

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

Abounding in this Grace

Last week we saw in the Study that Pastor Tyler did that Paul needed to clear the air with the Corinthians

A) See he has some important things to share with them and to challenge them on –

B) But before he got into that – he wanted them to really know his heart!

C) As we come to chapters 8-9 Paul is going to challenge the Corinthians believers to follow through on a previous commitment they had made.

Setting: On his third missionary journey, as Paul traveled between the churches of Macedonia & Achaia, he took an offering — not for himself,

A) The offering was for the church at Jerusalem which was going through hard times financially due to a famine & Persecution in the region.

B) Paul saw this as an opportunity for a bonding between the Gentile Christians in Greece and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

C) Paul was eager to take up an offering for the Jerusalem Church.

D) Although the Corinthian congregation had initially welcomed the opportunity to help their brothers in Jerusalem a year had passed, they hadn't raised any money

E) So Paul is writing to encourage them to follow through on their promise

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. 6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would

also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others

Now as we work our way through this chapter tonight we are going to see that Paul seeks to encourage the Corinthians in 4 ways

#1 By the example of the Churches in Macedonia V.1-6

#2 To abound in THIS grace V.7-8

#3 Through the example of Jesus V.9

#4 By being true to their word V.10-15

#1 By the example of the Churches in Macedonia V.1-5

A) Paul uses the churches of Macedonia as an example for the Corinthians to follow in their mode of giving

B) There are 4 things that Paul points out about their example that the Corinthians and us here tonight can learn from.

C) 1st thing we note is they gave in tough times – Paul mentions 2 things that point to this in V.2 their great trial of affliction and deep poverty

The Macedonians (namely, the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) were poor.

A) The word Paul uses for the phrase “their deep poverty” is the word that was used to describe a deep diving chamber

B) It is a word that was later used to describe – probing the depths of the sea – ala Jacques Cousteau

C) We might say they were **scraping the bottom**. They were in deep poverty. They were dirt poor!

Paul also says they were in a great trial of affliction:

A) They were also “in a severe test of affliction” (v. 2).

B) The literal idea is that they were being crushed by life. {Some of you feel that way today!}

C)The surrounding culture kept squeezing them harder and harder {Immense pressure! – they were going to just burst
1)They were poor and picked on.

I think the Holy Spirit brings this to our attention – because our natural tendency when we are going through tough times is to get self-focused

A)To become self-absorbed - focused on our own needs and survival

B)But sometimes the best thing we can do in those moments is to **take our attention off of our needs and put them on to someone else**

1)Someone with a greater need than ours.

C)And in those times when we are struggling we have the tendency to think – **I can't help out right now – I can't pitch in**

1)When in reality it is a greater opportunity to trust God to show up in your own life.

D)So the first thing that Paul points about the example of the Macedonians is they gave in tough times

The 2nd thing he points out is they gave generously -V.3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

A)They gave more than they could – beyond their ability.

B)I really can't afford this but I sense God wants me to do this and they were trusting God to meet their own needs.

C)In Luke 21 we have the story of the Widow who gave her two mites

It is interesting that the story tells us that as people were coming to give their offerings –

A)Jesus and the Disciples were near by

B)Jesus was watching what people were giving - -
1)But he wasn't really watching what they were giving but how they were giving

C)This is what he pointed out – that most of the people gave out of their abundance – but she gave all that she had

D)So Jesus told his disciples – you see that widow who gave her two mites – two mites is like an 1/8 of a cent

1)Jesus said – She actually gave more than anyone – because everyone else gave out of their abundance and but she gave her all.

E))Jesus said – for that reason she is going to be remembered – **and here we are over 2,000 yrs later – talking about her again**

F)The Point is – Jesus pays attention not just to what we give but to **HOW WE GIVE**

3rd thing to note about their example Is that they gave enthusiastically V4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

A)The word imploring literally means begging – begging with an urgency – come on Paul let us help.

B)I love when that happens in our church – **when a need is made known and the church body is like fighting each other to help out**

1)Where do I sign up.

C)I was talking to my friend Lance Cook – CCLH – and he was telling me the story – of when his church was like 2-3 years old

1)The Catholic church in Lahabra was in charge of doing the thanksgiving meal for the needy – in the community.

D)And for some reason – the Catholic church told the city – we can't do it this year – so the city called Lance – help

1)Help? We will just do it –

2)He said he put it out the body – who wants to help – needed like 50 volunteers – one day filled – waiting list

E)They have been doing it ever since – like 25 yrs now –

1)That type of enthusiasm breeds a giving and generous culture in a church

We are developing a similar culture here –

A)Core Value – we have been blessed in order to be a blessing.

