

Great Generosity in Deep Poverty

Sermon Delivered on March 17th, 2024
AM Service

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Text:

2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2: How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3: For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4: Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5: And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6: Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. 7: Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. 8: I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Introduction

On this Missions Emphasis Month, I want to remind us of God's desire for the nations.

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And in the words of the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:19, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

It is God's will that the Gospel reach everyone in the world—that everyone has the opportunity to know Jesus Christ. **Missions is God's main business, and it must be our main business.** As someone has said, "*Any church that is not in the business of carrying out God's business has no business being in business to begin with.*" Let's take care of God's business. May we be known to be missions-minded church. That ought to be our heart's desire—to be known as a missions-minded church. God has blessed us here at Grace & Truth Bible Baptist Church in so many ways, but the best is yet to come for this church. And if we are to continue to experience the blessings of God upon our lives, individually and corporately, then we must strive not to forget to fulfill our missionary obligation.

As I have already said, God has blessed us and has been good to us here at Grace & Truth Bible Baptist Church. From the very beginning of this church, God has graciously and generously provided for all our needs. We can confidently say, with the apostle Paul, our God has supplied all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. When we needed **a place to**

worship, God provided this RRES MPR. When we needed a **Sunday School teacher**, God provided that too. Today, we have, not one, not two, but three able teachers. When we needed a **pianist**, God touched Clarisa's heart to stay and be GTBBC's pianist. When we needed a **piano**, once again God provided that too. Whatever this church needed, God has provided according to His riches. He has provided **nursery workers, children ministry volunteers, sound system, a website, and soul winners**. And on top of that God has graciously and abundantly provided the **financial needs** of this church. By God's grace, this church does not owe one cent any establishment or bank or government for anything. God has blessed us beyond measure. I believe that God has blessed us, because many of you have been **faithful and generous in your giving**. You not only give for the financial need of this local church, but you also give to support our missionaries around the world. And I pray that we will continue to give and support missionaries and continue to add missionaries who will partner with us in spreading the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the passage we read this morning, Paul seeks to encourage the Corinthian believers in their giving. About a year earlier, a collection has been in the works to relieve the believers in Jerusalem church who were in need and were dealing with severe hardship and poverty due to the extreme famine that happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. In which the believers in Jerusalem were greatly affected ([Acts 11:27-30](#)). And the Corinthians had previously agreed and willing to participate in helping and contributing. However, some difficult issues had developed between believers in Corinth and Paul. The Corinthians had questioned Paul's authority as an apostle among other things. And so, Paul sent them a letter of rebuke, to which the Corinthians received the letter with an eagerness to make things right with him. Having resolved the issue, the apostle Paul now exhorts them to follow through the commitment they previously made to help the suffering believers in Jerusalem. And he does this by pointing them to the example of the churches in Macedonia.

[2 Corinthians 8:1](#) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.

Paul wanted the brethren in Corinth to know about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. Paul mentions the Macedonian giving to encourage the Corinthian church to give as they had promised. The giving of the believers in Macedonia is **a powerful and an excellent example of grace giving**. Why? That's what I want to direct your attention this morning—as we think of missions and missions giving, there are several aspects of the Macedonian giving that I want us to **take note of and emulate**.

But before we proceed, I just want to say that this message is intended primarily for believers and followers of Jesus Christ. If you are not yet a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, my first and main concern is not that you get involved in giving to missions. Our first and main concern for you is that you come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. So, our encouragement to you is simply to come to Jesus Christ and be saved.

Alright, let's look at several aspects of the Macedonian giving and learn and emulate them in our giving.

I – Their Poverty

2 Corinthians 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Look at what Paul says about the believers in Macedonia—they were **in great trial of affliction**, and they were **in deep poverty**. The Macedonians were going through two severe difficulties. The first difficulty is that they were **in great trial of affliction**. We do not know what that trial of affliction Paul was referring to, but most likely they were being persecuted for their faith. And on top of that, they were **in deep poverty**. As someone noted the term “deep poverty” in the Greek literally means “their poverty down to the death of it”. These Macedonians were having a really difficult time in many ways, including **financial difficulty**—but they gave regardless of what they were undergoing. They gave despite their deep poverty. They did not use poverty as an excuse not to give. I love what someone has put it, *“Poverty can be a catalyst for giving if one has the right spirit.”* **Sometimes those who do not have much, give more** than those who have much and have abundance. And, how many people think and say, *“If I have lots of money, I will give lots of money to missions.”* But you know what? God is not concerned what you would do if you had lots of money. All God is concerned with is, **what are you going to do with what God has already given you?**

The Macedonian believers were very poor and had little to give but they gave, and they gave liberally. **One should give not because he is well-off but because he has a willing heart!** And though they were undergoing affliction and poverty, they still were experiencing abundance of joy. 2 Corinthians 8:2 How that in a great trial of affliction **the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.**

Their great joy was not in having lots of money and possessions, but in spite of the fact that they had very little! This was a testimony to their great faith in Jesus Christ. **They may be in deep poverty, but they had a great wealth of joy and generosity.**

II – Their Power

2 Corinthians 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves.

The next thing that Paul says about the Macedonia believers is that **they gave to their power**. They gave according to their ability. This is known as proportionate giving. This is the clear teaching of Scripture that **we are to give according to our ability**. We see a good example of this in [Acts 11](#), where we are told that certain man named Agabus prophesied by the Holy Spirit that a great famine would spread over the entire Roman world ([verse 28](#)). Agabus might have suggested that Judea would be the hardest hit by this famine. As a result of Agabus' prophecy, the believers in Antioch began to gather money to send to the Christians living in Judea. How did they give?

