

# Giving with Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] 2 Corinthians 8, verses 1-8.

We'll get the text for this morning's message. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. 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. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

And this not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urge Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

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.

[ 1 : 14 ] I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? As you read the Gospels, you see that at times Jesus was impressed and even amazed by things that escaped the notice of others.

For example, in Luke 21, verses 1-4, Jesus notices a small gift given by an insignificant giver, at least as far as the culture was concerned, she was insignificant.

In Luke 21, verses 1-4, Jesus, it says, A widow comes to the temple.

To the outer court. It would have been crowded. So here she is in this large crowd of people, but it seems that no one takes notice of her, but Jesus does.

[ 2 : 53 ] She is a widow. And we know that in that culture, that would have meant living in incredibly difficult circumstances, because it was hard for widows without a husband to provide for their means.

Yet in her poverty and obscurity, she comes faithfully to the temple to worship God through the giving of her meager offering.

To drop her small sum into a large offering box. Her small pennies cling imperceptibly against the larger sums of greater value that those richer than her had poured into that offering box.

But Jesus knows what she's done. And calls then His disciples to Himself to seize this moment to teach them and to teach us an important lesson about the nature, the true nature of our giving to God.

What it should be like and look like. Though her offering was small, in God's economy, it was larger than all the rest.

[ 4 : 21 ] How so? Because Jesus tells us, she gave all that she had. She gave 100% of what she had to live on.

The other offerings were larger, but came from those with deeper pockets. They gave a portion. She gave everything. She gave it all.

You know, and we know that Jesus cared an awful lot about what happened in the temple. He cared an awful lot about what happened in God's house. The temple was to be a place of care and compassion, as well as a place of worship.

The fact that this widow had so little was an indictment on the religious system of that day, which had forsaken God's repeated commands in His words to care for and be compassionate to women who are in that condition.

And if ever a person had a reason not to give, it would be her. But she gave anyways. This woman knew the character of God.

[ 5 : 40 ] She trusted in His promises. She trusted in His provision. You know, and I wonder if as she went to the temple and as she placed her two pennies into that large offering box, if she wasn't meditating on God's Word in Isaiah 54, verses 4-5 of His promise and provision.

Fear not, it says there, for you will not be ashamed. Be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced. For you will forget the shame of your youth and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

For your Maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is His name. And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called.

She doesn't know that Jesus is watching her, but He is. And He will not neglect her. She doesn't know it yet, but He will build a new temple in Himself that will truly minister to the brokenhearted and the abandoned.

She gave all that she had financially speaking to God, but God would give much more than that to her and for us.

[ 7 : 10 ] You know, Jesus, when He came, when He died, He didn't offer a percentage of His blood. He didn't hack off a limb and wonder, is this enough blood?

Is this enough of My body? To atone for sins? He laid down it all. He gave His life.

He gave us His everything. And in death, He redeemed us. And in His resurrection, He has ensured that we have life through faith in Him now and forevermore.

The church has a husband who will never leave her, who will never forsake her, and who will never abandon His church.

And that truth should change us. Shouldn't it? Shouldn't that truth change the way that we think?

[ 8 : 19 ] Shouldn't that change the way that we live? Shouldn't that change the way that we give?

Those who have received God's gracious gift of faith in Christ should be gracious givers motivated to advance the kingdom of God of the King of Kings who impoverished Himself to give us abundant and eternal life.

God is a gracious giver. and His people should be too. Willing to place whatever He has placed in our hands because we know that He has already provided all that we will ever need now and forevermore in Jesus Christ, His Son.

God is a gracious and so over these past few weeks as we've really focused in on missions, you've been reminded, you've been encouraged to take part in missions to advance the kingdom of God through the sharing of the gospel, but today I'm going to address Scripture's command to us to advance His kingdom through the giving of our tithes and offerings.

To begin with, I think it's important that we understand at least a couple of things about what the Bible says about money. First of all, the Bible says that being wealthy is not a sin.

It's not a bad thing. if you came into that wealth through regular means, using your skills, your abilities to make a living, to be inventive or whatnot.

[ 10 : 14 ] It's not a sinful thing to have money. The Bible does not forbid the possession of money, nor does it forbid the possession of money in large quantities.

However, while the Bible does not forbid the possession of money, it does forbid something about money. The love of money. 1 Timothy 6.10 says, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. There are plenty of examples that we could go to in Scripture of those who brought disaster not only upon themselves, but upon the people of God, upon others because of their greed. But the supreme and the worst example of them all is Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ, the Son of God, for 30 pieces of silver.

People will do terrible things because they love money so much. And the Bible warns us not to love money. Because, I think, when we love money, we forget God.

