

Generous Love - Gratitude, Love, Trust

慷慨的爱——感激、爱心、信靠



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The Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) entered into a new chapter of her history by introducing Central Pooling. Apart from the structural changes, how can CAC churches work together in this new journey?

2 Corinthians 8:8-15 paints a similar context of an appeal to help other churches. It highlights Paul's appeal to the Corinthian church for generosity towards the saints in Jerusalem. This

giving project was important to Paul as we see this appeal highlighted in his other epistles. For Paul, this generous act of giving was a ministry, a tangible gesture of gospel solidarity, of love between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Three things we learn from 2 Cor 8:8-15 that characterizes "Generosity": Gratitude, Love and Trust.

Gratitude

Firstly, the starting point of Generosity is Gratitude. We can be generous because God is good. While Paul wants the Corinthian church to excel in giving, he reminds them that generosity is not just about giving more, it is being grateful for the grace we received through Jesus. **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."** It is not about how much you give. Contrast this with the poorer Macedonian church, who were poor and could not give much. Yet, they had gratitude and **"overflowing joy ... welled up in rich generosity."**

Generosity begins with Gratitude - something that happens in the heart. In Mark 12:43-44, Jesus spoke about the widow offering her only two coins. Jesus contrasted that with the rich people throwing their money to the temple treasury as a display of their wealth. The widow who gave sacrificially, was

acknowledged as being more generous. No show, all heart and with all that she had. **"People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."** 1 Samuel 16:7.

When God looks at your heart today, what will He find? Will he see your gratitude for the grace of Jesus? Or will he find a "show" of our offerings?

Love

The second thing about Generosity is that it is Love in Action. In Verse 8, Paul tells the Corinthian church that he is **"testing the sincerity of their love"** by comparing their giving with the Macedonians. In other words, if you are sincere, if your love for God is genuine, you will be generous.

We observe two things about love in action:

- (i) Giving is voluntary. Generous giving cannot be commanded if it is to be an act of love. As the chief church planter, Paul could have "commanded" the giving, but he did not, as it then becomes a tax.
- (ii) Love requires effort. The pledge to help Jerusalem would amount to nothing, if the Corinthian church had not followed-through. In Verse 11, when Paul tells them to **"now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means"**. The statement - "now finish your work" - is actually the central exhortation of the whole passage. Finish it. Complete it. Generous giving requires follow-through if it is to be an act of love.

Trust

The third characteristic of Generosity is Trust. Generosity must be anchored upon trust in a God who is just and fair. We can only give generously when we are assured that the God we obey is trustworthy. In Verse 12, when we give willingly based on what we have, the gift is acceptable. God is reasonable and does not expect us to give what we do not have.

In Verse 13, Paul goes on to state that his desire is that there may be equality. The Corinthian church is

in abundance, and the Jerusalem church is in need. Paul, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, appeals to the richer church to do her part in achieving equality in the eyes of God. That is the economy of the Kingdom of God. Those who have more should help those in need. 1 Peter 4:10 reinforces this Kingdom principle, **"Each one should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."**

Verse 14 **"At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need"**. The rich Corinthian church may be wondering what they might need from those poor Jews. How will they supply the rich? In the economy of God's Kingdom, our abundance may be temporal. The people whom we have given to today, may be used by God to bless us in future. Do not hold on too tightly to your resources. Steward them well and be generous. Put your trust in the God who is fair and wants equality for all.

Beginning from the position of Gratitude, let us follow-through our good intentions and make the effort to bless others concretely. Has God spoken to you about giving to a certain area? Finish that good work of generosity. Complete it. May God who is trustworthy, faithful and just, grant us the grace to do that.

