

2 Corinthians 8:8-15

Expressing the Grace of Jesus Christ

I love being a follower of Jesus Christ, it truly is the absolute greatest and this time of year joy overflows. Everyone appreciates generosity, most people themselves long to be generous. As I watch and listen to the world especially this time of year you and I know the grounding of generosity because we know Jesus. The gospel tells the most generous story. The story of the King of the Universe coming to save. Salvation is available through embracing Him. If we are in him then it only makes sense that we who know the most generous story, who have received Christ by faith. When a follower of Jesus expresses generosity it is an overflow of grace.

But how does the gracious generosity flow? 2 Corinthians 8 tells us as Paul is encouraging the wealthy Churches in Asia Minor to give to the impoverished Jerusalem Church.

#### READ TEXT

How do we express gracious generosity? 4 Truths from this text:

##### **1. Grace Must Flow from a Genuine Heart (8)**

- Paul is not commanding or using coercion to get these Corinthians to give. There is little doubt that he desires for them to give, but notice his tactic; grace.
- Paul wants them to give themselves wholly to the LORD first and then everything else will trickle down, covering every aspect of their lives.
- There is a distinction between coercion and compulsion.
  - Coercion flows from guilt.
  - Compulsion is a response to something great!
    - In this case, the greatness is the grace of God!
- Coercion could lead to regret or even worse a reluctance to embrace Paul which could be harmful for the gospel.
- Paul spoke this way with them earlier in 1 Corinthians 9:12-15
  - *Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel. But I have made no use of any of these rights....*
- Being compelled by grace results in a way to orient one's thinking towards a higher and better way - to be motivated by the highest truth - Christ!
- Paul wants their love to be genuine. Love that is genuine will never coerce. The Lord will never force someone to do what they don't want to do. He will powerfully persuade, but never coerce.
  - Love may constrain us, compel us, but genuine love will never force unwillingness.

This love that holds us will never let us go. Why? Look at verse 9 (the most powerful and foundational verse in this section).

## 2. Grace Must Flow from Knowing Jesus (9)

- This is the Lord Jesus who came for our sake and for our salvation. This is the way that salvation was brought to mankind. This way of salvation is very substance of our faith:
  - We confess: The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us
  - Without ceasing to be what He was, He became what He was not in order to take us from rags to riches!
  - Jesus willingly laid aside the glories of heaven, the splendor of heaven to come on a rescue mission to redeem and restore us.
  - He became “poor,” that is, in reference to the humiliation for God to become incarnate - to take on flesh. The invisible to become visible, the immortal to become mortal. His poverty does not mean, cannot mean, that he was any less God
  - This is the absolute wonder of the Incarnation - only God could do it!
  - By taking on flesh, he was able to undergo death so that he might overcome and defeat death. All so that he could make us rich! All so that, as Peter says (2 Peter 1:4), make us become partakers of the divine nature. The one who became flesh is then able to make us a partaker of divinity.
  - Do you see these riches?
    - These riches far outweigh pearly gates, mansions, or streets of gold. The riches that we possess in him are hope, peace, the knowledge of godliness, the disdain of sin, justification, sanctification, righteousness, an eternity in his presence, everlasting joy, never ceasing love
    - Listen to Augustine:
      - *How great is the multitude of his sweetness which he hides from those who fear him but which he reveals to those that hope in Him! For we understand only in part until that which is perfect come to us. To make us worthy of this perfect gift, he equal with the Father in the form of God, became like us in the form of a servant and refashions us in the likeness of God.* (FEAST OF THE NATIVITY 194.3 in ACC, 269)
- Here is the reason that Paul magnificently grounds giving in Jesus:
- The reality of his incarnation, and the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts to offer us salvation, gives us the capacity to even consider giving! Don't make the mistake of thinking that Scripture is saying, Jesus gave so in the way that He gave give. Such would be impossible. Rather, because Jesus gave we give, not as he gave but because he gave.
- Never get over the significance and magnificence of his coming. Never settle for star dust when you have been promised the universe. Always seek this treasure that has been given.
- But, I am afraid the problem may be that too often we forget how magnificent his coming and his salvation is, how magnificent He is. We are prone to wander, too easily satisfied. Oh that we would pray with Bernard of Clairvaux and another more recent hymn writer:

“What language shall I borrow to thank you dearest friend? For this, thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end. Oh make me thine forever, and should I fainting be; Lord let me never, never outlive my love for thee... I sometimes think about the cross and shut my eyes and try to see, the cruel nails, the crown of thorns, and Jesus crucified for me. But even could I see him die, I would but see a little part, see that great love for like a fire was always burning in his heart.” (O Sacred Head Now Wounded and It is a Thing Most Wonderful)