[ 11 : 37 ] When we love money, God is soon forgotten by us. We allow money to determine our worth instead of Him. We trust in it rather than Him for our safety.

We are tempted to hoard it for ourselves, keeping it from others in need, ignoring the commands that He's given us to use it to advance His kingdom.

But here's the thing we can't forget about God and money either. God is not poor. God is not poor. God doesn't need your money.

He's not poor. Your tithes, your offerings, are not a way for God to get money.

It's His way to make His people act more like Him. And, it's His way to give us an opportunity, to grant us an opportunity, a privilege, to be the pipeline through which His blessings come to others. [12:50] Jesus promised in Luke 6, 48, give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.

For with the measure you use it, it will be measured back to you. Paul added, as we've read, as Jared read, 2 Corinthians 9, 6, the point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

I don't know if you actually read that, but you were in that same zip code. The only direct quote from Jesus' earthly ministry recorded outside of the Gospels addresses the issue of giving in Acts chapter 20.

In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way, we must help the weak. And remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how He said Himself, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Generous giving to God results, the Bible says, in greater giving from God. And so, if we want to advance the kingdom of God, if we truly want as a church to see disciples being made, then we must put our money where our mouth is.

[14:10] Because in giving graciously, we better display the generous nature of our heavenly Father who gave His best, giving His Son, that we who believe will have eternal life in Him.

So, the main idea for this morning's sermon is that God's grace, God's grace should motivate His people to give generously.

God's grace should motivate His people to give generously. And so, we're kind of just parachuting into 2 Corinthians chapter 8. We need to understand what Paul's talking about here.

His aim, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is to encourage the Christians in the church in Corinth to give generously to another church that was in desperate need.

That church was the church in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem church, if you remember, was the first church founded on the day of Pentecost. As the Holy Spirit came and Peter preached.

[15:14] It was a large church, but it was an impoverished church for at least several reasons. First, many of its members were pilgrims. Remember, they were coming to Jerusalem.

They lived outside of that city, and so they came, they heard the gospel preached, and they were saved, and guess what? In the world at that time, there was one church that you could go to.

And so they wanted to stay with that church to continue to hear the gospel, to continue to learn at the apostles' feet. And so they left whatever was back at home to be there to be a part of that church, which meant many of them would have been homeless and impoverished for that reason.

Second, the economic climate at that time was not great. They were under Roman control, and the Romans extracted all that they could from their territories that they had conquered, seizing their resources and burdening them with heavy taxes to pay.

Also, we know that they would have impoverished because of the famine that was in the land that had been predicted in Acts chapter 11 by Agabus. And then fourth, Christians were being persecuted.

[16:27] They were losing their businesses. They were losing their homes. They were being disowned by their families. And for all of these reasons, and I'm sure more, they were in poverty.

Paul recognized their need, and he determined to do something about it, to take up a collection for that church by appealing to other churches for assistance.

Through their generous giving, the gospel would continue to advance and demonstrate the spiritual reality that in Christ, these churches were the church together.

Now you might be thinking perhaps to yourself, well, Pastor Mike, that collection seems different than the collection that we take for the gospel debt.

That was a church, and the collection was to help Christians survive. The gospel debt seems to be used for another purpose.

[17:33] Well, I disagree with that because God's purposes are never in conflict with one another. We are called to make disciples and to disciple disciples.

We do that here, and we do that by supporting other Christians on the front lines in other places. Each of the organizations that the gospel debt contributes to is a Christian organization, and they work to meet the needs that promote the name of Jesus Christ.

And I want to be involved with that, and I hope that you do too. God's grace should motivate His people to give generously, and so in this text, Paul gives us ten, ten characteristics of giving that reflects the graciousness of God.

God wants His people to be like Him. Do these characteristics describe you as a church? And so, yes, there are ten points to this sermon, but I know where you all are going to eat afterwards, so that means I can keep you here as long as I want, right?

Amen? Amen. I won't do that. I got the normal amount of stuff I normally have. First of all, the first characteristic, gracious giving is motivated by God's grace.

[ 18 : 57 ] gracious giving is motivated by God's grace. Verse 1, look at it again. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches in Macedonia.

So, the Macedonian churches that Paul speaks of here belonged also to, well, they were conquered by the Romans, and they were part of the Roman province of Macedonia in the northern part of what is modern-day Greece today.

There were at least three churches in that province that Paul would have had in mind, the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. But like the church in Jerusalem, the Macedonian churches were also ravaged by and plundered by the Romans.

But despite their lack, they still gave. And Paul used their example to encourage the Corinthians to match their gracious giving, and does so by pointing out that their giving was motivated by the grace of God that they had likewise received.

