

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
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## **Brethren, Let Us Abound in Generosity**

**1 Corinthians 8 - 9**

**Keywords:** Missions, gospel, money, finances, giving, generous, generosity, tithing.

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Using 2 Corinthians 8-9 Pastor Henry seeks to show the nature of a generous heart. And in doing so it is seen that true, Christian generosity flows out of the grace of God in the lives of the Church. And as that grace abounds, so does true generosity.

## **Dismiss**

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. 2 Corinthians 8-9.
- B. A book that is filled with many hard words for these people.
  - 1. Rebukes, corrections.
  - 2. Sarcasm and entreaties.
  - 3. A messed up church that in many ways lost its way, and only now is beginning to repent and move forward.
  - 4. And in the midst of it, Paul begins to work on a key issue that is a reflection of their hearts and motives—money.

### **II. Seventeen Observations about Generosity and The Christian.**

- A. The spirit of generosity was a work of grace of God in the Macedonian churches (1).
  - 1. This first point is why my sermon is entitled Grace-Centered Generosity.
  - 2. Giving that is true giving is one that flows from a work of God in the hearts of His people.
  - 3. Notice that though the giving that was done was incredibly selfless, it was because of the grace of God given in the churches of Macedonia.
  - 4. So for us to become a generous people who excel ever more we need this to become a point of prayer. That God might extend His grace even more into our hearts until generosity is our delight.

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5. Nothing will change and nothing will be accomplished for the Kingdom without a constant, fresh flowing in of the continuing grace of God.
- B. Affliction and poverty are not barriers to genuine generosity (2-3).
1. Please note that there are two things that were occurring in the lives of these believers.
    - a. Affliction and poverty.
    - b. Great and deep.
  2. God's grace was full and flowing in and through their lives.....**BUT**
  3. Notice that their troubles were hard upon them in the midst of that reality.
    - a. Grace came, and so did persecution and hardship.
    - b. The grace of God did not remove hardship, in many ways it brings it.
  4. And yet, out of that grace came a heart of generosity in these dear people.
    - a. They gave to the point of personal pain and hurt.
    - b. And they begged Paul for that opportunity.
    - c. **I cannot answer this for you, but I must ask it. What would it look like for you to give beyond your own ability?**
  5. Notice this one more time beloved.
    - a. There was an abundance/an excess/an overflow of joy in the midst of severe affliction.
    - b. That joy moved them to give with liberality in the midst of poverty.
    - c. Where does this joy come from?
      - (1) NOT from the absence of hardship and affliction.
      - (2) It came from seeing and savoring the grace of God in their midst.
      - (3) This requires that they spent time focusing on the multitude of ways God's grace was manifest in their lives.
- C. A generous person sees giving as a privilege not a burden (4).

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1. This fits into the idea we learned in Matthew 6 that the only money lost is that which we keep for ourselves here and now.
  - a. If you give merely out of duty but without the joy of knowing it is treasure stored in heaven, then it is viewed as lost.
  - b. It becomes a burden, not a joy.
  - c. A duty that many people find great pride in doing, rather than seeing the great grace of God in their lives and give with humility and thankfulness.
2. These people were begging him to support their fellow believers.
  - a. That word, “favor” is the word *charis*. Translates also as ‘grace.’
  - b. They were rich in the grace of God and it became a way to allow others to share in that grace.
  - c. They begged to do so—there was a hot passion in their souls to give, even to their own hurt.
- D. A generous heart begins with giving oneself to the Lord (5).
  1. It was not a normal experience for Paul to watch people give with joy even to the point of hurt.
  2. What is it that makes this happen? We know already that it is the grace of God working. But here there is a bit more information to glean.
  3. The flow goes like this: First they gave themselves to the Lord... and then His people.
    - a. They bought into the words of Jesus that they must lose their lives if they were to save their lives.
    - b. They took to heart Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6, “For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”
  4. And then, because of this, they realized that they also were responsible for the people of God.
    - a. They desired to obey their Lord who had said that they were to love one another as Jesus had first loved them.
    - b. That the world would know they were Christians by their love for one another.
    - c. Not just in the local church, but the church wherever it was found.

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- E. Generosity is a test of love (7-8 and 24).
1. Paul reflects on the abundance of gifts that God has poured out in the church at Corinth in vs 7.
  2. He is saying this: consider how much God has graciously given to you as a church, and then abound in like manner in this gracious work of giving.
  3. But notice vs 8. It is a test (proving) that will show that their claim of love of the brethren is true.
  4. This connects us back to the first part of 2 Corinthians where Paul is confronting them and reflecting on the harsh words he had for them in another letter.
  5. They appeared (cf chap 7) to have repented, showing sincere sorrow.
  6. But part of that repentance is to be seen in their generosity—one borne out of resting in God's grace, not out of duty.
  7. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 13:5 there is a reminder to test themselves in the faith. This would be one of those tests.
  8. And in verse 24 he again challenges them to live out that love.
    - a. He reminds them that he has been boasting in the grace of God in their lives.
    - b. Now was their time to prove that the boasting was not in vain.
    - c. James 1:26-27 if anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
  9. A loving believer should be a joyful, generous giver.
- F. A generous heart gives in light of the gospel (9).
1. All of this is summed up in the example of Jesus.
  2. Whenever we think we have given enough, we need to go and sit by the cross a bit more.

