

Studies In Second Corinthians

(II Corinthians 8:1-24)

1. Though in poverty, what were the churches of Macedonia taking part in?

Ministering to the saints: *“(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. (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” (II Corinthians 8:1-4).*

- The grace [gift] of God sometimes refers to the work we are able to do for God (**Ephesians 3:7-8**, **I Peter 4:10-11**, and **II Peter 3:18**).
- There is a plurality of congregations in the area of Macedonia (**Acts 16:12** and **I Thessalonians 1:7-8**).
- Churches in Macedonia faced troubles (**I Thessalonians 1:6**).
- Even in poverty, we need to be a giving people (**Luke 21:1-4**) and faithful in the Lord’s work (**Revelation 2:9**).
- Helping needy brethren is fellowship (**II Corinthians 9:13**).
- The churches in Macedonia were known for helping needy brethren (**Romans 15:25-27**).

2. Did the churches in Macedonia exceed what Paul expected of them?

Yes: *“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” (II Corinthians 8:5).*

- We have to understand this as exceeding hopes rather than falling short for two reasons:
 - The first four verses show they did much, even in poverty (**II Corinthians 8:2-3**).
 - What they did was “by the will of God”, which proves they didn’t fall short of anything (**Colossians 4:12** and **I John 2:17**).
- They gave their own selves to the Lord (**Romans 14:7-8**).
- Then they gave themselves to the brethren (**Galatians 5:13**).

3. What did Paul expect to see the church in Corinth do with the help of Titus?

Take upon themselves the gift of ministering to needy saints and excel in it as they have other gifts God had given them: *“(6) Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. (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” (II Corinthians 8:6-7).*

- They have to abound in this work (**II Corinthians 9:8**; cf. **I Thessalonians 4:9-10**).

4. Though not by commandment of the Lord, was Paul testing the church in Corinth?

Yes: *"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (II Corinthians 8:8).*

- When Paul wrote, without commandment from the Lord (cf. **I Corinthians 7:12**), that did not mean it was not with permission from the Lord (**I Corinthians 7:6**, **I Corinthians 7:40**, and **II Corinthians 10:8**).
- The church in Corinth had previously been commanded to prepare to help needy saints (**I Corinthians 16:1-4**).
- You have to do more than say your willing (**James 2:14-17** and **I John 3:17-19**).
- It is right to test brethren to be sure they are doers and not talkers (**Matthew 7:16; 20** and **I John 4:1**).

5. How does Jesus serve as an example in the area of benevolence?

In that He gave up everything to help us: *"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" (II Corinthians 8:9).*

- Jesus is the ultimate example of giving on behalf of others (**Philippians 2:4-8**).
- He became poor (**Matthew 8:20**).
- That we might have TRUE wealth (**Revelation 3:17-20** and **Revelation 21:7**).

6. Did Paul expect the church in Corinth to finish what they had started in regard to helping needy saints?

Yes: *"(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. (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. (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" (II Corinthians 8:10-12).*

- Those who have should give (**Acts 20:35**, **I Timothy 6:17-19**, and **Hebrews 13:16**).
- A willing mind is good, but the actually deed needs to be done (**James 1:22**).

7. Was the church in Corinth being burdened with helping needy saints more than others were?

No: *"(13) For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: (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: (15) As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack" (II Corinthians 8:13-15).*

- The goal was not to overly burden some and nothing for others (**Acts 4:32-37**).
- When you do right, you'll not starve (**Psalms 37:25** and **Luke 22:35**).

8. Did Titus care for and want to work with the church in Corinth?

Yes: *"(16) But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. (17) For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you" (II Corinthians 8:16-17).*

- Titus was in the work for them, not for himself (**II Corinthians 12:17**).

9. Did Titus come to Corinth alone?

No: *"(18) And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; (19) And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind" (II Corinthians 8:18-19).*

- **II Corinthians 9:3-5.**

10. Is there a need for an accounting process when taking funds from a congregation to do the Lord's work?

Yes: *"(20) Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: (21) Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (22) And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you" (II Corinthians 8:20-22).*

- There are those who will steal from the Lord's treasury (**John 12:4-6**).
- Our honesty needs to be upheld (**Romans 12:17** and **I Peter 2:12**).
- Having others able to testify of our honesty is good too (**I Thessalonians 2:10**).

11. Were Titus and the messengers of the churches in Macedonia reputable?

Paul certainly spoke on their behalf: *"Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ" (II Corinthians 8:23).*

- Cf. **II Corinthians 8:18**. Letters of commendation are good (**Acts 18:24-28**, **I Corinthians 16:3**, **Philippians 2:25-30**, and **Philemon 15-17**), though not necessary when one's works speak loudly enough (**II Corinthians 3:1-3**).

12. What was the church in Corinth expected to prove to Titus, the messengers with them, and to the other congregations?

That Paul's boasting about the church in Corinth's love for needy saints was warranted: *"Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf" (II Corinthians 8:24).*

- Again, as discussed in questions #4 and 6, actions speak louder than words.