

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Exceeding Reminders of Abounding Grace

This time of year is so incredible, there are reminders of generosity, reminders that this is the most wonderful time of the year. This night, as we gather we celebrate the eve of gift-giving, the eve of the greatest gift that has ever come into the world - the Son of God becoming flesh, for our sake and our salvation. Most of your children are going to awaken the morning with shouts of acclamation as they look to see gifts that have been placed under the tree, all to remind our hearts and to point us towards the Eternal Son of God giving of his total self for we who were less than deserving, we who had abandoned Him and in so doing abandoning hope. But still, he came. Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year because it serves as an annual reminder of the greatest display of God's grace - the sending of the Son!

We have been looking at 2 Corinthians on Sunday mornings as a congregation here at Oxford this Christmas season, and have seen Paul encouraging the Corinthians church to give generously to help the needy saints in Jerusalem. For 2 chapters, Paul has not simply been asking the Corinthians to give, but has been grounding their giving in theological terms. In other words, he wants their hearts to match their hands. He grounds their giving in the reality of Christ.

Look at 8:9 - *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.* Such a declaration becomes the basis for our entire existence, all of our life is now centered on this fact: Christ has come to save. Our giving, which is so closely tied with what our hearts treasure, is of course connected to the Cross.

At this point, if you have been tracking with the text and listening to this preacher preach, you may be thinking that such a sermon is overkill. But, I am simply following the text, and as such, I confess that if God is emphasizing a point about giving, then it will be good for us to hear his word.

READ TEXT

4 Reminders about the Abounding Grace of God through Jesus our Lord:

1. Diligence is More than a Moment (1)

- There are certain truths that we should never make us weary. So often we are guilty of segregating our life into moments instead of seeing how each moment is connected. People who come to church are guilty of this. I am not simply talking of the CEO (Christmas and Easter Only) Christians, I am also referring to those Christians who live week by week, Sunday by Sunday, those who segregate their worship instead of seeing the whole of life as an expression of worshipping the God who is.
- This is why I am so thankful for the labors of a man named Jerry Bridges

- Bridges, in his work: *The Gospel for Real Life*... reminds us to preach the gospel to ourselves everyday.
- Salvation is more than a one time event. Salvation has a beginning, but salvation yields eternal benefits. The eternal benefits begin now!
- The message of grace is for our everyday.
- Paul says it is superfluous, meaning that is unnecessary, but notice that he still writes to them anyway. This is the reality of reminding ourselves of grace, superfluous (because of how abounding grace is), but we still remind ourselves.
- It is Christmas and in our materialistic driven world there are always reminders of how little we have. I remember thinking as a boy, growing up with two blue collar parents, each time the Lexus or another car commercial came on showing the new shiny car with the big red bow - wow what a Christmas gift! Sometimes the Christmas season reminds us of how little we have - but grace is here to remind us of how much we have! The splendors of heaven opened to us by this Christ who came to live, came to die, and came to give us life through His life.
- Don't get over grace. Be diligent to remember grace. Let grace richly dwell with you in so much more than a moment, but in each moment!

Superfluous, but necessary. Why? Number 2:

2. Belief Must be Coupled with Faith (2-3)

- By putting these two words together I intend for you to understand a difference. The difference is between agreeing and confessing, between believing that you have a cold and taking medicine for your cold.
- What use is it to talk of doing good when we see great needs around us?
- When a man speaks his thoughts are brought to bear and when talk is met with action you get to see the measure of a man. Faith is proved genuine by actions.
- Have you ever heard the phrase, "Put your money where your mouth is?" I can't think of a better opportunity for our minds to think with such a term than here.
- Paul is saying, "We have heard a great buzz of diligence from you, so we are sending collectors to prove what you have said."
- The demand of the gospel, the far reaching implications of grace, touches every part of our lives: from our head to our heart, from our feet to our hands - grace infiltrates every nook and cranny of our lives and reforms us, refashions us, into an image worthy of the eternal delight of God.
- This is the reality of grace, the reality those who confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- And, of course, the overreaching issue always at war with faith is unbelief. Why do we sin? Unbelief. Why do we fail to love as we should? Unbelief. And so on...
- The world is filled with many who believe - who accept these doctrines as true. But, many do not believe, they have not and are not placing faith in Jesus. They know they have a cold, they know there is a doctor, they may even know that he is a good doctor, but they don't go to the doctor or take his medicine.
- Many see Jesus in a Cradle, on a Cross, Crowned with Glory and think of Him distant of themselves when in reality faith demands that we believe that He came to the Cradle, the Cross, and the empty tomb "for our sake and for our salvation."

- He took on flesh so that He could take our life of sin and sorrow and raise it up to His splendor and glory! He has taken our lives, we have given our lives to Him, and in return He has given us His life!
- Paul said it this way: Galatians 2:20 - *I have been crucified for Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
- The most humiliating point of life would be for one to travel through church services year after year, Sunday after Sunday and believe about Jesus without believing in Jesus - without trusting in Him for salvation.
- So many trust in their own righteousness, or their own traditions and think it sufficient for salvation. When instead we should be singing with Toplady:

*Not the labor of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demand;
 Could my zeal no respite know,
 Could my tears forever flow?
 All for sin could not atone; Thou
 must save, and thou alone.
 Nothing in my hand I bring,
 Simply to thy Cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress,
 Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to Thy
 fountain fly; Wash Me Savior or I die.*

Don't believe about Jesus, believe in Him, trust Him completely for your salvation. How will you know? Your actions will prove themselves as to what you really believe.

You see, we need each other. We need these reminders year after year, day by day, moment by moment.

The last two points, point that I will not even get to this evening, but I will mention them:

3. The Church is Interconnected (2-4)

- If grace is moment by moment then surely when we who believe in its fullest sense, neglect one another, each part suffers.
- There were some in the Corinthian Church who did not like Paul. Some thought that his actions were less than genuine. But he didn't mention that when he mentioned them to other churches. Instead, Paul mentions the zeal and readiness for ministry.
- You and I need to be reminded of this: If one part suffers we all suffer! You and I must be reminded to be compassionate, tenderhearted, and abounding in love with one another.

The only way that we can do that is our final point of what we need to be reminded about grace:

4. Actions Must Flow From Grace (5)

- Don't misunderstand the reason that we do what we do. Don't misunderstand the reason that we come to worship. We don't come to worship to earn the favor of God anymore than Paul wants the Corinthians to give to earn favor with God.
- We worship because in Christ we are partakers of the divine nature.
- We have the favor of God not because of our work but on account of His work!
- His work on the Cross, His salvation, His filling us with the Spirit, means that now our works are forever transformed. Grace has abounded in our lives, Grace is consuming our lives!
- We do what we do, live the way that we live all because of Grace
- Remember that grace was the response of God to our sins. Where sin abounded, grace did abound much more!
- Everything that we do - the life of worship that we live. Is in accordance with His grace!

We simply are those who live a life of amazement; amazed not at how righteous we are, but at how holy He is, how loving He is. We live of life amazement of Jesus. Let's stand and sing that together:

I stand amazed in the presence

1

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene, And
wonder how He could love me, A
sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

2

For me it was in the garden,
He prayed: "Not my will, but Thine."
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat-drops of blood for mine.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

4

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calv'ry,

And suffered, and died alone.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

5

When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.
How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!