Christian giving is motivated by God's grace. When a Christian understands that it's by God's grace that they have been saved, by God's grace, then they understand that all things truly belong to God.

[ 20 : 29 ] And so they hold their possessions, even their lives, loosely. Like the wise servants in Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25, they understood that what they received from the master was his.

But it was their job and responsibility to put what he had entrusted them with to work, to invest it for him, for his kingdom work. Christian giving is not to be motivated by trying to earn more of God's grace for yourself, but based upon the grace of God that you've already received in salvation. What you do not freely give to God, God neither needs nor wants. What he wants is for you and me to emulate his grace by being gracious ourselves.

Giving without expectation of personal gain. So that was the first characteristic. The second characteristic. gracious giving is undeterred by difficult circumstances.

Gracious giving is undeterred by difficult circumstances. So Paul continues on in verse 2 talking about the severe test of affliction that these believers in Macedonia were under.

[ 22 : 03 ] Affliction in the Greek was used to describe crushing grapes. And Paul used it here to speak of the spiritual pressure that the Macedonian Christians endured due to their difficult circumstances that they had faced and that they were presently living in.

The persecution that the Macedonian believers faced is mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament. And in Acts chapter 17 verses 5 through 8 there we see the initial persecution that these Christians at least in Thessalonica faced after the gospel was brought to them.

Let's look there together Acts 17 5 through 8 but the Jews were jealous and taking some wicked men of the rabble they formed a mob set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason seeking to bring them out to the crowd and when they could not find them they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities shouting these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also and Jason has received them and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar saying there is another king Jesus and the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things the Macedonians though motivated by God's grace which they had received through the gospel the preaching of Jesus Christ his Lord and Savior rose through these trying circumstances and did not allow their pressing situation to cause them to throw a pity party for themselves and saying oh Paul but what about us who sees us who's taking care of our needs who's helping us with our affliction no they trusted in

God and in fact they knew something that we all know but can't forget no one has known more and worse difficulty and circumstances than Jesus Christ they mocked him they wanted to kill him eventually they got their hands on him and they did crucify him when he was in the garden of Gethsemane before he was led to the cross he was so afflicted that he sweat drops of blood from his forehead yet he endured he endured the cross he endured it for you he endured it for me so listen I know that in this room there are people in difficult situations and are enduring hard

circumstances but you have to understand that we have a savior who knows difficulty infinitely more than you or I ever will he doesn't ask us to do anything that he himself wasn't willing to do again on an infinitely greater scale and he understands and he cares and he's here to help third gracious giving is joyful these people were motivated by

God's grace they were afflicted yet they were joyful continue on in verse 2 Paul says their abundance of joy Macedonians did not give grudgingly reluctantly or out of a sense of duty they were happy to make the exchange of earthly treasures for heavenly ones they saw this as a joyful thing and you know gracious giving done in joy is contagious for example we have been the teens have been working hard with our adults to raise money so that they can go to Falls Creek and the money needed to be raised is about six thousand dollars maybe a little bit more I'm looking at Eric to nod his head yes okay and so you know Cameron Eric

[ 26 : 36 ] Leandra all the Nikki lots of others have been planning organizing Ben to get the teens to have these projects and you've given them these projects to do and they've gone and they've worked hard and guess what they've raised all the money that they need because you've been gracious to them but here's what I think is amazing and what really was a blessing for me to hear Danny came home from Wednesday talking about how Cameron had shared with the teens that hey we've raised all the money that we need but we still have projects that the church needs us to do and the children want to go to camp wouldn't it be awesome if we went and did these service projects for our church members and gave that money to our children that they would go to camp and the teens from what I've heard sounded eager and excited to be able to do that to be able to pay it forward to be able to pass it along to joyfully serve so that kids in our church will go to camp too that's awesome praise

God we should feel joy in knowing that and that started with your generous giving to our teenagers fourth gracious giving is unimpeded by poverty again continuing in verse two Paul says they're extremely poor they're in poverty but have overflowed in wealth of generosity even still on their part abundant generosity and poverty are two things that we wouldn't normally put together would we but in the heart that has been transformed by Christ they go together in verse nine of second Corinthians chapter eight Paul draws the Corinthian believers attention to Christ as their supreme example in giving there he says 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 Jesus gave up his heavenly glory and came to earth to live as a man to suffer and to die the infinitely rich one impoverished himself to enrich others what

Christ has done for the Corinthian Christians is to be reflected then in what they do for others despite whatever lack they might have had!

