

## *Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Ten: Corinthians, Part 4 – 2 Corinthians 8-13*

#### Read 2 Corinthians 8-9.

- 1) What background information concerning Paul's collection of an offering for the church in Jerusalem do you find in the following passages: Acts 11:27-30, 19:21, 20:16; 24:17; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; and Galatians 2:10? **According to Galatians 2:10, Paul had been urged at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) to encourage the churches of the Diaspora to "remember the poor in Jerusalem."** Acts 19 and 20 mention Paul's intention of getting to Jerusalem. In his speech to Felix in Acts 24, he confirmed what we learn from Romans 15 and 1 and 2 Corinthians: that he had been gathering a collection for the Jerusalem church as he traveled through Asia, Macedonia and Greece.
- 2) According to 2 Corinthians 8-9, what did Paul hope would motivate the Corinthians' participation in this offering? **Paul hoped the Corinthians would have been motivated to participate 1) by the example of the Macedonian Christians, who gave eagerly and generously despite a severe trial (8:1-5), 2) by the example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who gave up all the riches of heaven and became human (impoverished) for our sake (8:9), 3) by their eagerness to complete what they had started (8:10-12), 4) by their interest in "equality" among the churches through mutual sharing of resources (8:14-15), 5) in order to uphold their reputation (9:4), by faith that God would supply their needs in return (9:11), and out of knowledge that their generosity would cause others to praise and thank God and pray for them (9:11-14).**
- 3) Reread 2 Corinthians 8:7 and 9:8. Why would Paul have called giving an act of grace? What would it take to make you more gracious so that you might excel in this area of giving? **Grace means giving what is not merited. When we pay someone for a service, no grace is required because it is a wage that is earned and deserved. However, when we give something we do not owe, that is an act of grace. Personal sharing may include prayer for a more gracious and compassionate spirit, for release from fear over finances that causes some to hoard their resources, etc.**

#### From 2 Corinthians 8-9:

- 4) What did Paul say about the Corinthians' interest in participating in the gift to the Jerusalem church (see 2 Corinthians 8:6, 10-11 and 9:2-5)? **The Corinthians had shown great initial interest in participating and had even begun collecting, but apparently, they had not followed through with their initial commitment and eagerness.**
- 5) In your experience, what kinds of things can tempt people from following through on an initial interest in serving someone for Christ's sake? **People sometimes lose interest in an opportunity to serve others that initially interested them because they did not continue to receive or seek information about it. The "cares of the world" (the busy-ness of life, demands on our time and attention, etc.) can also distract us from following through. There are also times when people change their mind and prioritize their own needs (which may be pressing) ahead of the needs of others.**
- 6) Reread 2 Corinthians 9:7. What kinds of service are you currently offering but sometime with a begrudging attitude? **Personal sharing**

Read 2 Corinthians 10-12.

- 7) What terms or phrases did Paul use in 2 Corinthians 10-12 to describe the false teachers who discredited him (include verse numbers)? “Commend themselves” (10:12 and 18), “measure themselves by themselves” and “not wise” (10:12), (by implication) taking credit for work done that was actually done by someone else (10:16), “super-apostles” (11:5 and 12:11), presenting a wrong view of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Gospel (11:4), “those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us” (11:12), “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ” and instruments of Satan masquerading as servants of righteousness (11:13-14), destined for judgment (11:15), “boasting in the way the world does” (11:18), “fools” (11:19), and enslaving, exploiting, taking advantage, and slapping the Corinthians while pushing themselves forward (11:20 and 12:17-18).
- 8) What allegations did these false teachers apparently make against Paul (include verse numbers)? That Paul spoke boldly from afar but when face to face became “timid” (10:1), that his letters “are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing” (10:10), that Paul didn’t charge the Corinthians for his services because his services and message were inferior to theirs (11:7-9), and that Paul’s service to the Corinthians was inferior to that which he gave others (12:13).
- 9) How were Paul’s “boasts” different from those of the false teachers (include verse numbers)? In what situation do you need to follow his example? Paul did not use the same worldly weapons they did but used weapons with divine power to change thinking (10:3-5). Paul boasted in authority he had personally been given by God (10:8). Paul boasted in his own work, not that of others (10:14-16). Paul was jealous for the Corinthians’ best interests (11:1-2), not his own. Paul boasted that he served them at the expense of others (rather than charging them), because he loved them too much to burden them (11:9-10). Paul boasted with recognition that any boasting is foolish (11:16, 21, 23). Paul boasted about his trials, not his accomplishments (11:23-29). Paul boasted of things that showed his weakness (11:30 and 12:7-10). Paul boasted about being in God’s presence (12:1-6). Everything Paul did was for the Corinthians’ strengthening (12:19). Personal sharing

