

II Corinthians: Lesson #27: The Ministry of the Saints

Notes for Parents to Study with Their Children

For Sunday, July 27th

Read II Cor. 8:1 – 9:15 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: II Cor. 9:7 “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

The Collection for the Saints

- Jewish Christians at Jerusalem were having a very hard time. They had sacrificed to send money to have the gospel preached in many areas. But now there had been famine in their land. During times like that it may not rain much and the crops don't grow. Food is hard to get and expensive to buy. Christians in Jerusalem had also been treated badly because they followed Jesus. Some may have been having a hard time because of that.
- God had shown Paul that it would be a good thing if some of the Gentile churches would send money to help their Jewish Christian brethren in Jerusalem.
- Paul had been asking several congregations to help. Those who were willing were to take up the money on the first day of the week. You remember we studied about that in I Cor. 16:1,2. It was one of our memory verses.
- It had been several months since Paul had told the churches about this. They were supposed to be collecting the money every Sunday.

The Macedonians

- When Paul got to the area called Macedonia, Paul told how the Corinthians had agreed to send their money to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
- The Macedonian area was very poor itself. The Christians in the churches there did not have very much money. But when Paul told how other churches were sending money to Jerusalem, the churches in Macedonia begged Paul to let them give money too.
- Paul said that even though they were in poverty, they gave very generously. He was so thankful for them.

The Corinthians Were Not Getting Their Contribution Ready

- The Corinthians had said they would help, but they had not been very generous and were not getting a contribution ready to send to Jerusalem. It had been nearly a year and they were still not ready.
- Paul reminded them that earlier on they had promised to help. Now they needed to finish what they started.
- To help encourage them Paul sent several men to teach them to give like they should. One of the men was Titus, one of the men that helped Paul preach. Two other men also went, but we don't know what their names were.

- Paul sent these men because he didn't want to get to Corinth and find out they hadn't gotten their contribution ready.

Some Things We Learn About Giving

- The Lord will not make anyone give. This is something you do voluntarily because you want to do it. (II Cor. 8:8)
- We give to show our love to God. (II Cor. 8:8) Before we every give anything, we should give our lives to God. (II Cor. 8:5)
- Jesus set the example about giving. He gave up heaven and all that He had there to come to live on earth. Then He gave us His life for our sins. As Paul said, Jesus became poor (by leaving heaven) to make you rich (spiritually rich). (II Cor. 8:9)
- God expects us to give from what we have, not from what we don't have. (II Cor. 8:12) But God is also happy when people who don't have very much still want to give (II Cor. 8:3)
- The amount we want to give should be decided earlier before we give it. We should think about how God has prospered us. (II Cor. 9:7)
- God wants us to give cheerfully and joyfully, not like we are mad about having to do it. (II Cor. 9:7)
- We should remember that God can control how much prosperity (money and possessions and jobs) we have in life. Paul told the Corinthians an Old Testament story about how the children of Israel gathered manna. Some gathered a lot and some gathered a little, but when they weighed the manna everyone's weighed the same. God can control what we have in life. (II Cor. 9:8-9)
- God will bless us when we give. The more you give, the more blessings there will be. Paul reminded the Corinthians that it is just like planting seeds to grow food. If you plant just a small number of seeds, there won't be much of a harvest. But if you plant a lot, a lot more will grow. (II Cor. 9:10-11)
- The blessings that came from the money that is given were going to make the Lord's church better. People would pray more and be thankful to God more and love their fellow Christians more. We can all be glad when we give to God knowing that in some way He will bless us. (II Cor. 9:12-14)
- We all know how much we have been blessed when God gave us Jesus Christ. That gift was so great, we can't ever say enough about it. (II Cor. 9:15)

Simplified Explanation of the Text

The Macedonians Willingness to Help the Needy Saints

II Cor. 8:1-2 But, brethren, we want you to inform you about the grace God had given in the churches of Macedonia: That while they were being greatly tested by many pressures on their lives, their joy was in such abundance that the things that had taken them so far down actually caused them to become rich in their dedication to God.

3 For I bear them witness that according to their ability and beyond their ability they voluntarily gave.

4-5 They were begging and urging us repeatedly to take their gift and let them participate in helping the saints. And that was not what we had expected, but clearly the first thing

that gave was their own selves to the Lord, and then they gave themselves to us in what God wanted.

