



POWER IN WEAKNESS!

The Epistle of 2 Corinthians

Give Yourself to the Lord!

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Message #10 of 17 – S885

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Sunday Morning Service

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Give Yourself to the Lord!

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Opening Comments

- Turn to **2 Corinthians 8**
- For you watching online, welcome – we are glad to have you with us
- Today we continue our journey through **2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness!**
- One of the characteristics of God that makes Him so attractive to most people is His grace **Ephesians 2:8**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...

- God's grace is the immeasurable generosity of a perfectly holy being toward imperfect and undeserving beings
- We can say with absolute confidence, God is a giving God!
- If you are a child of God, then His grace is running all through your life
- Even unbelievers experience God's common grace – His unmerited favor upon the whole world – the sun and rain
- Every breath and heartbeat are an expression of God's grace
- In today's text we will see that some of the graces God gives enable us to better reflect His nature
- Including His nature of graciousness
- It is one of the ways Paul says we can prove that we love God
- So, if you are here today, or watching online, and you love God, this is for you
- Let's pray and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Give Yourself to the Lord!**
- A little background is important here
- There had been a famine in the land of Israel
- Word had gotten to Paul about the famine and the impact it was having on the Christians in Jerusalem
- Christians were having a hard time before the famine

- They were Jews who had heard the gospel and accepted Christ as their Messiah
- To the Jews of that time, nothing was worse than a Jew turning away from Judaism, especially to Christianity
- Could mean separation from family, loss of occupation, and other forms of persecution
- The result for many was poverty – and then a famine comes into the land
- This famine would have made their circumstances much worse
- Paul, after he heard about the famine, determined to help and to encourage the churches he ministered to do the same
- In his previous visit, Paul had encouraged the Corinthians to join in the ministry of meeting the needs of the suffering Jewish Christians
- Chapters 8 and 9 are Paul’s encouragement to them to finish what they had started
- **2 Corinthians 8:1-4**
- When times are tough, most people think only of themselves and those closest to them.
- As Christians, we are called to think of others in need in spite of our own need.
- The ‘churches of Macedonia’ are probably in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea – all of them were poor churches
- In spite of their circumstances – the grace of God was bestowed on them so that they implored Paul to let them send a gift to ‘minister to the saints’
- They did not allow their poverty or affliction to be an excuse not to help others in need
- This ought to be one of the characteristics that causes Christians to stand out from the rest of the world
- Turn to **Mark 12**
- Someone who truly understands the grace of God feels free to express grace to others
- And in the context of this chapter, it is in the area of generosity
- God notices when His people are generous, especially when their circumstances might prevent them from being generous

- **Mark 12:41-42**
 - ‘a quadrans’ was an insignificant amount of money, especially compared to great sums the rich were putting in
 - But her gift caught Jesus’ attention
 - **Mark 12:43-44**
 - Jesus is making a distinction between the giving of the rich and the widow
 - Their giving proved their obedience to God
 - Her giving proved her trust in God
 - Turn back to **2 Corinthians 8**
 - In verse 1 Paul referred to the ‘grace of God’ – specifically the grace of giving
 - God had bestowed on the churches of Macedonia the grace of giving for the needs of the Christians suffering in Jerusalem
 - In the same way that the widow’s giving proved she trusted God; the Macedonians proved they had experienced God’s grace by responding with liberality
 - That doesn’t mean they gave large amounts, but it means they gave more than their circumstances suggested they were able to give
 - Our giving proves something – how much of God’s grace we have experienced – how much we trust God – how much we care about the things God cares about
 - Then Paul gives us the key to this kind of faith
 - **2 Corinthians 8:5**
 - There are two things I want you to note
 - First, the Macedonians gave themselves to the Lord
 - This is absolutely key to developing the faith to exercise the grace of God, the grace of generosity
 - Paul said in **Romans 12:1**
- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**
- If I truly give myself to God, I am giving Him everything, including the things I ‘own’ – it is all His
 - Then when I give, I am giving to God what He already owns

