

## Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE -

11.26.2023

# JOYFUL GENEROSITY

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 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. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7 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.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 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.

## I. PRINCIPLES OF JOYFUL GENEROSITY

### 1. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS A FRUIT OF GOD'S GRACE

- Paul is encouraging the believers at Corinth, to finish the collection that they had begun earlier for the believers at the church of Jerusalem, who were suffering greatly during a famine.
- Paul writes about this collection in several of his letters. He was devoted to stirring the Gentile churches to help support the Jerusalem church.
- Paul calls this act of giving among the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church, a “grace of God.”
- It is something that originates with God because it is not natural for us.
- Money tends to have a grip on our heart.
- But what happened? Grace came.
- And the fruit of that transforming grace is joyful giving.
- Paul gives the example of this fruit of God’s grace in the Macedonian believers.
- He writes they were under a “severe test of affliction” and living in “extreme poverty.”
- They didn't have an abundance of resources. But that did not deter them from giving generously.

- They gave with an “abundance of joy.” They were joyful givers.
- Where did that joy come from? From the grace of God. From their joy in Christ.
- Out of the abundance of their joy and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, a wealth of generosity bubbled up out.
- Joyful generosity is the fruit of God’s grace, stirring up joy in the heart, that overflows into a wealth of generosity.

## 2. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS SOMETIMES SACRIFICIAL

- We can also conclude from the example of the Macedonian believers, that there are times for sacrificial giving.
- v3 "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord."
- Their giving was sacrificial. It cost them something.
- Sometimes the Lord will lay a burden on your heart to give to a certain need, to stretch your generosity, and that means you may need to do without something you want for a time to engage in a higher level of giving.
- This isn't about the regular giving you should be engaged in but something over and above that.
- Example of David's offering in 2 Samuel 24
- And when God requires sacrificial giving of you, you should count it a joy to be able to do that.

## 3. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP TO GOD

- Giving is an act of worship to God.
- The ceremonial law in the old covenant established that the tithes and offerings that were presented were given to the Lord (Lev. 27).
- Everything commanded to be offered was to be devoted to the Lord. It was an act of worship, an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving, not merely an obligation.
- When we give, we are expressing thankfulness to God.
- Paul writes that these Macedonian believers "gave themselves first to the Lord..."
- Their priority in giving was the Lord, not Paul, and not even the recipients of their generosity. It was an act of worship to glorify God.
- They “gave themselves.” Notice it wasn’t just about money.
- God doesn’t need our money.
- The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein (Psalm 24:1).
- He isn’t after your money. It all belongs to him. He’s after your heart.
- Joyful generosity is a natural and inevitable expression of a heart that is fully devoted to him and a heart that isn’t mastered by treasures but captivated by the Master of all treasures.

## 4. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS PROOF OF THE GENUINENESS OF ONE’S LOVE FOR OTHERS

- Love is demonstrable. It involves action. It is a deed performed in love.
- Our willingness to give in practical ways is a key indicator of the genuineness of the love we claim to have for others.
- Paul writes in v8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.
- They would prove they loved the believers in Jerusalem not because they said they loved them, but by completing what they had committed to

doing in financial support.

- 1 John 3:17-18 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
- We can't claim to love others if we're not willing to give or serve them when they are in need.
- Do you see why this all points back to the heart?
- An evaluation of your giving habits will speak more about the true condition of your heart than any claims you make about loving others.
- The way we handle our money is a very reliable indicator of our spiritual condition.
- It gives evidence to support or refute our claims of loving God, loving others, and what our trust is truly in.

## 5. JOYFUL GENEROSITY FOLLOWS AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF OUR SAVIOR

- Paul grounds these exhortations as he always does in the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus.
- It is because of what he has done for us, because of his example of selfless, extravagant generosity, that our giving is to be a reflection of such grace.
- 9 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.
- Philippians 2:5-8 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- We were in spiritual poverty, our sins demanded God's judgment, but Christ took the punishment due us upon himself.
- So that we would become rich!
- We have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing the heavenly places—all the riches of glory (Ephesians 1:3).
- And it's all by the grace of our Lord—by his supreme act of generosity.
- That is our motivation for joyful giving.
- Giving begins and ends with the gospel of grace.
- Paul exhorts them to excel in this act of grace giving in addition to all of the other spiritual virtues that we are to excel in: faith, speech, knowledge.
- We must grow and excel in this grace also!