you know God can accomplish much with little you might think I don't have much to give but God can do amazing things with the little that you have to offer case in point remember that little boy who brought his sack lunch to the disciples who put it in the hands of Jesus some barley loaves and a couple of fish and a small offering in the hands of Jesus fed thousands of people don't underestimate what our Lord can do with the little you feel like you have to provide number five fifth characteristic gracious giving is based on ability not percentages gracious giving is based on ability not percentages look at verse three for they gave according to their means as

I can testify and beyond your means see we have to understand the New Testament does not fix an amount or percentage for our giving some are able to give more than others out of their prosperity and scripture encourages them to do that very thing look at 1 Corinthians 16:12 on the first day of every week each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income saving it up so that when I come no collection will have to be made 1 Timothy 6:17 through 19 command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain but to put their hope in God who richly provides us everything for our enjoyment command them to do good to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share in this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life so if the

[ 31 : 38 ] Lord has caused you to prosper use that wealth to advance his kingdom use it to make much! of your filthy stinking rich six characteristic gracious giving is voluntary gracious giving is voluntary again finishing verse 3 and going to verse 4 on their own accord begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in this relief to the saints they wanted to be a part of this they wanted to give it reminds me of Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19 Jesus sees him Jesus invites himself over to his

house and after meeting with Zacchaeus after sharing the good news of who he was and what he had come to do Zacchaeus was a changed and transformed man Jesus didn't tell him you know Zacchaeus if you really believe in me you'll do something like I don't know give away four times as much as you stole from people no Zacchaeus volunteers that salvation has come to my house I'm a transformed man that transformation the grace that I've received it's it's making me see this money that I used to treat as a god as as nothing compared to the god that I know now and so he returns what he stole four times four times as much giving it back voluntarily and so I want you to be encouraged that in our church you'll never get a call from me or a call from someone who's a leader in our church asking you about your giving record okay so don't be nervous about that our deacons aren't going to go around with a plate attached to a pole have you seen churches that do that and you know kind of nudge your shoulder until you pull the plate that's not what we are going to do that's not what giving is about the macedonians begged for the opportunity to give something they were uncoerced they weren't intimidated they gave freely voluntarily seven gracious giving is an act of sacrificial worship verse five and this not as we expected but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us and so Paul here makes a point to point out that the macedonians giving was first prioritized by their love of the Lord they loved the Lord he came first he was their top priority and so they gave of themselves because they had already given themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord who had given himself to them and so you know we've made a change here in the sanctuary instead of passing plates we have offering boxes at the exits at these doors because I think it emphasizes that our giving is an act of sacrificial worship and it's a private transaction between God and his people God sees and God knows and he sees the heart of those who give and he understands the pain that sometimes accompanies the offering but when you give it's a declaration no matter how much you give to God that what is mine is truly yours and I haven't forgotten what you've done for me the eighth characteristic gracious giving is something pastors should promote gracious giving is something pastors should promote let's look at verse 6 so Paul is inspired by the spirit writing this he is a pastor and Titus who he mentions here is also a pastor accordingly we urge Titus that as he had started so he should complete among you this act of grace it's a pastor's job as an under shepherd of Christ to remind people of what the Bible says and to encourage them to live their lives fully dedicated to the

Lord and to his purposes now unfortunately some pastors promote giving in order to prosper themselves yet we see that it is the pastor's role here to remind God's people of the generosity that they've received from God through Christ and encourage them to not store up earthly treasures but live their lives sold out for God and his kingdom and his glory number nine ninth characteristic gracious giving is something God's people should excel in gracious giving is something that God's people should excel in look at verse seven 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 so here you see that Paul is saying that giving is a spiritual discipline just as our faith in God and knowledge of his word matures us so does our gracious acts of giving spiritual disciplines require discipline knowing

[ 37 : 25 ] God's word requires spending time in God's word and being in God's word if we want to cultivate and develop that spiritual discipline means that we're going to have to cut other things out of our lives to make time for that to give that priority and giving is no different I don't know how that looks for you maybe you look over your bank statement if you dare and see where is our money going and what is there that is being wasted that could be given to advance the mission of God maybe you're going out to lunch at McDonald's too much and you need to bring a if that was me I'd be fasting because I think PB&J; is disgusting but you know what I'm saying is that you've got to find you've got to do the work where's our money being wasted how could it better be used to advance the kingdom of

God and then number ten gracious giving is proof of genuine love it proves that your love is genuine I say this not as a command but to prove the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine and you know the true test of love is not expressed so much in feelings or in words but through action being married and being a pastor who has married couples and you who have been married who have attended wedding ceremonies you know that the ceremony is a beautiful thing and that bride and groom come together and they share words with one another they give each other vows promises but you know what it's the marriage that's going to determine whether or not those vows

that they shared were truly meant by those who gave them the marriage would demonstrate actions of love that prove to the husband and the wife that yeah those words that I shared with you on that day when we came together

