

2 Corinthians Class 10 Transcript

Greetings and welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 10 in our series on **2 Corinthians: The Ministry of Reconciliation**.

For class number nine, we had two questions turned in. So, as always, let's begin by addressing those.

In **2 Corinthians 7 verse 10**, Paul explains that worldly sorrow produces death. So can we assume that such was the case with Judas who did not have sorrow leading to repentance?

What is interesting that it is only Matthew among the gospel writers who actually recorded what took place with Judas after he realized what was about to happen to Jesus. Here's what Matthew wrote in **Matthew 27 and verse three**:

Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that he had been condemned was remorseful and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. Now that's not a bad translation at all from the New King James [Version]. The old King James Version says that *Judas repented himself*. That's the only time an expression like that occurs in Scripture.

Most newer translations like the New King James Version correctly put some reference to remorse instead of repentance. The Greek word that's used in this passage in Matthew 27 is a variation of the verb we talked about last time, *metamélomai*, which basically means to feel remorse or sadness as a result of the consequences of your actions.

So in answer to your question, yes, this does seem to be a clear example of a worldly sorrow leading to death instead of repentance. Instead of repenting and seeking reconciliation as Peter did after his very blatant denial of Jesus, Judas limited God by deciding in a sense that his sin was too great for the sacrifice of Christ to atone for it. He was wrong. But he acted on his faulty opinion and he took his own life. Whether he will ultimately end up in the second resurrection and be given an opportunity at that point, it's a decision only Jesus Christ knows.

The second question was from class number eight, actually.

The Old Testament speaks of God as a "Father." Yet why is it that Jewish people do not do that, do not use that phrase?

Well, there are actually only a very few references in the Old Testament to God as a Father. And those references rather consistently point to Him as the kind of Father figure for the entire nation of Israel, not as an individual Father. It was, in fact, in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus Christ begins to emphasize that God is our Father as an individual. Prior to that, we know that in—that when He was 12 years old. We have the account of them going to the temple, and saying, *I must be about My Father's business*, but in that case, referring to Himself. It is in the Sermon on the Mount where He teaches us to pray, *our Father*, that we are introduced to the concept of God as our personal Father.

I can't really say for sure why Jews never referred to God in that way. But I would imagine they would've thought it would've been rather presumptuous for an individual to claim God as his or her Father prior to the time that Jesus Christ made this clear.

So thank you again for your questions. We appreciate them, and you again at the end of this class will have one hour to turn in whatever questions you have and we'll try to address those before the beginning of the next class.

As always, we want God's blessing upon our class. So if you would bow your heads and join me, we'll ask that blessing.

[Prayer]

[5:02]

If you remember, at the end of class number 9, we were talking about the fruit that is produced by genuine repentance—not so that we have the ability to judge other people, but so we have the ability to judge ourselves: are we truly repentant or not? These are the attitudes, the fruit that is produced when a person truly repents. Now Paul is using that in talking to the Corinthian congregation because he wants them to understand that he is confident that they have truly repented of the problems that he brought up to them.

Now, of course, that's not going to be true of everybody in the congregation, but it was true for the majority. And Paul is certainly wanting them to know that: "Let's put all that behind us. We made mistakes. Let's go on from here." And that kind of leads to where we go in **chapter 8**.

We're going to see some very important principles in this chapter, and that's fine. We want to see what it is he's talking about here. But he puts those principles in the context of a task that he had given to a number of the Churches there in Macedonia and Achaia, and also even into Asia Minor as well.

But, this task had to do with putting together a very large and substantial gift for those in Judea, who were suffering. Apparently there was a period of drought or a period of difficulty with finances in that area, with being able to come up with enough food, and so on. So the brethren were in a very difficult spot. And Paul, over a period actually of—it appears to be a two- or three-year period of time, he's encouraged the Gentile brethren to put together this gift to send to Jerusalem. Now, that's kind of been put on the back burner in Corinth because of some of the other issues that have been there.

But Paul is now saying: "Alright, it's time to bring that forward again." Paul is already—remember when he wrote this—he is in Macedonia, whether Philippi or Thessalonica, we're not really sure, but he is in that particular area. And, he is telling them that it's time to go ahead and complete what you started.

[7:17]

But as we go through this **eighth chapter** this evening, in this particular class we want to focus on the principles that are involved here, that have to do with "giving." Now I think we need to put that in the context of what all of us heard many years ago, and, I hope we still remember and think about, the concept that there are two basic ways of life: the "give way" of life and a "get way" of life.

We live in a world where "getting" seems to be supreme. Where people are most concerned about, "What's in it for me? How can I profit from this? Why should I do something unless it's going to bring a profit to me?" But that's not the way God thinks. And since it's not the way God thinks, it's not the way God's children are supposed to think either. That instead, we are a part of a whole different approach, a "giving" way of life. And that needs to be a part of all that we do as well.

Now, very often when religions—when the various churches talk about "giving," they're almost always talking about giving money. Well, that's one thing that we can give. All of us are tithe-payers. We give offerings as well. We seek to support the work of the Church, and that's, again, perfectly proper. Nothing wrong with that at all. But giving doesn't end where our wallet begins.