The Corinthians Should Get Their Contribution Ready

6 Having seen all this in the Macedonians, we have urged Titus to help you begin this same work, so this same grace could be completed in you, too.

7 Now we know that you have a lot of faith, a lot of God's word being taught, a lot of knowledge, all diligence, and your love for us, but we want you to have a lot of this grace, too.

8 I'm not ordering you to do this, but when we see this dedication that others have, I want you to prove that your love is genuine.

9 When we think about the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, you know the grace that He demonstrated: that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor so that through His poverty you would become rich.

10 So here are my thoughts about this because this will be beneficial for you: Over a year ago you not only began this work, but also showed the desire to do it.

11 Now its time to finish doing this. Just as you earlier had an eager desire to do this, so also have the desire to finish this from the resources you have.

12 For if you are already willing and eager to do this, it will be acceptable if you give according to the resources you have, not what you don't have.

13 Our reasons for asking you to do this were not so that other people could take it easy while more troubles are being put on you.

14 But this is more about balancing things out and making them equal. Right now the resources you have in abundance can go towards what they lack, so that the things they have in abundance can go towards what you lack. This way things can be equal.

15 It is written in the Scripture about those who gathered manna that when it was weighed, "Those who gathered a lot had no excess, and those who gathered little lacked nothing."

Paul is Sending Men to Help the Corinthians Get Their Contribution Ready

16 We are so thankful to God that He gave in Titus' heart that same diligence we have for you.

17 While its true that he came to you because we had encouraged him to do so, but being even more diligent, he also came to you voluntarily.

18-19 And we sent him along with the brother who is praised for his work in the gospel throughout all the churches and who has been chosen by churches to travel along with us. He is serving the same gracious work that we do for the glory of the Lord and to show our own eagerness to see this accomplished.

20 By having such a respected man along, we hope to avoid having anyone find fault with us in this large sum of money being taken care of by us.

21 We are trying to think ahead and do things in a good and commendable way, not just in God's sight, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we also sent with those two men our brother who you have often tested and found to be diligent in many things. Now he will be even more diligent because I have expressed my confidence in you.

23 Now if there are any questions about Titus, just remember he is my partner and fellow-worker for you. If there are questions about these other brethren, they are sent out from the churches, Christ's glory.

24 So show to them and to the other churches proof of your love and proof that the things we bragged about you were so.

9:1 For about this matter of serving the saints with your contribution, I am certainly writing you more than is necessary.

2 I know your eagerness which I've bragged about to those in Macedonia. I told them that you brethren in Achaia were ready over a year ago. In fact it was your zeal that stirred many of them up.

3 That's why I have sent these brethren because I don't want our boasting about you in this matter to have been in vain. Like I said, I want you to be ready when the time comes to take the money.

4 Now what would happen if the representatives sent from Macedonia came with me, and when we got there you weren't prepared. We, not to mention you, would be ashamed in the thing we boasted about you.

5 This is the reason that I thought it was necessary to ask these brethren to go on to you before we got there. We wanted them to start getting this blessing of yours ready since we had told everyone about it earlier. We want them to see an attitude of blessing others, not a spirit of covetousness.

Paul Explains Some Truths About Giving

6 Just think about this: If a person is planting seeds, if they plant only a few seeds, they are only going to get a few plants and a small amount of produce. But if you plant an abundance of blessings, you will reap an abundance of blessings.

7 Each person should give as they had decided in their heart. Not out of a heart that is upset that you are having to give and not with a feeling that you are being forced to do this. For God loves those who give from a cheerful, joyous heart.

8 But God has the ability to abundantly supply you with all His gracious gifts so that you will have everything in abundance that you need to do every good work.

9 As it was written about the righteous man in Psalm 112, "He scattered out, he has given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever."

10 Now the God who assists the sower by supplying him with seed and supplies bread for you to eat will also increase the seed you have to sow and will grow the fruits of your righteousness.

11 Making you rich in every thing that brings about a sincere devotion to God which will make us thankful to God.

12 The reason we are asking you to assist in this service to the saints is not just to help them in their poverty. It's also make them overflowing with great thankfulness to God.

13 Through the proof that this service will give them, they will glorify God because you agreed with and obeyed the gospel of Christ. And they will also glorify God because your fellowship with them was and all was sincere.

14 They will passionately pray for you because they will see how much God's grace is upon you.

15 Thanks to God for His gift that is inexpressible.