Forever is just how Scripture want us to think. Forever is not just one moment, forever is every moment. Look at what Scripture says in verses 10-12 (READ)

### **3. Grace Must Flow from Start to Finish (10-12)**

- The Corinthians are commended for desiring give.
- Praise the LORD for the desire. Conviction is powerful, it awakens our heart into action.
- But what is better, having a good desire or acting on that good desire? Or, even further as Scripture addresses: Having a desire, starting that desire, finishing that desire.
  - So often we are guilty of starting with good intentions, but as the old saying goes; "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."
- I look around and I see so much potential for the kingdom of God here today. Maybe you don't realize it. If that is you, reread verse 9 to see just how rich you are in Jesus!
- Jesus looks at you and he does not see poverty, He sees all the riches in glory.
- Did you know that Oxford Baptist Church started as a church plant? Did you know that in order for this church to be here in this community a court case trying to bar us from being here went all the way to the GA Supreme Court? Did you know that this building we are in now, completely paid for, was built when the church had \$14 in the bank?
- Unfortunately what gets mentioned (at least to me) more often is what happened a few years ago when Oxford Baptist underwent a church split.
- Now we look around and see plateau, neglect, and decline. Oxford is filled with so much potential, and truly some good intentions, but its time for us to put feet on our intentions and finish. It is time for us to realize all that God has for us, for us to become a bright beacon of hope shining the glorious light of Jesus, proclaiming Him, admonishing all men that there is one name under heaven by which they may be saved and his name is this one who for our sake and our salvation became incarnate so that by his poverty we could become rich!

How, pastor? Where do we begin? As verses 13-15 says:

### **4. Grace Must Flow from Whatever You Have (13-15)**

- Focus on what we have. The little boy with the loaves and fish gave all that he had to Jesus, and with just a few fish and a few loaves in the hands of Jesus fed over 5,000 men (not counting the women and the children).
- Focus on what you have, give it to Jesus, and push hard in faith trusting him, giving your all to him!
- Think about David. When David was told by the prophet Gad to make a sacrifice to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah, Araunah wanted to give David the threshing floor along with all the animals necessary for the sacrifice, but David revealed a man after God's own heart when he replied: "*I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing....* (2 Samuel 24:24)
- The gospel always bears the fruit of generosity, creates an obligation of gratitude that expresses itself through giving.
- We have to always guard ourselves from clinging too tightly to things and not seeking him.
- Look at this principle in verse 15 taken from Exodus when God sent manna. Manna was the provision of God, was all that they needed, and they became discontent and dissatisfied. Some even hoarded the manna by taking too much, but by morning what was excess was filled with worms, had turned to rot!
- The point, the timeless principle that God was teaching them

- Hebrews 13:5 - *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*
- Trust God's provisions. Trust that his provisions are an abundant of supply!

As we close today, I want to speak real personal to you. When the Lord laid what I am about to say on my heart heavily on Tuesday night after studying this text I knew that he is going to test the heart of Oxford Baptist Church.

Oxford Baptist, I am afraid has been hoarding money. We have been taking more than our share and as such it has been turning to worms for years. Oxford has a safety net and unfortunately for some that safety net is not the daily bread of God, it is the money that we have, the over \$150,000, in the bank. I understand the origin intention for that money was to build a building, but God has said no. It's time for us to give that money away, to not keep more than we need, to give back to our Lord what he has so graciously given to us.

Don't let the money lull you to sleep spiritually, rather purposefully or not. God judged the Israelites for their hoarding to teach them as one preacher from the past said, "Never desire more than you already have or be anxious because you have less." (Chrysostom, HOMILIES ON CORINTHIANS 17.2 in ACC 271.)

This is our moment Oxford. Will we express the grace of Jesus, will we prove that we believe that we have our greatest provision in Christ?

As we close I want to read a poem to you by T.S. Eliot called "Choruses from 'The Rock'"

And the Church must be forever building, and always decaying,  
and always being restored.  
For every ill deed in the past we suffer the consequence:  
For sloth, for avarice, gluttony, neglect of the Word of God,  
For pride, for lechery, treachery, for every act of sin.  
And of all that was done that was good, you have the inheritance.  
For good and ill deeds belong to a man alone, when he stands  
alone on the other side of death,  
But here upon earth you have the reward of the good and ill that  
was done by those who have gone before you.  
And all that is ill you may repair if you walk together in humble  
repentance, expiating (atoning) the sins of your fathers;  
And all that was good you must fight to keep with hearts as  
devoted as those of your fathers who fought to gain it.  
The Church must be forever building, for it is forever decaying  
within and attacked from without;  
For this is the law of life; and you must remember that while  
there is time of prosperity  
The people will neglect the Temple, and in time of adversity  
they will decry it.  
~T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock'" (1934)

How will we build? Will it be with grace? God help us.