Giving is a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of approaching other people, a way that affects every relationship in our lives, both with God and with one another. So, principles of giving are very, very important. And we will see—here in this **eighth chapter** and on into **chapter 9**—some very important principles that we need to understand about what—how God views giving, and therefore how you and I should view giving as well.

[9:11]

So let's pick it up here in **verse 1 of 2 Corinthians 8**.

He says: **verse 1** *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:*

Now, if you remember back last year when we were covering **1 Corinthians**, in **1 Corinthians 16 [verses 1-3]**, Paul had given instructions about collection for those who were in Judea. And, from the way he wrote about it there, it's clear that they were aware of this for some time prior to that. It wasn't just a brand-new instruction. And now, what Paul is continuing is basically a continuation of that explanation or that instruction he had given. His instruction then had to do with details of how that collection would be put together.

The collection had probably slowed quite a bit in Corinth because of the issues that were there. And, I think we would imply—and we'll see this a little further as we go into the book—that it appears that some of those, at least, who were troubling the Church in Corinth, who had come there after Paul had left and were causing problems, had begun to take the tithes and offerings and expect the people to support them. And, of course, some people were supporting them. So, probably, the collection that was being taken up for the brethren in Judea had begun to suffer. There wasn't as much there, and people weren't as diligent about putting all of that together because there was confusion about what was going on.

So, Paul is wanting to remind them of the responsibility that's there, and he talks about the *grace of God*. Remember always, when we look at the word *grace*, we're talking about "a gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient." Paul says that God had given *grace*, or given graciously *on the Churches of Macedonia*.

Now, we're going to see some things as we go forward here about this. The Churches in Macedonia apparently were not as well-to-do financially as Corinth. Corinth was a relatively wealthy area. There was a lot of wealth to be made in Corinth—a lot of trade, a lot of things going on in that way. So, probably, as a whole it was one of the wealthier congregations. And the Macedonian congregations weren't that way. They were probably some of the poorer congregations. But, Paul is reminding them that the gift that they are to give—that any giving that they give—really is based upon an approach toward God, and a recognition of God's hand, of what He does, of how He intervenes to help and to bless in many different ways.

[11:54]

So, the situation that we see here, that had produced some of these difficulties, was a situation that was particularly for that time. So, if we look at this, then we have to ask ourselves a question. Well, we're not being asked for any special collection now for anybody in need. I mean, as a Church we certainly contribute to areas that are more in need. It is a part of our annual budget to funnel quite a few funds to those areas that have less to be able to take care of themselves. And that's, of course, appropriate. But we're not asking for some special collection. You haven't received some kind of announcement that says: "Oh, we need everybody to give a special amount, as much as you can, because of this situation that we're facing." So, what are **we** supposed to derive from what Paul wrote to those people about that special situation?

Well, we're going to be given here some principles to use when it comes our opportunity to give. That we need to judge how we do that. Because giving—in the sense that it's described here, and as it applied to the brethren in the first century in Corinth and the other Churches contributing—this kind of giving isn't tithes. God determines what a tithe is. But, beyond that, we are left to ourselves to decide: how should we give? What are we capable of giving? We know the famous example—we'll refer to a little bit later—where Jesus Christ looked at a widow who gave two tiny mites. And He said that she had given more than the

others because she gave out of her poverty.

So, the giving that God is interested in is not measured in dollars and cents, or whatever other currency we may use in our country; it's not measured in that way. That isn't what God's looking for. Those aren't the principles we examine. But we are going to be given principles about giving in whatever way that opportunity comes along.

So, we should remind ourselves of what Paul wrote in **Romans chapter 12 verses 1 and 2**.

In that passage, Paul wrote: **verse 1** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

In other words, Paul is saying: "This is not unreasonable for you to give yourself to God." We'll read more about that here as we go forward in **2 Corinthians**. But, he says: "That's not unreasonable at all when you consider what God has done."

He continues on: [**Romans 12:2**] *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Paul's going on to say many more positive things about the Macedonian brethren. But he begins by reminding everyone that both the right attitude **and** the ability to give were not because the Macedonians were somehow more spiritual or more righteous than anyone else. These were gifts from God. The Macedonians were giving abundantly, following the example of God's giving, just as we should.

So, he uses them, and he says: [**2 Corinthians 8:1**] ... *God has bestowed grace on the churches of Macedonia.*

And he says in **verse 2**: *that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*

[15:29]

Now we can spend a lot of time looking at the individual words, but, basically what Paul is saying here is that the Macedonian Churches were going through a difficult time. There was a certain amount of persecution upon them. When you go through **1 and 2 Thessalonians**, you find quite a bit written there about how to go through persecution, and what it does to you, how you are to respond to persecution. They were going through difficult times, in addition to the fact that they were not wealthy people. They were subsistence people to a great degree, just getting by in most of those areas. So he talks about their *deep poverty*. He recognizes that they're going through a very difficult time.

Some of the commentators say that the word that's used here for *poverty* is a word that describes the kind of poverty where you're not really even sure where your next meal is coming from. And it's a very deep and difficult poverty. Now, there are people in this world, there are brethren in the Church who live that way day-to-day. And God provides for them. And in many cases, they're very generous, very deeply dedicated people. But it's not easy. And most of us have never endured that kind of a grinding poverty that has really no hope of coming out of it.