### 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify

God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

## 6. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS ABOUT BOUNTIFUL SOWING AND REAPING

- If you want to yield a bountiful harvest, you better plant a lot of seed. That's the point Paul is making.
- The principle is that the harvest you reap is directly related to the amount of seed you sow.
- What kind of harvest is Paul saying that we reap from our financial sowing? Is it a material harvest or a spiritual harvest?
- Well, in the context of this passage, I believe we are to expect both material and spiritual blessings.
- The general principle is that joyful, bountiful sowing has its rewards.
- There is a bountiful harvest we can expect when we sow liberally.
- There is a "harvest of your righteousness,"
- We are "enriched in every way..."
- God will make his grace abound to you, so that you will have "all sufficiency in all things at all times..."
- The resulting harvest is up to God.
- But if we want a greater harvest, we need to sow generously.

## 7. JOYFUL GENEROSITY IS INTENTIONAL

- 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- Notice that Paul doesn't say that every believer needs to contribute a set amount.
- Your giving is to be voluntary, not compelled, commanded, or coerced.
- Every believer must give as he has purposed in his heart.
- That means the decision is up to you. What is generous for you?
- How much should I give? Well, what does joyful generosity look like for you?
- What have you decided to give? Give that.
- Out of the joy we have in Jesus, we give generously, with a big smile on our heart.
- You should challenge yourself to give with greater generosity while remembering that you need to be able to give with joy.
  
- NT giving is beyond the obligation of the tithe in the OT.
- It's grace giving. It's giving as a response to the grace we have received.
- In 8:12, Paul writes that giving is according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.
- If you don't have it, you can't give it. There is grace.
- I want you to consider if your giving reflects dependence and trust in God's provision for you.
- If it doesn't, repent of your self-reliance and begin to engage in generous living.

## 8. JOYFUL GENEROSITY TRUSTS IN GOD'S PROVISION

- It's all over this passage that God will take care of us when we live open-handed.

- 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
- Generous givers will receive a generous supply of ample provisions from God so that they will be able to do more of the good works that they have already been doing.
- 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
- He will supply the initial financial blessing that is sown, and when you sow that seed in the form of generous giving, you will receive a harvest. That seed is multiplied so that we will have more to sow the next time.
- Our capacity for generosity will increase as will the joy we experience in generously giving.
- All of this means that we can trust God to provide for us.
- And when he provides for us, it's not to hoard, but to continue to be generous.
- Too many don't give generously because they aren't trusting God to take care of them.
- They let anxiety about the future keep them from being generous in the present.
- Preparing for the future is prudent. But being fearful about the future is sinful and reveals you are trusting more in yourself than you are in God.
- Paul writes in v13 that our giving is submission to God that comes from our confession of the gospel of Christ.
- Through our generous giving, we prove the genuineness of our confession and that we have embraced the gospel.
- Does your giving validate or invalidate your confession of the gospel?
- Are you trusting Christ or are you trusting yourself?

## 9. JOYFUL GENEROSITY PRODUCES THANKSGIVING TO GOD

- In v11-15, four times Paul expresses that our giving produces or results in thanksgiving to God, that it glorifies God.
- When you give generously, you give thanks to God as an act of worship.
- When someone is blessed through another's financial or material generosity, they give thanks to God.
- Because God acted open-handedly with me, because he lavished his grace upon me, I want to live generously so that the gratitude towards God increases in my life and in the life of those who are blessed by my generosity.
- We should never be concerned with whether we get the credit for our generous acts, we should only be concerned about God's glory and giving him thanks.
- We have a tendency to let our good deeds and giving be known to others.
- Jesus says our giving should be in secret.
- What's your motivation for giving?
- The only proper motivation for giving is for it to produce thanksgiving to God.
- Paul closes this passage with a doxological profession—"Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"
- That gift is God's own Son!
- All of these principles were perfectly displayed in the life and death of the Son of God.
- He is the grace of God made manifest.
- He sacrificially gave himself for us.

- His death was an offering for our guilt and sin that was an acceptable act of worship to God.
- He proved the genuineness of his love for those he redeemed by laying down his life.
- He sowed the maximal seed that could be sown, his exceedingly precious and priceless blood, to reap the bountiful harvest of salvation for all those he came to save.
- He purposed from all eternity to rescue and ransom a people by his blood, and joyfully completed what he determined to do.
- He lived his entire earthly existence in the likeness of human flesh, in full trust in God's provision.
- His ultimate act of joyful generosity has resulted in unceasing thanksgiving to God from the hearts of all the Redeemed.
- "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?