From 2 Corinthians 10-12:

- 10) Reread 2 Corinthians 10:5 with Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:10, 2 Timothy 2:15, and 1 Peter 3:15. Paul wanted to make sure the Corinthians were not deceived by the false teaching that had been presented to them. He argued against it using weapons with divine power to affirm “the knowledge of God.” He told the Corinthians that their thoughts should be “obedient to Christ.” From your personal experience, how does a person “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”? In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul may have primarily had in mind apologetic defense of the gospel to mockers and skeptics (“taking captive” false teachings by correcting them with God’s truth). To do that, we must familiarize ourselves with God’s word, so that we are able to defend it (to ourselves and to others). A few of the other passages address a different kind of mental correction: conforming our personal patterns of thinking to the truth of the gospel (Romans 12:2). This too requires time spent in God’s word, scripture memory, and prayer. But it also requires examination of our personal justifications and defenses. Putting away our old self (both thinking and behavior) is an ongoing part of the life of every true Christian and making our thoughts obedient is the first step toward making our behavior obedient. Personal sharing

- 11) From 2 Corinthians 11:23-12:7, list the hardships Paul endured in his years of ministry. Paul worked very hard, was imprisoned multiple times, was flogged severely, faced death, received the Jews' 39 lashes on five occasions, was beaten with rods three times, was stoned, and was shipwrecked on three occasions. Once, he spent a night and a day in the open sea. Paul constantly had to move to new locations. Criminals, his own countrymen, Gentiles, and false brothers endangered him. He was also endangered by forces of nature and endangered in all locations (city and country). He went without sleep, food, clothing and shelter from the cold. Additionally, he bore the burden of ongoing concern for those to whom he had ministered. Paul mentioned an example that apparently was exceptionally humiliating to him: being lowered from the walls of Damascus in order to escape arrest. Last, Paul said he was given a "thorn in the flesh" to torment him and keep him from becoming conceited.
- 12) Reread 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What did Paul say can result from a believer's trials and weaknesses, once he or she decides that God's grace is truly all that is needed? For what difficulty will you rest in the confidence that God's grace will be enough for you today? Paul said that when we decide God's grace is all we need, He will demonstrate His power through our weakness. We (and others) will then see that God's strength is the reason we are able to persevere victoriously. Personal sharing

Read 2 Corinthians 12-13.

- 13) According to 2 Corinthians 12:14-21, what potentially could have been the outcome of Paul failing to strengthen the Corinthians (12:19) through this letter? Paul was concerned that the Corinthians would be quarreling and behaving sinfully toward one another and that he would have to present himself as a disciplinarian when he arrived.
- 14) Some of the Corinthians had planned to test Paul's claim of apostolic authority. Which verse in 2 Corinthians 13:1-10 gives Paul's specific challenge to them and what was the challenge (see also Luke 6:42)? In verse 5, Paul challenged the Corinthians to instead examine and test themselves.
- 15) After reading Luke 6:42, think carefully about someone you presently have reason to evaluate (this could be a child, a professional who is giving you some kind of service, a person of whom you are suspicious for some reason, a company or organization, etc.). How will Paul's advice to the Corinthians and Jesus' own words in Luke influence your thinking in making this evaluation (answer specifically to your own situation)? Personal sharing