So, he is describing that, and yet, he says, these people have been so very generous. They've been so abundant in this. As it has been suggested, that since they knew the afflictions had a purpose, that there was, as it says here, a certain *joy* that they had in the midst of it. They knew that God was working something out for them, so they could see that.

Now maybe this is a flawed comparison, but I know some of you will at least understand what I mean by this. Let's say, for example, you were going through a diet. Now, there are two different ways you can

approach the diet. If you're on a diet, you will become acquainted with something called "hunger." You're going to be hungry at times. Now, you can focus on the discomfort of the hunger. You can kind of grimace and be upset because you're constantly hungry. Or, you can approach it with the idea of: Well, okay, being hungry means something good is happening, and, on down in the future, it's going to produce a good result.

So, in that sense—again, I say it's probably a flawed metaphor—but it illustrates the fact that when you're going through a trial, you can approach things in a positive way and be joyful about what the trial produces. Or you can approach them negatively and always see the sad side or the difficult side of things. That's a choice that we make. And Paul is saying that the Macedonian brethren looked on a very positive way. They were joyful about the fact that God was working things out, and that ultimately this trial would produce good things. So they were able to be joyful in the midst of it.

[18:21]

As we continue on, we note that Paul never, anywhere in here, gives any indication of the amounts of what's being given. He doesn't compare one area to another by: how many drachmas did they give per person? Or how many did this area give? That was an irrelevant comparison. And that wasn't what God was interested in. Nor should it be what we are interested in.

Probably many of you will know that years ago, we used to give—after a holy day, we would announce the total offering and how much per person it was. And through the years we've come to realize that's probably not the best thing to do. Because, when you do, well, there will be some people who will say: "Well, I gave above average. So I'm fine." There will be others who feel that they weren't able to give up to that average so: "Maybe I didn't do my part." And neither one of those conclusions are correct. It's not the way we want to look at it. We're simply grateful that together, as brethren, we can contribute to the work of God in some way. So, Paul never compares. Nor should we.

He goes on to say in **verse 3**: *For I bear witness that according to their ability, —*

Now we're talking about the Macedonian brethren.

—according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

Now Paul is not implying that they were foolish in their giving. But, they were **very** generous. He's saying that by his judgment, they gave more than he would've expected. He didn't think they would be **able** to give in that way. But, they did. They surprised him. They gave a great deal.

It's not unusual today, as we deal with brethren around the world—some of whom are in this same kind of grinding *deep poverty*—that very often they are very, very generous considering what they have available to them. They're very generous. And, in many cases, they are **delighted** to be able to contribute. Because by giving as they're able, it helps them to be a part of the work. They feel like: We're not just receiving things; we're actually able to give, to contribute, to make things better, to be a part of the work that God's doing. And that's the way they should feel. That's the way anyone should feel when they are able to contribute in those ways.

So Paul looks at the Macedonian brethren, and he says: "I never would've expected they would have given as much as they did. But they did. And they were deeply dedicated to that."

[20:51]

And he goes on to say: **verse 4** *imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

There are a couple of things here. First of all, with knowing their level of poverty, it may be that Paul was

even somewhat reluctant to take that much from them. Because, I mean, they really didn't have that much. So, evidently, they went to Paul and they said: "No, we want to be a part of this. Please **take** our offering. Take it; let it be a part of what's there." And Paul was willing to do that. But they were quite urgent with him.

One of the commentaries made this point, and I think it's a really interesting point. They said:

Well, in this case, perhaps their love for the needy brethren was strong because they understood what it was like to be needy.

They'd been there. They felt that. They knew what it was like to be in need and not have something. So they have a special connection with those who are in that spot.

We also note a couple of other things. For one thing, they implored Paul; they begged him *with urgency* to *receive the gift*. They saw giving, not as an obligation but as a gift that they could freely give, as a privilege to give.

I'm reminded of a story told by the humorist Sam Levinson. Some of you may remember the name. Others of you probably don't. But Sam Levinson grew up as a young Jewish boy in the tenements of Brooklyn. And he was the youngest in the family. And he explains in one of his stories that he, as the youngest child, on Friday afternoon before the Sabbath began, everyone—even those who are in poverty as his family was—they took a small amount, and they sent it with the smallest child to the local synagogue to turn in as a gift for those who were even needier than they were. And this was something that was done week after week.

Well, Sam Levinson tells the story that he came home one day to pick up the money to go down to the synagogue, and his mother said, "No, I sent it with your brother." And he said: "Well, why did you do that? That's my job. That's what I get to do." And she said, "Sam, you have not been good this week. And you have not earned the privilege of giving." [It] really struck him that giving is a privilege. It isn't something you have a right to do. It isn't something that is an obligation that you do. It's a privilege. And, he had lost the privilege that week, and he said it taught him a great deal. I wonder how often we look at giving as a privilege, as a blessing that God gives to us.