B) You guys respond so well when needs are presented –

1) it is such a blessing to partner in ministry with all of you

The 4th thing we want to note from the example of the Churches in Macedonia – The reason for their enthusiasm and willingness

A) V.5 but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

B) The Believers in the church in Macedonia had given themselves to the Lord which made it all the more easier to give of their finances

C) When I truly give myself to the Lord – I am giving all that I have – it all belongs to Jesus

1) I am just a steward or a caretaker of what he has given me!

D) That is when we discover what Jesus said is true- I tis more blessed to give than to receive!

Notice the result of their giving in this way:

A) V. 2 that in a great trial of affliction **the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty**

B) Their hearts were filled with an abundance of Joy!

C) Probably the greatest example that I have ever seen here at CV of giving as described by the Churches in Macedonia happened several yrs ago

1) High School Senior

A really special young man who loved Jesus was graduating from High School.

A) Upon his graduation he received a check for \$1,000 – It was the largest sum of money he had ever personally had.

B) That summer – the youth group was going on a missions trip – and there was a girl in the group who really wanted to go – short \$500

1) Her family was going through problems and didn't have the money

C) This young man heard about her problem – and he felt moved of the Lord to take **half of his \$1000 that he just got as a grad present – and give it**

1) His family wasn't rich either so this was a big deal – he wanted to give it completely anonymous – didn't want the girl to know it was from him

2) No ulterior motives going on here

D) Trip canceled – the girl decided to use that money to go to Bible college –

1) At first the- young guy was like what?

Today both the girl and the young man are in ministry – she is a pastor's wife

1) The young man is a pastor – His heart is filled with Joy seeing what God has done with this girl.

F) That is what Paul is talking about here –

1) there is an abundance of Joy in being able to be used by the Lord in that way.

So the first encouragement that Paul gives is seen in the example of the Churches in Macedonia

A) Encouragement #2 To abound in THIS grace V.6-8

6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others

B) The Church in Corinth had some problems that Paul addressed in his first letter do them –

1) but they were also very blessed.

C) They were abounding in certain graces – Paul mentions in v. 7 Faith and speech [Boldness in sharing] – Knowledge / diligence & Love

But Paul declares here: See that you to abound in this grace as well.

A) God never wants us to be in a holding pattern – always growing, always abounding {Complete

B) What is the grace he wants them to abound in?

1) The Grace of giving! Interesting he calls this a grace

C) What is Grace?

1) Grace = Underserved favor – We think of the blessings that God has bestowed upon us – coming thru the conduit of Grace

2) God's underserved favor – or that He has blessed us even though we didn't deserve it

But why would GIVING be considered an undeserved Favor?

A) Think of it this way – God who doesn't need us to do His work to accomplish His ministry on the earth.

B) But He says to you & I - I am going to let you partner w/ me in my work!

1) One way is thru your giving

C) Giving of time/ talents/ energy/ resources!

1) God could miraculously provide...Jerusalem

2) Feeding of 5,000 – passed out not appeared

That is an amazing thing – He doesn't need us – but He blesses us by allowing us to be a part of what He is doing! Giving is a simple way!

A) Some might say – that is one Grace or blessing I can do w/out

B) Such a person has no understanding of the Goodness of their Father!

C) Privilege not a duty or obligation –

Notice V.8 8 I speak not by commandment

A) I am not commanding you to do this – you are free – no obligation –

Bb) Ch.9:7 **God loves a cheerful giver** – hilariously Full of Joy – awesome

B) He doesn't like when we give begrudgingly – If I have to – God is like keep it – no obligation here

C) But then Paul does add this thought in v.8 but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others

1) In other words – our willingness to give and help out does reveal the genuineness of our love for others.

D) Jesus said this is how people will know that you are my disciples is by your love for one another.

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1) Actions speak louder than words – Money where their mouth is !!!

3rd Encouragement – Through the Example of Christ v.9

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

A) Tremendous verse that speaks to us of What Christ did for us in Saving us –

1) He became Poor – left heaven { Became a man

B) Poor one at that Born in a borrowed stable, Jesus preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey,

C) He ate His Last Supper in a borrowed room, and was buried in a borrowed grave.

1) He Who made everything laid it all down and entered into total poverty that You & I might be rich, so great is His love for US.

Yes this is a tremendous verse in showing what Christ did & the affect that it had on all who put their trust in Him

A) But here Paul is using it as an encouragement to give This is Paul's point

B) Not only did the believers in Macedonia give in their poverty, but to a greater degree, **Jesus gave everything to set us free.'**

C) Those whose lives have been touched by the love of Jesus welcome the opportunity to reciprocate that love

Encouragement #4 – To finish what they started v.10-15

10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.

