

2 Corinthians 8:7-15^v

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

^v About 2 Corinthians 8:7-15

At the meeting of the elders in Jerusalem that dealt with the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile churches of Christians, Paul had agreed to “remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10). The Jerusalem community, persecuted by the Jewish leaders and suffering from the effects of sustained food shortages in Judea (Acts 11:27-30), was itself in particular need of help. Paul was diligent in encouraging the communities he had founded to donate for its relief (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

This provided a way of maintaining fellowship with the Jewish branch of the Church, with which relations were sometimes strained. In Paul’s eyes, the Gentile churches were already

indebted to the Jewish church for the gift of the gospel (Romans 15:27). He cites the example of the Macedonian churches in order to incite the Corinthians to similar efforts.

Theologically speaking, Christians have already given themselves to the Lord in response to God's love shown in Christ. Their response to one another is to be patterned on Christ's own self-emptying in the incarnation (Philippians 2:6-11). Gratitude for the riches Christ has given motivates true generosity to one's neighbor. Imitating Christ's generosity is the ideal to strive for.