They also said: "Please *receive* our *gift* and the *fellowship*, the sharing, the partnership *of the ministering* or serving *the saints*." They said: "We can't go there and help our brethren directly. But we can help them this way. So please, let us be a part of doing the work." That's what they were asking: "Let us be a part of serving our brethren. We realize we don't have a lot that we can do, but we can do this. And we ask you, please, let us be a part of it." And, of course, Paul was willing to do that.

[24:12]

We see in **verse 5**, it says: *And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.*

I think there's a lot that's said here. Godly giving does not begin by looking at our resources. Godly giving begins by looking at God. It begins by considering God's role in the whole process where giving is involved. We don't start with "what I've got." We start with "what God has," what He's capable of doing. And we begin to evaluate on that basis. That's our starting point.

Now, that's a principle that you see: they first gave themselves to God. You belong to us—excuse me—"We belong to You, and therefore, whatever You want to do with us, we are Your servants, and please guide us and help us to see how to serve." What a wonderful beginning place for us! Again, I cannot help but ask: do we do that? Do I do that? As we're approaching those times—especially, say for example, the Holy Day seasons, when we plan for those Holy Day offerings—am I asking God ahead of time: "Please guide us. Please help us to see what we need to do here. Help us to be tools in your hands to accomplish

your purpose.” That’s first and foremost. We belong to Him.

It’s a very powerful principle here about giving ourselves first to God. And it’s going to impact our ability to give. These people recognized their limitations. But they also knew that God didn’t have those limitations. And therefore, they asked God to use them in accomplishing whatever He intended—to use them, enabling them to give in an appropriate way that would be helpful. God, in His turn, has the ability to magnify anything we could possibly give and make it accomplish far more than we ever imagined. We’ll see that again as we continue further here.

But again, let us always keep in mind, as we go through this, the bigger principle involved. Because I think, so often, whenever we talk about giving, we talk about money: “How can I give more money?” Can you give more of an offering? Well, that’s wonderful! And that is a wonderful way to give. And we don’t want to diminish that in any way. God’s people have been very generous for the Church of God over the last number of years. And we’ve been very, very appreciative. And we certainly want to be thankful for that.

But I think we also have to remember, we’re talking about a “give way” of **living**, not just a give way of sending money—a give way of living. We need to keep that principle in mind, whether we’re talking about money or whatever other form our giving may take, because there are brethren who are unable to give money. But they certainly give in many other very meaningful, very powerful, very important ways. And we all need to look at that because, after all, we’re all called to live a “give way” of life. We’re not all called to **give** more and more money. We may be able to give more than others or less than others. That’s really kind of irrelevant here. But our **lives** should be giving. So let’s keep that in mind as we go forward.

[27:35]

How did God use these Macedonians to accomplish His purpose? Because admittedly, undoubtedly, they were not able to give as much as the people in Corinth. But God used them, nonetheless. We’ll see as we go forward that Paul uses their example as an encouragement to others to do their part as well. He basically says: “Look what the Macedonians have done. Look at their dedication. They gave themselves to God. And then they gave their best that they could give. What more could we ask?” And that’s an inspiring example for anybody else to see.

So, at the same time as well, we will also find that: Okay, the things that were going on in Corinth, again, they were rather difficult. And Paul tells us that he didn’t have any rest, that he was concerned—that he was in a certain amount of turmoil because of his **deep** concern and love for the brethren in Corinth. And yet he didn’t know what he could do. He’s trying to help them. But, wow, the problems are still continuing!

And yet, just to the north, here are the brethren in Macedonia who are solid, rock solid, supporting Paul, helping in any way that they can. There is that sense of encouragement. And Paul said he received a great deal of encouragement from them in the midst of a difficult time. Yes, he’s still concerned about the Corinthians. But God used the people of Macedonia to encourage Paul in those difficult times as well. And so he really appreciated what they did.

So, we come to **verse 6**: *So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.*

In other words, Paul, as we said, had already told the Corinthians about the collection. Now there’s been a difficult period of time. We’ve gotten past that, for the most part. Paul has sent Titus down there to go ahead and complete the process. And he’ll explain, later, that it’s important that it be completed before the others show up. There’s a reason for that as we’ll see as we go further. But Titus had begun this process. It probably indicates that Titus was a pretty good organizer. He was one of those individuals who’s able to put things together and do things in an organized way. Some people are better at that than others. Doesn’t

make them more righteous. It's just simply, they have that strength. And Titus appears to be one of those good organizers.

So Paul could send him ahead so that he could begin putting these things together. Because, remember, this isn't simply a matter of: you come to the area, and you pick up a bank check, and you go to Jerusalem. These were goods. These were various things that had been prepared—clothing, food—all of those things and probably a certain amount of money as well. But there would be other things. And this would all need to be put together so that it could be shipped to Jerusalem and it could arrive safely. All of those things are involved. There were a lot of logistics, as we call it. And Titus was probably pretty good at that.

[30:32]

Verse 7 *But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.*

Now isn't it interesting when you see what Paul said here? Here's a Church that's probably very prosperous; they're doing well, financially. And Paul is wanting them to be able to give generously so that the help for those in Judea is going to be better. But, notice what he says: *you abound in everything*. What does he focus on? What does he remind them that they abound in? There's nothing physical here. He doesn't say: "You've got nice homes. You've got nice clothing. You are prosperous in your business." He doesn't bring any of those things up at all. What he brings up is *faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, love for us*—all of these characteristics. These are spiritual characteristics.

