**Be Encouraged – 2 Corinthians 8:10-21**

Grace Giving (Part Two)

Turn with me to **2 Corinthians 8:10-21**; we are in our second week of our series entitled “grace giving.” In chapter 8 and 9, Paul is going talking to the Corinthian church about the importance of giving. In fact, in our first week in this series we saw Paul tell the church in **2 Corinthians 8:7**:

*7 Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us\*—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.*

Yes, this church had a lot of problems that were needing to be addressed, but we know that this church also had a lot going for itself; they had faith, they had gifted speakers, their knowledge of the Word was full, and they had great enthusiasm. In **1 Corinthians 1:5**, Paul told them:

*5 Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge.*

In both statements, Paul speaks of their giftedness in speaking and their intellect. **How many of us know that smarts and great speaking doesn’t guarantee that a person will live right?** **Amen.** The church had its act together in some aspects, yet not in others. And this was especially true when it came to giving. Paul wanted them to grow and mature in the gracious act of giving. Which goes to show that there is no such thing as a perfect church. The key however is that we are willing to grow and mature in those areas in which God has called us to. **Amen**.

When we last left off, we saw that giving is a matter of the heart, it is a normal part of the Christian life, and it at times can be a spiritual battle we struggle with because the pull of earthly resources can tend to take the place of a relationship with God. How we handle our finances tells us something about our relationship with God, and it can also tell us something about what we need to let go of. Giving is to be birthed out of a relationship with God, a heart that is moved and sensitive to what God shows and says. It is not a forced demand, but an invited request from God. And Paul appeals to hearts by pointing out a key point in verse 9 (**2 Corinthians 8:9**):

*9 You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.*

We are to be givers because Jesus gave abundantly, and continues to do so. As recipients of incredible grace, we should now become grace givers. We are motivated by the love of God towards us. **John 3:16** reminds us:

*16 “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son…”*

**Do any of us experience the generous grace of God on a daily basis?** If so, then let that motivate you to give; give of your time, your talent, your treasure. Mimic the example of Jesus. Giving is not about God needing your money, or your time, or your talent. It is about God having your heart. And if he doesn’t have your heart, then don’t give.

* **Grace giving is birthed out of the giving of grace by Jesus who has won our hearts.**

The church in Corinth needed a reminder of why they should give. They were a very affluent church; Corinth was a prosperous city, a major crossroad of the ancient world where a lot of the region’s commerce was concentrated. Yet when all of the churches in the region had taken an offering to help the struggling Jerusalem church, Corinth was the only one who had yet to make a contribution. Even the poor and struggling church of Macedonia had taken up an offering and were able to raise more than expected.

Paul didn’t want their wealth to stand in the way of their relationship with God. Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:10**:

*10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

Paul wanted to make sure that Corinth did not fall prey to the same temptation. Give grace because grace has been given. This morning, Paul wants to give further instruction about their giving, so let’s look at verses 10-21 (**2 Corinthians 8:10-24**):

*10Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. 11Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. 12Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don’t have.*

*13Of course, I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. 14Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. 15As the Scriptures say, “Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough.”\**

*16But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. 17Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. 18We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. 19He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem\*—a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help. 20We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. 21We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.*

*22We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. 23If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches,\* and they bring honor to Christ. 24So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.*

There are three things that Paul is wanting to address here; (verses 10-12, verses 13-15, and verses 16-24). First in verses 10-12 we see Paul giving advice about giving. **How many of us know that it is one thing to voice support for something and quite another to do something about it?** Many people state that they want to help the poor yet rarely have taken action to alleviate the suffering. That is what Paul is addressing here in our first section.

The Corinthian church had an emotional response to the suffering in the church in Jerusalem, in fact, some believe that they were the first to speak of taking an offering to help, but here we are a year later and nothing has been done. Paul is challenging them in **verse 11**: *“Let the eagerness you showed be matched now by your giving.”* Let the readiness to help, the alertness of the need, the awareness of what you see, move you to do something, to finish what you have started.

Church, perhaps we are asking the question **“God, what is it that you want me to give to?”** **Where do I invest my time, my talent, my treasure?** The question God comes back to us with is **“What need do you see? Who is there around you that needs your help**? **Have you ever wondered why it is that God has allowed you to see or hear of a need?** Perhaps he is showing you exactly where he wants you to be. Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:13**:

*13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.*

God is at work in you, he is giving you the willingness to see and the ability to do that which he has planned for your life. He brings to us those things and people that we can pour into for his glory.

* **The reason why we see or hear of the needs of others is because God wants us to be involved somehow.**

And I don’t know about you, but sometimes I am overwhelmed by what I see. I think we even become paralyzed but so many of need that we end up doing nothing. **But, did our Father see our need? Did he step in and take care of it on the cross? Did we deserve it, did we earn it?** No. Yet God still gave. Grace giving responds to the needs of others, as we are made aware of it, whether we believe that they deserve our help or not. Paul told the church in Galatia (**Galatians 6:9-10**):

*9 So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. 10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.*

Many times, even our own brothers and sisters in the faith genuinely need our help. **Are we willing to respond to the voice of God, the cry for help, and give of ourselves?** The key is to be moved by what God says and what he shows us. Remember, giving is tied to our key verse in verse 9: *“You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.”* **Because of what Jesus did on the cross, because we have been graced beyond measure, are we willing to pass it on to the lives of others?**

But there is another part of this giving we need to consider. In **verse 11 and 12** Paul tells the church to *“give out of what they have, not out of what they don’t have.”* In other words, God is not asking us to give more than we can afford, or what we need to live on. There is a reason why we are blessed.

