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# Sacrificial Generosity in Ministry Giving

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-24<sup>9</sup>

*Russ Kennedy*

Listen to the Old Testament text for our New Testament text this morning:

### **112** Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,  
who greatly delights in his commandments!

<sup>2</sup> His offspring will be mighty in the  
land; the generation of the upright will be  
blessed.

<sup>3</sup> Wealth and riches are in his house, and  
his righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup> Light dawns in the darkness for the up-  
right; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

<sup>5</sup> It is well with the man who deals gener-  
ously and lends; who conducts his affairs  
with justice.

<sup>6</sup> For the righteous will never be  
moved; he will be remembered forever.

<sup>7</sup> He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is  
firm, trusting in the LORD.

<sup>8</sup> His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,  
until he looks in triumph on his adver-  
saries.

<sup>9</sup> He has distributed freely; he has given to  
the poor; his righteousness endures for-  
ever; his horn is exalted in honor.

<sup>10</sup> The wicked man sees it and is angry;  
he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the  
desire of the wicked will perish!

The occasion that gives rise to 2 Corinthians 8-9.

The need in the Judean churches...

The promise to give to meet the need...

The concern that Corinth was not going to carry through...

The occasion that gives rise to our message this morning:

A past agreement among the Elders as to the core principles to be taught...

There is a current need to teach new attenders and members at the Chapel...

Financial stability and growth experienced by many with accompanying giving and lifestyle challenges...

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Our guiding principle and purpose in teaching all of the Bible for all of life...

<sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

So, a message on the grace of giving that will be centered on Christ and aiming for your maturity, a labor of love through God's strength and enabling Spirit

The Grace of God (v.1)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

We need a working definition of grace that will fit with this verse. It is God's free favor in giving to us the desire and the ability to do His will resulting in thanksgiving in the heart of one so favored. Grace then is:

God's poise to do good for us. It is His free, undeserved, unmerited favor.

God's power that transforms our beliefs, wants and enables us in ministry. Grace empowers all that we do in the Spirit so that we intentionally live from the "inside-out".

Gratitude to God that overflows from the enabling grace God has given. One of the evidences that we are living in the flesh is grumbling and complaining; the evidence we are living by grace is humbled gratitude.

Paul wants to exhibit the grace of God actually *given* to a church ...

## The Pattern of Grace Giving

(v.2-8)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

### ***Their Personal Poverty***

(v.2)

This church gave in the midst of persecution, affliction and poverty. Their situation was not conducive to giving. Their own needs were great. But God's grace was even greater. So the grace of God mingled with abounding joy overflowed in amazing generosity.

### ***Their Sacrificial Generosity***

(v.3-4)

<sup>3</sup> For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

They gave according to their ability and they gave beyond their means. They purposed to give over and above what was expected. They made sacrifices to give. Evidently, Paul was not asking them to do anything because of the depths of their poverty. But notice their attitude: they pleaded to give! Imagine that conversation...

### ***Their Spiritual Maturity*** **(v.5)**

<sup>5</sup> and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

They gave themselves as gracious gifts:

*To the Lord* as the one who owns them and oversees them;

*By God's will* understanding what God desired and required;

*To the ministry* as the ones who sustain it and supply its needs.

### ***Their Grace Giftedness*** **(v.6-7)**

<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

Notice how Paul compares the grace of giving with all the other grace gifts. He wants them to excel in this gift as well. Probably some irony here, but it does strike us right where we are – do we excel in this gift as well?

### **The Principles of Grace Giving** **(v.8-15)**

In encouraging them to carry through with their giving as promised, the Apostle brings the Old Testament concepts of giving through the cross and what emerges is not law, but grace.

#### ***Motivated by the Example of Christ's Grace*** **(v.8-9)**

<sup>8</sup> I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup> 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 by his poverty might become rich.

#### **The Test of Sincere Love** **(v.8)**

Our care for others is exhibited in our willingness to give. Theirs was a special offering going to alleviate the difficulties of the Judean churches - ours is regular giving to sustain ministry.

#### **The Test of Sacrificial Giving** **(v.9)**

Here is the grandest expression of grace, Christ's sacrificial giving of Himself. He became poor in earthly loss in order to provide for heavenly riches.

In grace, sincere love is proven through sacrificial giving like Christ's.

***Matched by the Enablement of God's Provision******(v.10-12)***

God has provided so that you can give

<sup>10</sup> And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup> So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

There was a good start on the part of the church at Corinth. Their giving matched their desire to give. But now, they need to match their finishing with their original desire. They had established what they desired to do. They launched collections to so that they could meet their commitment over time. Now, a year later, that impetus and inertia has waned.

Three principles seem to emerge here:

The church should try to meet the commitments it has made. There are sacrifices to be made so that others outside will receive what was committed to them. This is particularly important for missionaries.

One does not need to give more than he is able. The individual giver and the church should not be pressed to do more than what can be done. However, they should not be restricted from anything they want to do.