And he said: "You abound in those. God has given you," again, "just as He gave certain things to the brethren in Macedonia, God has given you these things. This is a blessing from God. And as you're considering how you're going to be able to give effectively, you need to consider what God's given you." If the only thing we look at, when we consider what God's given us, is our bankbook, then we're missing a great deal of what God has actually done. So he reminds them: "You have abundance in these. There's nobody, basically, who receives more than you do when it comes to these basic spiritual things."

Now Paul goes on to say: **8** *I speak not by commandment, —*

In other words: "I'm not commanding to do something. I'm not coming to you and ordering on the authority of Jesus Christ, or as an apostle of Jesus Christ, 'You need to do this.' No, I'm not doing that. I'm not speaking *by commandment*."

—but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

Testing here probably doesn't mean quite the same way we would take it. Paul is not saying: "I'm putting you to the test." We as ministers don't have the right to put people to the test. That's not our job. But he says: "I'm deciding..." "I'm evaluating" —perhaps is a better way to put it— "I'm evaluating the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. I'm seeing how others are diligent in what they do."

And again, we're not talking about dollar amounts. We're talking about the diligence that people have in examining their lives in determining how they're going to give. Giving, always— there are a couple of basic facets in this situation that Paul is explaining here, and it's very important for us to keep in mind as we give, whatever it is we give. Giving, first of all, must be from a willing heart, not because of compulsion. To command giving—an offering, for example—hinders the giver from having the opportunity to give from the heart. So, we don't command people to give an offering.

[33:39]

I know sometimes people wish they could give more, and so on. I've even occasionally seen people who

didn't give anything when the offering was given. That's rare. But every once in a while, that happens. Okay, that's between the individual and God. If you feel like you shouldn't, okay, well, you have to answer to God for that. God's the one who said what to do. But if a person doesn't feel like they can give, okay, that's their decision to make.

But we are to give from a willing heart, not because we have to. That should be something we always keep in mind. Whether we're talking about a Holy Day offering that is planned and something that God has instructed us to give, or whether it's something else that we give at some point, it should be given out of a willing heart. Not by compulsion, not because we feel guilty if we don't, but simply because we want to give, because giving is the right way to live, because we want to have the mind of God, and God is a giving God. So, we want to live a "giving way of life." That should be in our heart.

It's also important to remember here, and Paul is making the statement, that our giving is being examined by God as an expression of what's in our heart. Do we have the abundant heart that God has? So he says: "I'm evaluating, and God is evaluating, on the basis of the *diligence of others* as well. How diligent are **you** with this opportunity that you have?"

He goes on to say: **verse 9** *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, —*

Okay. And remember, that which is given, motivated by grace. Jesus Christ gave out of His goodness, without regard to the worthiness of the recipients. None of us are worthy of the gifts that Jesus Christ brought. He gave because giving was the right and good thing to do, not because the recipients were especially worthy. That doesn't mean that He looked upon us and said: "Oh, what a terrible group of people. I'm going to give to them anyways." No. It's not that. But, worthiness is not the standard to use for determining whether we're going to give or not.

He goes on to say, using the example of Jesus Christ:

—that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

In what way was He rich? Well, He dwelt in eternity. He had eternal life. He dwelt in the third heaven and all the glory and magnificence of the third heaven. He had wealth, in that sense. It's not measured in physical terms. But He had all of that, and yet He gave it up to become physical, to literally die, to have a life that ended, and to give Himself for us. What an amazing example of giving! And it wasn't because the Father forced Him. This was a **gift** that Jesus Christ **willingly** gave. Throughout Scripture, it is **always** shown in that way. Jesus Christ at that last Passover service said: [**John 10:18**] "*No one takes my life from Me; I willingly give it.*" They didn't understand at the time, but today we do. Jesus Christ **gave** His life for us.

[37:05]

As you read through this, we could probably get the idea that Paul is—if you just read through this in the English and you don't understand the setting and what's taking place, what has happened in Corinth—you can almost get the idea that Paul is really trying to drum up a big offering. But that's not the point at all. That's not what he's trying to do. He's setting before them the examples of others and their diligence in wanting to be a part of what God's doing. And he's asking them to look at themselves and say: "How are you doing? Do you want to give for that reason? Do you want to share in the same way they want to share?" Now the attitude of heart and mind is what's most important here. The amount is, in a sense, irrelevant. God owns everything. He has the power to bring whatever is needed. He doesn't need our money.

Now, occasionally, very rarely, but once in a while, I have met people that seem to think that the Church

really needs their tithes and offerings and if they left, we'd be in bad shape. Well, that's never happened. There's never been a person that's left, that's left the Church in a bad shape. No. God has the power to provide whatever we need. So, whatever our tithes and offerings may be—we hope they're generous; we hope they're given as generously as we can—but, God is the one who provides. Not us. We're only giving what He's given us in the first place.