[Acts 11:29](#) Then the disciples, **every man according to his ability**, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.

Every man according to his ability, whether rich or poor, whether they have much or have less, everyone gave according to what he or she had.

Back to the Macedonian believers, Paul then also said, they gave beyond their power. First, they gave to their power, then **they gave beyond their power**. They gave according to their ability and beyond their ability. They gave according to what they had and sacrificially gave more. *“The Macedonians gave not just as much as they were able (literally “according to their ability”) but beyond (v. 3). How much beyond Paul does not say. But there is **no hint that this was a reckless action** on their part. The sense is that **they determined what they could comfortably contribute and then went beyond this figure.**”* - (IVP New Testament Commentaries are made available by the generosity of InterVarsity Press).

The Macedonians gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. They gave more than what was “reasonable.” **They did not give recklessly or carelessly. They gave responsively**, sacrificially, and willingly. What is your ability to give? *“You cannot give more than you have. But you can give beyond your power!”* Ask the Lord for wisdom and guidance as to what you can do for missions this year.

III - Their Persistence

The next thing that Paul says about the Macedonia believers is that **they were persistent in their giving**.

[2 Corinthians 8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift ...](#)

Here are believers who were in deep poverty, yet they earnestly begged Paul to receive their gift. Don't miss that. It wasn't Paul who did the begging. **It was the Macedonian believers who did the begging**—they begged Paul that they would be allowed to participate in the giving.

Why did they beg? It could be because Paul was aware of their extreme poverty and being aware of their poverty, he was reluctant to receive their gift. Paul didn't want them to go even deeper in financial difficulty. But the believers in Macedonia strongly entreated Paul and his company that they would take their gift. They were determined to give and would not be denied.

Now, why did they strongly insist for Paul to receive their gift?

[2 Corinthians 8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.](#)

They strongly insisted that Paul receive their gift because they viewed their giving **not as a burden but a blessing**. The Macedonians saw giving **as a privilege not as a problem**. They consider giving **not as something to be avoided but a privilege to be desired**. They did not give because they HAD TO but because they WANTED TO! They implore that their gift be received, so they could have a part in the **“fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”** They knew that their monetary gift was going to be used for a great purpose—namely, to relieve the suffering saints in Jerusalem.

IV - Their Priority

How could these Macedonian believers who were in a great trial of affliction and in deep poverty, give beyond their ability—and even do so willingly, generously, joyfully, and persistently? How could a group of people who had nothing yet had so much to give?

2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but **first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.**

They were able to give so willingly, generously, joyfully, and persistently because **their priority was right.** They first gave themselves to the Lord. The Macedonian believers gave out of their poverty because of their love and commitment to Jesus Christ **who was rich, yet for their sakes became poor, that they through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor 8:9).** They knew by experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that He impoverished Himself that they might become rich—rich in the Gospel, rich with eternal life, and rich towards God.

This is the key to generous giving—**we must begin by giving ourselves to the Lord.** Because if you give to the work of the Lord without giving yourself to the Lord, your giving will be a burden, instead of a blessing. Understand, that **God is not after your money—He's after your heart.** As someone has said, *“You can give without giving your heart to God, but you cannot give your heart to God, without giving.”* Or as Amy Carmichael puts it *“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.”*

Now, do you see why I said earlier that this message is intended primarily to believers? **Tithing and giving to missions is only for believers!** Non-believers have not experienced the grace of God and have not given themselves to the Lord. Being strangers to the mercy and grace of God, they have not presented their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (**Rom 12:1**). If you have never carried out **Romans 12:1**, then today is your day to do it!

Closing Exhortations

There are people around the world that need to hear the gospel. Though the gospel is free, it takes not only time, effort, prayers, but also the finances of God's people to send it around the world. Praise God, missionaries are still being called, prepared, and trained and willing to go to the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And we have the opportunity and privilege to partner with them. May we have the same attitude as Macedonians when they gave. These believers were very poor and had little to give but they gave, and they gave willingly, generously, joyfully, and persistently. May we do it like they did it. But it is important to remember why the Macedonians gave to God in an amazing way. It's because first of all they gave themselves to the Lord. They gave their heart to the Lord. *When God has our heart, everything else—including our finances—will follow.*

Not only did they give themselves to the Lord, but **they also had a sense of gratitude towards God.** They were thankful to God that they were beneficiaries of the gospel of grace. They know the grace of God.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

So, the question this morning is, have you received the grace of God in Jesus Christ? If you have, then ask the Lord what you can do for missions this year. Pray, *“Lord, what will thou have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6). And when He shows you, just do it!

But if you have not received the grace of God in Jesus Christ, today is your day to do it! Again, my challenge exhortation to you today is not—give to the work of God. No! My challenge to you today is come to Christ for forgiveness and salvation.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Paul here is speaking about Christ’s incarnation and crucifixion. How our Lord Jesus Christ willingly came into our world to become a man. He humbled Himself and impoverished Himself and left the glories and the benefits of Heaven that are rightly His as the eternal Son of God. He impoverished Himself and laid down His life for you and me. He willingly submitted to the will of the Father and sacrificed Himself and died for our sins. Why? So that sinners like you and me could have our sins forgiven and receive eternal life. Oh, trust Him today. Call upon Him who *“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”* Rich in the gospel. Rich with eternal life. Rich towards God.

AMEN!