

Worksheet #7: 2 Corinthians 8:1–24

Summary: In chapters 8 and 9, Paul writes to the Corinthians about the collection for the poor in Jerusalem that he had described previously in 1 Cor. 16:1–4. Commentator David Garland introduces these two chapters as follows:

Cranfield comments, “The Church’s need of money is a matter which it is difficult to handle with graciousness, sensitiveness and dignity.” Paul handles the issue deftly, and his lengthy discussion shows how important planning and administration are to the success of any ministry.... The Jerusalem project offers the Corinthians the chance to participate in something greater than themselves. Generosity is not something innate to human beings. Seneca recognized that people needed to be taught how to give, receive, and return willingly. This is no less true of Christians, and in these two chapters Paul shows why and how the Corinthian Christians should contribute to this fund.¹

In chapter 8, Paul begins by demonstrating that contributions from the Corinthians are necessary. He does this by citing the positive example of the Macedonians, who were generous despite their poverty and trial (8:1–7). Then, in 8:8–15, Paul describes the sacrifice of Christ as the ultimate example of generosity. In 8:16–24, he commends the efforts of Titus in administering the collection.

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
 - A. Paul’s Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
 - B. Paul’s Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
 - C. Paul’s Competence (3:4–6)
 - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
 - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
 - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
 - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
 - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
 - I. Catalog of Paul’s Sufferings (6:3–13)
 - J. Call to Separate from Paul’s Opponents (6:14–7:1)
 - K. Paul’s Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. **The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)**
 - A. **Example of the Churches in Macedonia (8:1–7)**
 - B. **Examples of Christ’s Sacrifice and the Old Testament (8:8–15)**
 - C. **Administration of the Offering (8:16–24)**
 - D. Importance of Having the Offering Ready (9:1–5)
 - E. Principles Motivating Generous Giving (9:6–15)
- V. Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

¹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 364.

² Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Paul's reference to the "great trial of affliction" (8:2) in Macedonia likely refers to the persecution described in 1 Thess. 1:6 and 2:14. Why is it significant for Paul that these Macedonian believers contributed to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem?

2. What might Paul mean by saying that the Macedonians "first gave themselves to the Lord" in 8:5?

3. Why does Paul believe the Corinthians should contribute to the collection (8:7)?

4. What does it mean for Paul to be "testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others" (8:8)?

5. Is Paul saying that wealthy Christians should give *all* of their wealth to needy Christians, to the impoverishment of the giver (8:13)? Why?

6. How does the account in Exod. 16:13–36 support Paul's point in 8:13–15? What are the implications for both wealthy and poor believers?

7. Why is it important for Paul to provide this "letter of commendation" for Titus in 8:16–24?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
