Corinthian believers were willing to share their affluence with the poor saints in Jerusalem, perhaps later, the Jerusalem saints would be in a position to help the Corinthians when they, too, would experience a recession.

Paul was not attempting to set up a form of socialism the way we know it or call it by equalizing property, no, but he was seeking to relieve the acute distress of believers who were suffering material need. When the opportunity to exercise some kind of self-sacrifice presents itself, and the Lord wants us to act, we, too, must have proper disposition and take appropriate action as God directs. This action may involve our time and strength as well as money as goods, but it's something we must learn to do.

Then, the next and last section of chapter 8 is verses 16 to 24, where Paul talks about Titus and the other brothers. He talks about Titus and the other brothers. He said, But thanks be to God, who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have.

For he not only accepted our appeal but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. With him, we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news. Not only that but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.

We intend that no one should blame us for this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right, not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. And with them, we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service.

As for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you. You see, this paragraph provides some invaluable insights on the subject of giving and the accountability of leaders to do what is right.

To have high standards in both receiving money from the saints of God and disbursing it, receiving money and spending money. When we receive offerings from believers, both the way we receive them and the way we spend them are important.

You see, those who handle money are always subject to scrutiny, rightly or wrongly. Someone is always ready to accuse one of mishandling funds. Even Paul had his detractors.

He was accused of vested interest in the collection. They accused him that either he was taking a cut or at least he was using it as a means of promoting himself. You see that in verse 20.

We intend that no one should blame us for this generous gift that we are administering. It goes to show that believers expect the leadership of any Christian group, church, or organization to be held to high standards of honesty, especially when it comes to acquiring and disbursing funds. To ensure that the money was properly administered and to avoid any appearance of dishonesty or impropriety, the churches involved in the collection project selected trustworthy men to go with the money they collected.

Titus was Paul's representative for the collection at Corinth. He had a vital interest, not just in the money, but even more in the Corinthians. He knew that a miserly attitude on their part would, in the long run, hurt them.

So, in verses 20 and 21, we see Paul's thinking. I mean, those two verses encapsulate Paul's thinking for us. Paul and his companions are going to great lengths to avoid being accused of even the appearance of bad dealings.

Let's come back again to the one word we've been repeating since our first lecture. Integrity. Remembering that word is important.

Integrity in finance. Integrity, financial stewardship. You see, most of the time, it is unusual for Paul to say he's concerned about what people think of him.

Most of the time, he dismisses any responsibility. You judge me, I don't care. My judgments are with God.

I don't get people's approval. You only want God's approval. But in this case, Paul goes so far, as far as he can, to do everything possible so that any onlooker, Christian or not, will see that what they are doing with the funds that are being collected is scrupulously honest.

So that in no sense will the cause of Christ be discredited. It's unfortunate. In our times, we know several examples of ministers who have made a mess both of ministry and themselves and have put a blight on the name of Christ because of financial misappropriations.

You may have remembered that Judas, as the carrier of the purse of the disciples of Jesus, misappropriated the funds for himself. You see, there have been too many times over the centuries since when the cause of Christ was treated with disrespect by leaders who were careless at best and dishonest at worst with money. So, what does Paul do to make sure there is both honesty and perception of honesty? One thing he seems to do is to set up a multiplicity of leadership whenever money is being dealt with so that not just one person is in charge of a project.

So, he sends three people to Corinth, and later, a delegation will go with him. When he takes the gift to Jerusalem, a number of people oversee and help one another with financial temptations, which can be very strong. So, in sum, this section we have just looked at offers us one important lesson.

There should be strict honesty in the handling of church money or ministry. Listen, like Caesar's wife, those who handle finances in the church should be above reproach. The manner in which finances are handled should be above board.

The testimony of Christ has suffered because verse 21 has been violated. Yes, it is true that God knows when our intentions and motives are honest, but it is also necessary that they appear honest and proper to fellow believers and the outside world. Christians should avoid the shoddy handling of finances.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 9, 2 Corinthians 8, Grace of Giving.