- It would be like someone loaning me a tool – if they want it back – I give it to them because it belongs to them
- The same thing is true if I have given myself to God – if God wants me to be generous with something He has given me – I should just give it
- But how do I know what God wants me to give? That’s where the next part comes in
- Notice the second part of verse 5
- **2 Corinthians 8:5b**
- Paul was God’s representative to the people
- God has given the Holy Spirit to all believers so that they can know the will God for their lives
- But He has also created the church to communicate His will beyond the life of individual believers
- It was God’s will that the Macedonian believers send help to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem
- God could have communicated to each one individually, but He chose to use Paul in the context of the church to communicate this need and to use the church to be the vehicle through which that need would be met
- The Macedonians gave themselves to Paul = they submitted themselves to his authority as a spokesman for God
- Paul communicated the need and helped them to understand their part in meeting that need
- This is not about money – it is about the grace of God working through you
- We begin to grow in this when we first give ourselves to the Lord and then engage in the life of the church so that we come to understand, through the church where God wants to work through you in the grace of generosity
- Paul wants the Corinthians to experience this grace just as the Macedonians have
- **2 Corinthians 8:6-8**
- Paul is not commanding them to be generous
- He is asking them to prove the sincerity of their love

- Just saying that you love others proves nothing **John 13:34-35**
A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- Real love can be proven
- Paul is calling them to prove the sincerity of their love by doing what they had already said they were going to do
- He then gives them justification for his call to generosity
- **2 Corinthians 8:9**
- Jesus is our great example of the grace of God, the grace of giving
- Jesus gave up heaven to come to this earth so that we could be saved
- Jesus laid aside His deity for a time to walk in the abject humility of a human life
- Jesus laid down His life on the cross so that we could be forgiven of our sins and be reconciled back to God
- And Jesus calls us to the same degree of generosity **John 15:13**
Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.
- The grace of God, the grace of giving is sacrificial
- It is a kind of generosity that doesn't not count the cost of the gift
- But it also is not an unreasonable giving
- **2 Corinthians 8:10-15**
- God does not call you to put yourself into poverty to be generous
- God expects you to pay your bills – to fulfill your financial obligations
- God doesn't expect you to be generous if you have nothing to be generous with
- The question we all should meditate on is, 'Why don't I have more to be generous with?'
- It is one of my beliefs that God gives everyone something they can be generous with
- The widow had her two mites – the Macedonians, in their affliction and poverty, liberality
- For most Christians it is not if they have something to be generous with, it what they do with it, and sadly they use it for themselves
- I wonder how many Christians enjoy temporary fleeting pleasures by using what God has given them to give to others on themselves and

miss the ‘abundance of joy’ (verse 1) that comes with the grace of giving

- Paul wraps up this chapter talking about how he handled this offering
- **2 Corinthians 8:16-23**
- Paul entrusted the handling of the money for the offering going to Jerusalem to Titus, someone they knew and two men that the churches in Macedonia knew
- Paul isolated himself from the handling of the money
- We follow that same pattern here
- Much harm has been done to the cause of Christ because men mishandled the expression of the grace of giving of people
- Paul closes by again calling them to prove their love
- **2 Corinthians 8:24**
- I will close with a couple of questions, ‘What does your giving prove about your love for God, His church, and the things He cares about?’
- Are you growing in the grace of God, the grace of giving?
- If your faith is growing, so should this expression of God’s grace
- If you are not sure, give yourself to the Lord
- Every day when you wake up, give yourself more to Jesus
- Every time you handle anything during the day, consciously give it to Jesus
- And then give yourself to God’s church – look for the things God is showing that He cares about through the church
- And then ask Him how you can express the grace of God, the grace of giving in that thing
- Not sure – ask someone – let us help you to grow in this grace
- God is a gracious God – He is a giving God
- it brings Him glory when we imitate His generosity to the things and people He cares about in the world
- **Pray!**