Now, he describes Jesus Christ here as becoming *poor*. It emphasizes an event that happened, and it focuses on the beginning of that: *He made Himself poor*. "He entered into a different state" is the sense of it. From the wealth of eternity and the third heaven, He entered into a different state to be human alongside of us. And so that was a **tremendous** change. And that through His willingness to do that, He enables us to look forward to entering into that same state of life that doesn't end, and, as we've seen in many places in Scripture, that He shares His glory with us. What a wonderful thing to look forward to!

[39:22]

Okay, so Paul continues on: **verse 10** *And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.*

So, Paul is making the point to them that: "You know, over a year ago we told you this. You were getting ready. You were doing the right things. Time has passed. Difficulties have come along. And it would be easy for you to kind of set that aside."

Remember what he said at the end [beginning] of **1 Corinthians chapter 16 [verse 2]**? He said: "Get these things together so that we don't have to collect them when I get there." But, the year has passed. He didn't get there as quickly as he thought he might. And so, people could've lost a lot of that diligence about putting things together. "Well, he'll get here, and we'll get it ready before he gets here." And Paul says: "No. You need to be diligent about this."

It's always easier to get started on something than it is to complete it, to stick with it until it's finished. We've probably all had that experience. That's one of those things that you learn, even as a child. And one of the things parents often teach their children is: You can't just start; you've got to keep doing it until you're done. It's an important life lesson. There was nothing wrong with the readiness of their desire in Corinth to help out. That was, in fact, a very good trait that they had. But it was just as important that the initial desire isn't lost to the challenges that have come along since then.

I think that's also a way of showing us that giving was something, in this case, that was going to be completed. In other words, Paul is not telling them: "Okay, give. And next Sabbath, give again. And then the next week, give again. And just keep giving." It's not focused in that way. There was a **specific** thing involved here, and Paul's saying: "We need to complete that. We started on a project; we need to finish that up."

[41:21]

And then he begins to give us, again, some really, really important principles.

[2 Corinthians 8] verse 12 *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted —*

Who is doing the accepting? Well, that's God.

—it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

Okay. Another way to put this is: *if there is present a willing mind*. *First*, here, doesn't necessarily mean "chronologically first," but it says: "most important of all." That's the concept here. Most important of all *is* to

have a *willing mind*—a mind that is eager to give, that we desire to give. Because, from that perspective, we're able to judge a lot better what we can give, what we've received, how we express our appreciation for what we've received.

So, we begin, not with: "Oh, man! I've got to give another offering." But instead: "I have the opportunity to give another offering. This is great! What can I do? Is there a way I could do better than I've done before?" Those are the attitudes and approaches we would want to have. And, it also implies, for us, that as far as God is concerned, our giving is evaluated by God, based upon that willing mind, that attitude. What we have, physically, before God is irrelevant. Again, the God who owns all things has given us everything we have. So, all we're doing when we give is giving back something that He's given us in the first place. Which is fine. He's pleased with that.

It's as I heard one person illustrate this—one of our elders, a few months ago, was talking about an offering being given. And he used the example of how a parent feels when a small child gives the parent something. And in many cases, the parent has had to give them the money to give in the first place. But the child has then taken it, and they bought something for their parent, and they give it to them. And the parent is really pleased because the child is **giving**, the child is learning, the child is expressing a love and appreciation.

Well, in a sense, that's kind of what we're doing. God gives us **everything** we have, including life itself, and we give back to God. And, we are just giving a little bit of what He gave to us. But the attitude, the willingness, the eagerness to express our love to God and to our brethren in that way is something that's very pleasing to God. So He evaluates what we do, based upon that spirit—not what we don't have.

Now, Paul goes on to explain here in **verse 13**: *For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;*

In other words, if we put it this way: We're in a society today where governments seem to think that wealth redistribution is their job. That somehow, what government should do is to take from the wealthy and give to the poor, and this is what we need to do. Well, that isn't exactly the biblical way of doing things. We should be concerned for others. We should look at what we have and what we can do to help those who are in need. Yes, that's proper to do that. But, it's not a matter of something being taken away from those who are wealthy and given to others who have really done nothing to earn it. That isn't God's way at all.

[44:46]

So, he makes it clear here: "I'm not asking that the wealthy people give to the point of becoming poor. And I'm not asking that they give to the point where the poor become wealthy." That's not it. It is a matter of reaching out with what we have to share. And that will involve giving more, [of the] things that we could hang on to if we chose to. Though giving obviously involves giving up something a person already has, giving is never intended to be burdensome to the giver. That's not really what we're trying to do. God doesn't want us to be burdened in that way.

But Paul goes on to say: **verse 14** *but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.*

Now again, when we say *equality*, we're not talking about everybody being in exactly the same level. To do that, well, in a sense, it takes away God's ability to bless or even to correct. If we try to take away God's corrections by providing for somebody who God is correcting, then we're kind of short-circuiting what God's trying to do. Or if we bring blessing when God is not blessing a person, well, that's not really helping to accomplish what God intends. God intends blessing and correction. So, we're not a matter of trying to make everyone equal. That's not what we're trying to accomplish. But, there are situations that come up where we do need to help one another, where those who do have more have a responsibility to help out with those

who really can't do any more for themselves. And it's not their fault. They're simply in that kind of a system.

