

Graced to Give, Part I

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

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

2 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.

3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-

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

6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

7 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.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

9 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.

10 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.

11 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.

12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness

14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

15 As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

This gospel of Jesus Christ must motivate every duty of the Christian life - especially our giving. Our sermon text teaches that the gospel unleashes us to become generous givers.

Sermon Outline:

I. **Generously** Gospel-motivated giving is generous (II Corinthians 8:1-7).

A. Joy - Gospel generosity is driven by joy, and can be so even in difficult times.

B. Relationship - Gospel generosity is relational.

C. Blessings (vv. 6-9). Gospel generosity is a response to the Lord's blessings.

We are the beneficiaries of His blessings often mediated through people.

II. **Faithfully** Gospel-motivated giving is an act of faithfulness. The call to faithfulness is given by someone who loves you (II Corinthians 8:10-12).

A. Desire - Faithful giving is expressed in our desire. What does it look like to give faithfully? It is giving that is spontaneous and free, not a toilsome duty. The Lord lovingly includes us in His mission. He uses our gifts to extend His kingdom.

B. Ability - Faithful giving is expressed no matter how seemingly small the gift. There is no small

gift given to the Savior. Every gift, however small, is multiplied in the hands of our Savior. An acceptable gift to the Lord is “according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (12).

C. Death and Sin (v. 24)

III. Sacrificially Gospel-motivated giving is sacrificial. Sacrificial giving is compelled by the costly love of Jesus (II Corinthians 8:12-15).

A. Reciprocity - Sacrificial giving results in reciprocity. If you give, it will come back to you (v. 14 - “your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.”)

B. Realignment - Sacrificial giving helps to realign our priorities and our consumption.

Discussion Questions

1. What positive and negative feelings do you have about people raising money for Christian causes?
2. How do leaders normally make appeals for giving? How is the Apostle Paul’s appeal different?
3. In what ways are the Macedonians excellent examples of generosity (8:1-5)?
4. Look at the descriptions of the giving of the Macedonians in the sermon outline. What adjectives would you use right now to describe your giving?
5. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul refrains from using the word “money.” Instead he speaks of sharing (8:4; 9:13), service (8:4, 18; 9:1, 12-13), offering (8:19), grace (8:6-7), and gift (8:12, 20; 9:5). What insights do these words give us into the nature of giving?
6. Who does the Apostle Paul use as the supreme example of sacrificial giving?
7. Reflect on this quote from E. Stanley Jones, a missionary to India, and discuss what it looks to allow the gospel of grace to motivate our charitable giving: “Grace binds you with far stronger cords than the cords of duty or obligation can bind you. Grace is free, but when once you take it, you are bound forever to the Giver and bound to catch the spirit of the Giver. Like produces like. Grace makes you gracious, the Giver makes you give” (quoted by Joni Eareckson Tada, *Diamonds in the Dust*).
8. Paul never raised money for himself or for his own missionary organization. What is the primary goal that governs his appeal for gifts (8:10-15)?
9. What one way would you live differently if the truths of this passage were more real in your life?

10. Take a few moments to pray for the needs of believers in our country and around the world who are suffering and experiencing persecution just like the church in Jerusalem was in our sermon text.

*Some of the above questions are taken and adapted from the IVP Life Guide study on 2 Corinthians.

Going Deeper

1. How do you think our view of God affects our giving? Do you fundamentally view the Lord as a giver or as a taker? Do you view God as “an incessantly demanding, cosmic killjoy in the sky?” Or do you view Him as an inexhaustible giver of grace and the One who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:19)?
2. **THE KEY TO GENEROUS GIVING:** The degree that we personally experience God’s divine generosity and amazing grace will be the degree to which we are generous with others – open-hearted and open-handed with all of His resources, time, talents, and treasures. Grasping Christ’s own unspeakable richness and generosity moves us to a life of generosity.
3. **PRAYER:** Take time to thank the Lord with your group for His generosity in sending His Son. Then ask Him for a renewed desire and capacity to imitate His generosity.