I truly meant them if you truly love the Lord and his people and there's nothing that you would be willing to withhold from him and what he's asked you to give or how he's asked you to serve or how he's asked you provide no matter what situation you may be in I was reminded of this some time ago as you know I was probably a pastor for a year or two I don't remember at my church in Leavenworth we had something called the Deacons Fund which is kind of like the gospel debt where it's giving above the regular tithes and offerings from the church but that fund was used specifically for needs of people within our church which the gospel debt does as well and as much as I don't want to know who gives what I really do not want to know that at all but in our deacons meetings and they function like our elders do it was brought up that one of our biggest givers to that deacons fund was one of our most impoverished members and we knew that she was a widow we knew that she lived in a little shotgun house we knew that her heat didn't work and yet she continued to give to others and you know our thinking and mine included was not in the right place we were almost you know does she know what she's doing she can't really afford to be doing this obviously we hadn't read the story of the widow's mite at any time we had but we had forgotten because that's what people do that's why you need pastors to remind you right amen and so we decided you know what we're going to do one of our deacons went on a covert operation to her house to peek in her windows to see you know what what's the situation with her furnace and she was hanging up blankets in her house to serve as walls

I guess it's just I you know I've never had to do that but that's a way to try to keep warm and we saw that and he came back and told us and so we said okay she'll never allow us to help her so we're going to have to get her daughter involved to try to sneak into her house to replace her furnace and I got we had the plan hatched and I called the daughter and the next day I got a call from this widow and she was not happy with me and first of all I think I think she should have let us do that her not letting us do that was wrong but she is older and sweeter and meaner than me so I didn't I didn't say that could be meaner than me so I didn't say that but it's what she said afterwards that really convicted me she knew she's smart she knew that people were concerned by how much she was giving considering how poor she was and she said and I can't remember exactly the words she said but basically she said you know what it's none of your business and if

I want to give to my church and if I want to give to God then I will give and why would you prevent me from doing that you got me I'm wrong and I apologized and we were wrong and when her time comes and she gets to heaven she'll be one of those I think people who like the widow in her might was unknown virtually by a lot of people in this world but we'll hear the great things that she was willing to sacrifice for her Lord in this life and I hope to be like that and I know that I have a long way to go to being there and I'm sure that many of you do too but all this to say be a good steward of what God has given to you he's given you eternal life we aren't owners the life that we have we didn't create that ourselves

[ 44 : 14 ] God has given it to us and ultimately he has given us his son apart from him we'd be doomed eternally to spend our existence in hell but Christ came he impoverished himself the son of God by adding flesh to his deity by willingly going to the cross to die there to shed his blood to give his body as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God for the sins that we've committed against him God is a gracious giver and he arose on the third day as proof that those who put their faith in Christ have had their sins truly eternally atoned for and like Christ as well though we may one day die we will live because Christ has defeated sin and death and so if you're here this morning or listening online

I want you to know you must know that God is a gracious giver and the most gracious gift that he has to offer you is Jesus Christ his son if you will believe in him by faith you will be saved forever and that should change and transform you as it's changed and transformed us to think differently about our lives and what we have four questions of application as we close question number one how should God's grace motivate his people to give generously to missions how should God's grace motivate his people to give generously to missions question number two which of the ten characteristics of gracious giving mentioned in 2nd Corinthians 8 1-8 do you struggle the most to display in your life which one do you struggle the most with and then read 2nd Corinthians 9 6-7 and ask why does

God love a cheerful giver and why does he insist that our giving be conducted in this way cheerfully and then finally how have these past four weeks of missions emphasis challenged you to give more of your time talents and treasures to advance the gospel and contribute to the gospel debt we'll talk about these in our community groups tonight but I encourage you be thinking about them this afternoon and throughout this week let's be a people who give graciously because we have received graciously from our heavenly father let's pray Lord God we thank you that you are a gracious father that you have given us all that we need through Jesus Christ your son God we know that by faith in him we live now and we live eternally and Lord we know too that as your word says this world is not our home that we are passing through but the time that we have and how we use it is important Lord help us to not be concerned with accumulating earthly treasures and forgetting about the greater purpose that we have which is to advance the gospel to share the good news to be good stewards of life and the resources that you've placed in our hands to make much of the name of Christ knowing that eternity is so much longer than our time here and so Lord may we use it well to go and to give to those who go and encourage those who go to advance the name of Jesus Christ and share the good news of Jesus Christ and we pray Lord that you use!

God to do! We ask these things in Jesus name Amen