As we said earlier, as a Church we make it a part of our budget annually to send **considerable** amounts of money to some of the international areas that are not able to support themselves. Now that's not true of all international areas. Some of the international areas, as well, send funds to support areas that are not as well off. So that's something we need to keep in mind too. It's not just the United States that does that. But we recognize that. We don't want our brethren suffering in difficult situations when we have all kinds of luxury.

We see this, for example—just recently we've had some reports about the Feast of Tabernacles and how some of the brethren in some of the Third World countries in Africa, for example, have very, very little. They basically camp out for the entire Feast and cook over open fires. Well, I think all of us would feel like, if there's a way that we can help, that we can make this better, then by all means, let's do it. And for us to enjoy luxury condominiums and steak dinners every night while our brethren are suffering, well, that really wouldn't sit well with any of us. So, we're eager to give and to help so that we can even things out a little bit more, so that those who have less can enjoy more. And we still have plenty.

[47:53]

So he goes on to say: **verse 15** *As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."*

Okay. Where is that written? Well, actually it's in **Exodus chapter 16 verses 13** through **36**, where it talks about the *manna*. God provided *manna*, and it was the same *manna* for everybody. He didn't provide something different. He didn't provide, you know, luxury gourmet *manna* for the wealthy and kind of rough *manna* for the others. *Manna was manna*. That was it. Everybody went out to get it. And, you went out, and He told you to take enough for each day, **except**, as you remember, on Friday, when you were to take twice as much because He wouldn't be providing it on the Sabbath. And it would work well.

But the principle that's here is as it describes this early on—it describes how some people weren't doing that. They tried to take extra on another day other than Friday, and, as they found out the next morning, it bred worms, and it was smelly. And it was something that almost made you sick. So, they didn't do that.

There were others who went out early on—we, again, remember that account in **Exodus 16**—they went out to try to get *manna* on the Sabbath. It was not there. So, they learn a lesson. God says: "I'll provide for you. And if you follow what I tell you to do, then, if you, one day, you accidentally gather a little too much, okay, you'll be able to use it up. If one day you actually gather a little less than you really needed, I can make it work. We can do that." You're serving God, doing the right thing. Then, if you gathered much, you didn't have anything left over. You gathered a little bit too little, you weren't hungry. You had enough to get by. So, he uses that as an illustration for us.

Now, I wonder how many of us would've ever thought about using **that** as an illustration about "giving"? But it shows how God gives. He gives you adequate. He gives you what you need. He tells you to take advantage of it. And He blesses you in the process. That's an example of God's way of giving. So it shows us some important lessons.

[50:07]

So, he says in [**2 Corinthians 8**] **verse 16**: *But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.*

Paul says: "I don't have to worry about you because I know Titus loves you as much as I do. Titus is so thrilled to be able to go back."

He goes on to say: [**verse 17**] *For he (Titus) not only accepted the exhortation (the encouragement, the appeal that Paul had given), but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.*

So, Paul, after hearing the report from Titus, says: “I need you to go back and work with them on this.” And Titus says: “Hey, no problem. I **love** the Corinthian brethren. I’m eager to go back and work with them.” So, Paul wants them to know that this is the way Titus is going to deal with them.

Now he goes on to tell us a little bit more here.

He says in **verse 18**: *And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches,*

We don’t know who this is. We honestly don’t. It has been suggested that perhaps it was Luke. And that is a possibility. But what has taken place? Well, from the beginning when Paul is talking about this collection, he has told every congregation where he’s been: “If you have some people you would like to send with us when we take this to Jerusalem, we’ll be happy to have them go with us. That’s fine.” Now there are probably a couple reasons for this—and we’ll talk about one of those in a minute because I don’t want to get too bogged down in that right now.

But one of the reasons is because, by sending the representatives from each of those Churches, it was like a personal individual who comes to the people in Judea when they’re receiving this offering—this gift that’s sent to them—to encourage them, to tell them: “I represent your brothers in Thessalonica, in Berea, in Corinth or at Ephesus, and we **wanted** you to have it. We are so grateful that we could share and help in this situation that you’re facing.”

So it’s going to bind the Churches together in a very special way. Remember, almost all of these Churches that are contributing are Gentile Churches, and they’re giving to brethren in Judea. And, they’re building a bond between Gentiles and Jews, a bond that’s going to be very important as the Church moves forward through the end of the first century and forward. That’s going to be a very important bond. It was a bond that didn’t exist in Judaism. So it was something that had to be learned. And by sending Gentiles and Jews to care for one another, it’s going to strengthen that bond. That’s a good thing.

But there’s more to it. So let’s go on. Who this is, again, we’re not exactly sure. Luke has been suggested. Whoever it was was in Jerusalem with Paul when he was taken captive. That, we can assume, because that’s when the collection was taken to Jerusalem, right before Paul was taken captive. So they would’ve been there with him.