One should give all that one is able. The giver and the church are to have hearts oriented, not towards gaining, but towards sharing. Many people are not thieves and satisfy their covetousness with stealing. But they are still covetous and satisfy their desires with working. Paul said in Ephesians that repentance means renewing out thinking so that we are not primarily working to get and gain, but to receive and give. How many of you have taken you last 2 raises and kept your present lifestyle so as to use those raises for the Lord's work?

One other consideration. Is it possible that we have spent our giving on something else? In essence, Paul says give anyway. Do not compound the sin.

***Maintained by the Equality for God's People******(v.13-15)***

<sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

The quote is from Exodus 16:18, the story of the giving of manna and instructions for its collection. It shows how God in the midst of giving the manna requires work in the collection and equitable distribution in its use. Even in God's generous provision for Israel's needs in the wilderness, there were requirements and responsibilities that had to be met. The result of corporate obedience was individual provision.

This basic principle applies to the church as well.

Within the church, no one should be wanting for basic necessities. One of the purposes of our Flocks is to care for one another at a very practical level. We also maintain a Corporate Benevolent Fund to be able to meet needs of our people.

God will provide our needs and often through one another. We are to take care and look after one another. This is what it means to be God's people and in the community of the church.

God gives to the church as a whole all that is needed for God's people to be supplied for. God gives both wealth and wealthy people to the church. God gives the poor and needy to the church as well. Each, according to their financial and spiritual abilities, are to be providing for each other.

This is not merely Christian socialism. It is Christian care for one another. James speaks to the responsibility to actually take care of one another and not simply do so in words, but with practice al deeds of love. But we do not share with one another in order to serve our desires or cravings or to undercut the need for diligence and work. Paul in this regard says that if a person refuses to do what they can and then requests or relies on the church, then they should be given even the basic of sustenance.

## **The Precautions in Grace Giving (v.16-24)**

Shows their concern that the handling of God's money be honorable, accountable and with no questionable methods.

### ***The Appointment to this Ministry* (v.16-19)**

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. <sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup> With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. <sup>19</sup> And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.

An individual is selected to care for this ministry. He desired to be involved. He is identified by name, Titus. So, he is clearly being indicated as someone responsible for the handling of this money.

A second individual is selected who was well known to the churches for his preaching. It is a bit useless to speculate who this was. He was known to them. The Spirit didn't think it was necessary that he be known to us. This individual is identified by reputation.

A general recognition of their involvement is noted. The churches that had been doing the giving had appointed this unknown brother. The assumption is that the other churches affirmed that appointment and recognized these two men.

***The Appearance of this Ministry******(v.20-21)***

<sup>20</sup> We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, <sup>21</sup> for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

Not only that we are *doing* what is right, but that all that we do *appears* to be right. It should give no grounds for questions. With a view to this, we aim to be careful, honorable and accountable in our handling of what is given.

***The Approval for this Ministry******(v.22-23)***

<sup>22</sup> And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup> As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

Those placed in this ministry had proven themselves in terms of Christian character and service. Their Christian character was their first qualification. Ability in giving and managing was important, but not primary.

***The Attestation by this Ministry******(v.24)***

<sup>24</sup> So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

You will spend your money on what you love. Just as God's giving to us is an expression of and proof of His love, so our own giving is as well.

The generosity of the commitment the Corinthian church had made had been expressed to other churches – now, would they carry through?

We have been open, above-board and conscientious in our handling of this gift. Now you do the same in your giving. This is how you do that, chapter 9.

**Reflect and Respond**

Are we a generous people? Yes. You are to be commended as faithful and generous in your giving. You have embraced our teaching on stewardship. You have generously given to support the church, the special projects, the Global Ministry Development. May the Lord continue to empower you and provide for you so that you will continue in this sweet grace.

Are we a generous church? I believe so. We have had several special initiatives where we have financially helped faltering churches. As a church we were able to give over \$13,000 to sister church in Hamilton ministering to the African-American community there. We have assisted ministries in Haiti and Nigeria. We have built a church building for the gypsy people in Romania. We give \$10,000 this past year to assist a sister church in Namibia. These are a

sample of our desire to be a generous church. We will continue to be alert to those opportunities God gives us.

Some of you are new to the Chapel. Maybe you have been taught little or differently about giving. I encourage you to consider the Bible's call to a heart orientation to give, to be generous by grace with gratitude. We have had some general principles for our personal and corporate giving. Next Sunday Evening's message will establish the New Covenant model of grace giving.

Let us carefully consider and embrace these principles.

God is enabling giving by His grace.

God is providing so that you can give. What are you doing with it?

God has called us to take care of one another in the church. No one should go hungry.

God has called us as a church of means to be generous in our care of churches without.

God has given us patterns of both ethical and wise handling of money given to ministry.

God Himself is a generous God who has given sacrificially for us.

Do you, will you, follow the Lord in this sacrifice of grace giving?

## Notes