* **The giving to God is not a manipulation, a coercion, a man induced plea that tries to force people to give; it is to be freely given from the heart.**

(Not a planting of seed money, or a faith pledge; presumption). We read a good example of this in the Old Testament when God proposed to build the tabernacle; his one stipulation was that people would give out of a willingness to give. **Exodus 25:1-2**:

*The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them.*

Later in **Exodus 35:21-29** we read of their response:

*21 All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle,\* for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. 22 Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing. They brought to the Lord their offerings of gold—brooches, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind as a special offering to the Lord. 23 All those who owned the following items willingly brought them: blue, purple, and scarlet thread; fine linen and goat hair for cloth; and tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather. 24 And all who had silver and bronze objects gave them as a sacred offering to the Lord. And those who had acacia wood brought it for use in the project.*

*25 All the women who were skilled in sewing and spinning prepared blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen cloth. 26 All the women who were willing used their skills to spin the goat hair into yarn. 27 The leaders brought onyx stones and the special gemstones to be set in the ephod and the priest’s chestpiece. 28 They also brought spices and olive oil for the light, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense. 29 So the people of Israel—every man and woman who was eager to help in the work the Lord had given them through Moses—brought their gifts and gave them freely to the Lord*.

Notice how many times the word “willing” is used. God doesn’t want to force us to give; he wants to move in our hearts to give; to be motivated out of love and duty. He invites us to use what he has blessed us with to make a difference in the lives of people around us.

* **We are blessed by God so that we can bless and help others.**

This reminds me of a parable that Jesus gave in **Matthew 25:14-19**:

*14“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. 15He gave five bags of silver\* to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.*

*16“The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. 17The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. 18But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.*

*19“After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money.”*

Obviously, the man going on a long trip is Jesus. As we are in this time between his going to heaven and his return, **what are we doing with the resources that he has given us? Is there a return on his investment? Are people being impacted because of the way we use God’s resources that are at our disposal?** It is clear that the Corinthian church was in a position to help. That’s what we see in our second section this morning. Paul says in **verse 14** of our text, *“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need.”* May we, as God’s people, give what we have been blessed with when we witness the needs of those around us. **Amen.** Invest into the kingdom of God through the giving to those God brings your way.

But there is another point Paul is making here in **verses 13-15**, and that is that God wants there to be some “equality” when it comes to giving. Paul is not saying that the rich should become poor and the poor rich (communism), he is not saying that the we are all to be the same (socialism), but what he is saying is that all of God’s people (whether poor or rich) should respond to the needs of those around them. In fact, the term “equality” here in the original Greek means “equity – to be free from bias or favoritism.” In other words, no matter what social status you have, if you are a child of God has blessed you to give.

* **The invitation to give is not determined by your social status because we all have something we can give.**

The poor should not wait for the rich to step up, and the rich should not wait for the need to go away. BE MOVED BY THE NEEDS GOD ALLOWS YOU TO SEE AND GIVE WHAT YOU CAN.

Paul then goes on in verse 15 and quotes a verse out of **Exodus 16:16-18** where it speaks about the daily provision of God to his people of manna:

*16These are the Lord’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts\* for each person in your tent.” 17So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. 18But when they measured it out,\* everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.*

No matter what a person gathered, they had enough. God wants to move in us to alleviate the suffering of people.

* **God’s people have the opportunity to become the hands and feet of God, the provision of God, to people who don’t know him yet.**

Imagine if all of God’s people would be moved to give there is no telling what can be accomplished. Perhaps the church would once again be known for its generosity and would become a place where the hungry, the sick, and those in need can find help and most importantly, Jesus.

Finally, in **verse 16-24** Paul speaks about how Titus and trusted men will escort the offering to the church in Jerusalem. Paul wanted to make sure that there was no question about the handling of this offering. Paul did all he could to protect himself from any false accusations. That is why we, here at our church, have council members who weekly and monthly take care of the finances, make decisions, and prayerfully ask for God’s guidance. Every penny we spend is accounted for and reported to the church every year. We want you to have confidence in that what you are giving here is being used properly and prayerfully. Praise God for those who are willing to serve his church in this way, **Amen.**

**Conclusion:** God invites his people to give. He shows them areas in which they can take what they have and invest it in the kingdom of God; whether it be his church, the needs on the mission field, or the local community. This invitation is something God wants his people to respond to. It is not a demand, or a coercion, but invitation to give to God by giving to others. God shows us the need, he provides enough for us to give, and we have the privilege of being Jesus hand and feet to others. We then get to become grace givers. Do we desire that? Pray!