随着“统筹统办”的通过，新加坡卫理公会华人年议会开始了她历史的新篇章。除了架构上的改变外，教会要如何携手合作，面对这转化之旅呢？

哥林多后书 8:8-15 描绘了相似的情况，并发出教会之间彼此帮助的呼求。保罗呼吁哥林多教会要向耶路撒冷的圣徒慷慨的施予。我们能够在保罗其它书信中找到同样的呼吁，由此可见保罗对该事工的重视。对保罗而言，这样慷慨给予的事工，明确的体现出犹太人和外邦人之间，福音所带来的合一与爱。

我们能够从林后 8:8-15 学到三个“慷慨”的特质：感激、爱心和信靠。

感激

首先，慷慨的起点，是感激的心。我们能够慷慨给予，是因为上帝是美善的主。保罗除了要哥林多教会在慈善的事上胜人一筹，他更提醒慷慨不只是给予更多，而是对我们透过基督所领受的恩典深表感激。“你们知道我们主耶稣基督的恩典：他本是富足，却为你们成了贫穷，好使你们因他的贫穷而成为富足。”所以，慷慨不在于你们给予多少，和较贫困的马其顿教会相比，他们因为贫困，无法给与太多。但是，他们带着感激的心，“仍然满有喜乐……显出他们乐捐的慷慨。”

慷慨从感激开始 - 是关乎内心的。马可福音 12:43-44，耶稣提到了一个寡妇捐出了她仅有的两个小文钱。耶稣用

她与财主对比，他们为了炫富投了许多钱进圣殿的银库。然而寡妇舍己的给予，得称之为慷慨。没有大肆宣扬，只有她的全心和一生所有。“人是看外貌，耶和华是看内心。”撒母耳记上 16:7。

今天当上帝看着你的内心时，祂会看到什么？祂是否会看到你对耶稣恩典的感激之心？或是看到我们奉献中的“炫耀”？

爱心

慷慨的第二个特质是爱的行动。第8节，保罗告诉哥林多教会他要借着马其顿教会的热忱给予，去“考验他们爱心的真诚”。换句话说，若你是真诚的，若你对上帝的爱是真挚的，你就会慷慨给予。

我们能够从这节经文中发现两件事：

- (i) 给予是自愿的。身为教会“开国元老”，保罗能“命令”他们给予，然而他没有那么做，因为那样的给予只是一种“税收”。慷慨的给予若要是个爱心的行动，那就不能来自命令。
- (ii) 爱心，需要行动。若哥林多教会没有去跟进完成他们帮助耶路撒冷教会的行动，那他们对耶路撒冷的认捐将是枉然的。11节提到，保罗告诉他们“如今就当办成这事，既然有愿做的心，也当照你们所有的去办成。”“如今就当办成这事”，是这段经文的中心信息。办完它，办好它。慷慨的给予必须要去跟进，才能算是爱心的行动。

信靠

慷慨的第三个特质是信靠。慷慨的心必需立足于信靠上帝是公义、公平的。唯有当我们确信我们所顺服的上帝是信实时，我们才能够慷慨的给予。第12节，我们看到依照我们所有的并乐意的给予，必蒙悦纳。上帝是公平的，祂不会要求我们给予超出我们的能力范围。

在13节，哥林多教会是富有的，而耶路撒冷教会是贫乏的。随着圣灵的引领，保罗呼吁较富足的教会尽一份力，以达致上帝眼中的均匀。那就是上帝国度的经济体系。有余的应当去帮助贫乏的。彼得前书 4:10，“人人要照自己所得的恩赐彼此服事，作上帝各种恩赐的好管家，”继而巩固这个神国的原则。

在14节，“就是要你们现在的富余补他们的不足，使他们的富余将来也可以补你们的不足，这就均匀了。”富裕的哥林多教会可能在想，他们有需要这些贫穷的犹太人的帮助吗？在神国的经济，我们的富裕可能只是短暂的。今天我们帮助的人，日后上帝或许会使用他们来祝福我们。不要紧抓着你的资源。要好好地管理它们、并乐意慷慨的给予。信靠你的上帝，祂是一位公平、渴望看到均匀的主。

从感激之心作为起点，让我们有始有终，完成我们去祝福他人的行动。上帝是否要你在什么地方给予帮助吗？以慷慨之心完成这善工吧！愿守约、信实、并公义的上帝的，赐我们够用的恩典去完成这工作。