[53:10]

We go on to **verse 19**: *and not only that, but who (And this appears to be another individual.) was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,*

“So, we’re administering it; we’re watching over it; we’re protecting it. We’re stewards watching over it to make sure everything gets there just fine.” And the purpose of that is, of course, to bring glory to Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church. That He is the One who’s produced the love, the concern, the abundance, to be able to reach out to one another.

Verse 20 *avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—*

Okay, Paul recognized there’s a danger here. He’s being given a very large amount of money, goods, and so on, to take to the brethren in Jerusalem. How does he prove that he didn’t kind of pilfer some of it for himself? He can give his word. He can say that. For most people that’s perfectly adequate. Most people

would say, “If Paul says it, I know it’s true. That’s not a problem.” But Paul is going beyond that. He’s making sure that no one can ever accuse him of misusing the funds.

Now again, keep in mind—and we mentioned this earlier as we were going through 2 Corinthians—this isn’t so much a matter that Paul is protecting himself. Paul recognizes—just as he says here, and as we get into this a little bit further—that the gospel message is going to be seen in a different way if someone misuses the position of responsibility they’ve been given. If Paul is accused of stealing some of this, then the message that he brings is suspect in the eyes of people. So Paul said: “I’m going to make sure this doesn’t happen.”

He knew the principle that the gospel is hindered if the servants of God, for any reason, acquire a reputation for dishonest dealing. So Paul is going to make sure everything is aboveboard. Those who are traveling with him know what came from their various Church areas. They would know how much there was, and when it’s delivered, they would be able to verify everything has been delivered. So even when they go back home, if someone says: “Well, did it all get there, or did somebody take part of it?” They can say: “No. I was there. I saw it. It was all delivered.”

[55:49]

And he goes another step here. **Verse 21** *providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

I think this tells us something again, even about the way the Church of God functions today. And that is that we must make sure that when it comes to financial matters like this, that everything is aboveboard and there’s no question whether anybody is honest or not. You know, our system is set up—it has been for many years—but it is set up in Church of God, a Worldwide Association, so that even those who are the administrators in charge of various functions do not have access to the information about individual tithes and offerings.

Even Mr. Taylor, who is our chief financial officer, cannot go into the files and find out what you or I have contributed. We’ve protected everyone in that way so that there is **no** chance that anyone could be treated differently because they’re a big donor or they’re not a big donor or any of those things. We have set it up in such a way that it is always honorable. Now, of course, obviously, they have access to the **total** figures, but not any one individual figure.

But we go beyond that. Each of the local congregations—in some cases, the Church circuited—maybe I should say: each individual Church circuit and, in many cases, each congregation receives a subsidy from the headquarters office each month. And, in those situations, we know exactly how much we send. They go to a local Church account, and the local congregations pay their hall rent, their social expenses or whatever their expenses may be in that particular area.

Those funds are sent each month. And, there are those in the individual areas who are responsible for handling those accounts. Generally speaking, you will find the pastor is not the person doing that. In fact, we encourage that the pastor not even be on the checking account so that he can’t even sign a check from that account. That way it removes him completely from anybody questioning whether the pastor might get into the funds. No, they’re completely separate from that.

Best accounting practices even tell us that the person who writes the checks on the local account should not be the same person who receives the monthly bank statement and reconciles the account. So we even have more than one person involved. And, very often—again, it depends on the Church area—there may be even an annual kind of accounting before everyone. That: Look, here’s how much the Church received from headquarters this year. Here’s how we spent it on these various things. Now certainly not talking about

anybody individually receiving Church assistance or anything like that. But, just so people in general know: Here's what we're doing; here's how this is being handled. So if there are ever any questions, everything is open and aboveboard.

[58:48]

As an organization we hire outside auditors who come in and audit our books every year. I personally know of this because, as the corporate secretary, one of the things that I have to send them each year is the minutes from our board meetings so that they can compare what we've done with what the board has approved. Again, all of this is done with an outside firm, and then the results are made available, and we, again, talk about them every year so that those things are available.

We have what's called, from the auditing firm, an "unqualified report." Now what that means—I used to kind of joke with Mr. Taylor about that, and he said: "Well, yeah, you'd think we could spend enough money to get a qualified firm to do it." Oh, no, that's not what it means. What it means is that the report is "complete" and there are no extenuating circumstances that we have to say: "Well, we think this is what happened, but we're not sure." No. "Unqualified" means there's nothing qualified, no qualifying statements. Nothing that says: "Oh, well, we're not really sure." It's complete, open, and it's as good as it gets. We do that every year. And, again, we feel that's important. We want to be completely aboveboard.

So, that's what it's talking about here, and Paul says that's what he's doing.

Okay, let's quickly complete this chapter.

Verse 22 *[And] we have sent with them our brother (Again, we don't know who.) whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.*

"You Corinthian brethren—yes, there have been problems. Don't forget: we have great confidence in you."

23 *If anyone inquires about Titus, —*

You know, they don't know Titus. They wonder about him. "Well, is he the same as Paul?"

—he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about (those others who may have been involved), they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

"We told everyone that you would be ready before anybody else. So, make sure that you're ready before we show up."

Okay, that's where we'll end for today. Thank you for joining us for class number 10.

We will plan to begin class number 11 next week in **2 Corinthians chapter 9**.

[1:01:18]