A year prior when they heard about the need and the opportunity – they were gung ho

A) But there were no wire transfers in those days – no western union

B) So they had to wait for Paul or someone to come and collect their offering

1)A whole year past and suddenly it was out of sight out of mind

C)They had gotten caught up in life and distracted and noting had been done – or collected.

I think you know that a burden is from the Lord when it doesn't go away.

A)Over the years I have had this experience a number of times people on staff here

B)Request some big idea or big need or big thing they want to do

1)Ok – lets pray about it for a while – see if the Lord brings confirmation –

C)I might let a couple of months go by – then I approach that person – say

1)Let's talk about that thing that you asked me to pray about - WHAT THING?

D)Oh I guess it wasn't that big of a deal – I have been praying about it but obviously you haven't

E)I know for me – I know that something is from the Lord when I can't put it away.

1)**Wakes me up at night – Burdens that are 10 yrs old – keep praying**

Now Paul knew this was from the Lord and he was reminding the Corinthians of their past conviction

A)And Paul is encouraging them to follow thru – on that – Complete the doing of it

B)**This is a good word for all of us –**

1)How many of us have had things this year where you prayed felt God's leading –

2)something – never materialized

C)What Happened ? Busy – distracted – lazy ?

“The tragedy of life so often is, not that we have no high impulses, but that we fail to turn them into actions.” (Barclay)

D)How many good intentions – God intentions have been buried and lost – no follow through

The thing that we forget is that God usually just finds someone else to share in that grace/blessing

A)**This is Paul's heart here he wants them to see the bigger picture involved.**

12 For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. (First heard you were able and willing)

13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; 14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.

B)**In essence Paul is saying – I didn't share this with you to burden you but to bless you –**

1)**Chance to be used by the Lord**

C)**The Church is ONE BODY – EQUALITY - Sort of says here – and what goes around comes around**

1)You help them now – and when you have a need they will help you – that is how it works

D)**Sharing Promotes Equality in the body – There is a unity**

Now it is interesting that Paul quotes here from Exodus 16:18 – the gathering of the manna

15 As it is written, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

When God gave the manna to Israel each day in the wilderness –

A)**They were instructed to gather only for one days supply – gather more it would rot**

B)**God essentially was saying – trust me!**

1)**Trust me to provide for you every day.**

C)**Paul is drawing upon this analogy – because any time we are challenged to give- there is a struggle**

1)**Are my needs going to be taken care of?**

D)**Can I really afford to do this- Paul reminds them using the analogy of the Manna**

1)**God takes care of his own**

E)**They all gathered what they needed and there was never anyone lacking.**

But in this illustration Paul is also reminding the Corinthians and us

A) That one way the Lord supplies is through each other – through the body

B) When a church body understands this – they care for the needs of each other

C) And when a church realizes they are part of the bigger C church the body of Christ

1) They are more open to meeting the needs that come from the Church at large.

So Paul encourages them to follow through with this desire to finish what they started

A) Let's wrap this chapter up – with some closing comments that Paul makes

B) Paul wants to assure them that their offering is going to be in dependable hands

¹⁶ But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.

C) Titus was a co-laborer with Paul and God had given him a heart for the church in Corinth

1) So when Paul was delayed in coming to them and Titus heard about it – and the frustration

D) He made his way to Corinth to minister to the saints there.

¹⁸ And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches,

Now we are not sure who this dude was – but what a title

A) Idea here is a brother whose passion for the gospel was known throughout all of the churches

B) Great Rep - Regardless of who it was, what a wonderful thing to be said about any man.

I have been in ministry for a long time and it is a rare thing to find someone who sees with a big picture mentality

A) The tendency of most of us is to be focused on our own thing – takes so much time and energy

B) But it is really refreshing to find guys who are concerned about the Body of Christ as a whole

¹⁹ and not only *that*, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and *to show* your ready mind, ²⁰ avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—²¹ providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

C) Regarding the collecting of the offering, it was not one person who handled the money—

1) but rather a group of men. This way, there would be accountability and integrity.

D) The way we do it here – Physical offering is counted by a group of men on Sundays

1) Recounted by our accounting team on Monday and it needs to match.

²² And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which *we have* in you.

²³ If *anyone inquires* about Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren *are inquired about*, *they are* messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

Paul instructed the Corinthians, Receive this team with love,” “for then they will see our boasting and Joy in you is well-founded.”