

1. Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted entirely to the topic of generous giving. The word "grace" occurs with higher frequency in II Cor. 8 than anywhere else in the NT: vss. 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16 and 19. Its basic thought is that of generous giving, be that of God or of the Christian. In vss. 1 and 9 we have the grace of God and that of our Lord Jesus Christ. In vss. 4, 6, and 7 we find this grace as it works in converted man. But all grace in man can be traced back to the grace of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians give generously because God has graciously and generously given to them.
2. Next to his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles, Paul's most important activity during his ministry was to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem. Cf. Gal. 2:10. Jewish Christians were ostracized and persecuted in Jerusalem. They helped each other as much as possible (Acts 2:44,45) but evidently that was not enough. And so wherever Paul went, he asked for contributions for the Christians in Jerusalem. Our text speaks about this collection in two places: Macedonia and Corinth. Paul is using the enthusiasm of the Macedonians to spur on the Corinthians to complete the task of the collection which was lagging in Corinth.
3. The churches of Macedonia were at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. The grace of God had been bestowed on these churches. That simply means that the Gospel had caused them to give very generously for Christians in Jerusalem.
4. Vs. 2 explains vs. 1 and is truly paradoxical. Civil wars had devastated their country. Despite their deep affliction and utter poverty they displayed great joy and generosity. Why? Because of the grace of God which had been bestowed on them.
5. Vss. 3, 4, 5 and 6 are one sentence with the main thought in 5: "they gave themselves." Vss. 3 and 4 lead up to this thought. Vs. 6 is the result of this thought. Not only did they give according to their ability but even beyond their ability and that "of their own accord."
6. Vs. 4 tells us that the grace of God had caused these poor, afflicted people to beg of Paul. Paul did not beg them. They begged Paul. The privilege amounted to sharing in the service toward the saints in Jerusalem.
7. Contrary to what Paul had expected, these people gave themselves entirely to the Lord. And the evidence of their utter dedication found itself in their attitude to Paul and his associates. The grace of God was truly evident in suffering, poverty-stricken Christians.
8. Titus had originally gotten the collection in Corinth started. But, for some reason or other, it had been interrupted. As a result of the enthusiasm of the Macedonians, Paul urges Titus to finish the work. The grace here spoken of is that which had become evident in Macedonia. It is a gracious work of God.
9. In vss. 1-6 Paul spoke of the zeal of the Macedonians. In vs. 7 he tells them to be consistent in the use of gifts which God has given to them. And in vs. 8 Paul politely compares the Macedonians to the Corinthians: "By comparing the zeal of others I am testing also the genuineness of your love." I Cor. 13 calls love the greatest gift.
10. In vs. 9 we have motivation par excellence. It speaks both of the atonement and the example of Jesus Christ. This vs. is comparable to Mt. 20:28 and Php. 2:5-11 where we find Jesus both as Savior and example. As Jesus gave Himself completely for mankind's salvation so we should give ourselves completely to the Lord and His church in service. In this vs. "grace" is used in its full saving sense. Although Jesus was Lord of heaven and earth He laid aside the full use of His attributes and even lost His last possession, His clothing. His poverty denotes what He suffered and fulfilled in my stead. Now I am forgiven, saved, an heir of heaven. I am very rich. Jesus' forgiving grace causes my giving grace.

# Sermon Outline on II Cor. 8:1-9, Trinity I

Theme: WHY WE SHOULD ABOUND IN THE GRACE OF GIVING

Introduction: In all ages Christians have given of their money to support the work of the church. It is not a tax which is forced from us as does the State. It is not because of a law. See vs. 8. Our text gives us the several reasons why Christians should willingly give their money and themselves to the Kingdom of God.

## I-Because of What we Already Are Vs. 7.

We are told at I Cor. 1:5-7 that we've been enriched in everything through Christ Jesus in all speech and knowledge so that we lack no gift but are eagerly awaiting the second coming of Jesus. And our text tells us that we have more than enough in everything, in faith, in word, in knowledge, in zeal and in our love toward other people. (Some texts read "your love toward us"). As vs. 9 says, we are rich through the poverty of Jesus. All we need do now is but the gift of giving into practice. The Lord has given us all the material and strength to do this. Just DO it!

## II-Because of The Example of the Macedonians Vss. 1-6

As today, Macedonia was northern Greece. It was a Roman Province. It had suffered much because battles had taken place there. The people were poor. But when Paul preached in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, we are told in vs. 2 that despite the great trial of their affliction they had an abundance of joy in the Gospel and this resulted in an abundance of giving freely and willingly. But more, not only did they give according to their ability but they gave BEYOND their ability. They gave freely and willingly. But more, they begged St. Paul to receive this gift and to pass it on to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. Very likely Paul advised them to think this over before giving so very generously. But no, they begged Paul: "Please receive our gift." Vs. 4 says that it was actually more than money. It was also fellowship in the spirit. That is important. But more, in vs. 5 Paul says that "first they gave THEMSELVES to the Lord." That is the real secret, not just their money, but their very selves. Our love for the church is like the love of marriage. Married people should give THEMSELVES, not just a promise. It is total. Look at vs. 8 of our text. Paul says: "I am not laying down rules. I am testing the genuineness of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." For 2000 years Christians all over the world have been testing the sincerity of their own love by comparing themselves with the Macedonians.

## III-Because of the Salvation and Example of Jesus Christ Vs. 9

The last vs. of our text is a very well-known passage. It is very paradoxical. Though Jesus was very rich in the glories of heaven He became poor and lost everything so that we could be rich. In this one thought we find both our salvation and our example. He had no place where to lay His head. His enemies took His honor from Him. He lost His very clothing on the cross. He was buried in a borrowed grave. That summarizes what we call His active and passive obedience in our stead. He became a curse in our stead so that we could have God's eternal blessing. This is an unforgettable example. We think also of the widow's mite, Lk. 21:1-4. She gave the Lord everything that she had, holding back nothing. Others gave from what they did not need anyway. She gave what she really needed. Read Ps. 50:12. The whole world belongs to the Lord. He does not need my money. But He does want to test the sincerity of my love for Him and for others. Refusal to give can lead to loss of soul. Mt. 25:45. But willingness to give, to give like the widow, to give like the Macedonians, yes, even to give like the Lord Jesus gives, that is the test of genuine love.

Conclusion: The forgiving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ saved us. The giving grace of Christians proves their faith.