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3. Paul is laying it on thick in these two chapters but he does not want it out of simple guilt.
  4. So he brings them back to the basics, the gospel message.
  5. In light of the Cross how can we not be a generous people?
  6. I want you to think of the riches you have because of the gospel. Because in your CG you will be asked to share two of them. And there is no repeats allowed.
  7. Two examples:
    - a. In Jesus we are forgiven of all our sins forever.
    - b. In Jesus we are kept safe by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- G. A generous heart finishes the task (10-12).
1. Vss 10ff show that the Corinthian church was a good starter, just not as good at finishing things.
  2. Paul reminds them that to give to this cause was something that they desired to do a year earlier.
  3. But the desire is not enough, they need to follow through and finish it.
    - a. Are there commitments you have made that you need to finish?
    - b. In fact, genuine desire is a desire that acts.
    - c. Wishing and wanting is never enough, you must put feet and hands to them or they are simply dust in the wind.
  4. Example: We were committed to CBTS until we died, or God removed Philemon. God removed Philemon, but even now we support the even larger ministry Philemon participates in.
- H. Generosity flows from the provision of God (12).
1. We are not responsible to give from what we don't have but what God has given to us.
  2. This is why I said in the previous sermon that it is wise that you give by percentage rather than dollar amounts. This prevents the problem of not being able to give an amount due to financial realities.

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3. Notice that Paul is not even asking for something beyond their ability.
    - a. Rather he is asking them to consider how God has enriched them.
    - b. And then why God has enriched them.
    - c. And then give accordingly.
  4. We do not 'wait' until we have more. We must always begin where we are at.
- I. Generosity involves time as well (16-19).
1. Titus was with Paul and willingly left him to go to the Corinthians to work with them and give them this report.
  2. Along with him is another who was apparently a well known preacher in that area. And the churches sent him as well.
  3. Some people do not have a lot of money, but they can give of themselves in time and energy.
  4. These men were emissaries for the glory of God. They came to give witness of God's work in the hearts of the believers in Macedonia.
- J. Generosity is not blind, nor stupid (20-23).
1. They also put in safe guards to make sure that there was no room for the acting out of temptation or greed.
  2. Paul did not want any false accusations to come their way (20).
    - a. This shows that he knows how life works and how people are suspicious or haters of the gospel.
    - b. He knows that there is the chance that charges of stealing or embezzlement could be made, and so he makes safeguards.
  3. This is why our finances are an open book to anyone here who desires to see them.
- K. Generosity is only generosity when it acts (9:1-4).
1. It starts with talk and decisions, but only takes place when the words and decisions are acted upon.
  2. Notice in vs 2 how the Macedonians got stirred up to give?

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- a. The pledges of the Corinthians.
- b. And this was used by God in the hearts of the Macedonians to give beyond their ability and to their own harm—yet with great joy.
3. Anyone who has been in any type of leadership in the church can testify that talk is abundant and action is often scarce.
4. Anyone can talk a lot about giving, money, and generosity. But it is a truly generous person who then opens the wallet and gives.
- L. Covetousness is the arch-enemy of generosity (5).
  1. Covetousness is a sin that is too comfortable in the church.
  2. Covetousness is simply the desire to have more that is rightly due you.
    - a. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 5:11 that we are not to have anything to do with a “so-called brother” who is covetous.
    - b. In 1 Corinthians 6:10 he says that those who are covetous cannot be true believers.
    - c. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 but those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
  3. Notice the way Paul sends these men ahead of him so that they can make sure the offering is fully brought in.
    - a. Accountability is a key component to sins of this nature.
    - b. Do you struggle with covetousness? Do you struggle in faithfulness to give?
    - c. Become accountable to someone who will truly, graciously and faithfully hold you to your word.
- M. There are God-ordained results attached to giving (6).
  1. There is also the similar challenge to our thinking that Jesus gave in Matt 6.

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- a. To keep your treasure you give it away.
  - b. To reap much, you must give it away too (sow).
2. But this is not a teaching on prosperity.
    - a. Though this is often taken way out of context by greedy men and women who are prosperity teachers—seed offerings and such.
    - b. The reality is far different.
  3. This is all connected back to vss 1-5. The word ‘bountiful’ (willing ESV) is the word we get “blessing” from.
    - a. A gift that would be a blessing and bring praise is what Paul wanted from them.
    - b. And all of this was founded upon God’s abundant grace toward them for the purpose of the praise of God’s glory.
  4. So vs 6 says, the one who sows with/because of blessing shall reap with/because of blessing.
    - a. The point is not how much one gives.
    - b. Rather it is that God “returns” to the giver in like kind.
    - c. God gives blessing who give to be a blessing. And He withholds blessing to those who withhold being a blessing.
- N. The purpose of money is to be able to be generous in every good deed (8-11).
1. Here we have a key answer to why God gives us things and money.
  2. Not to enrich ourselves. But to be generous people.
  3. Notice how 8 and 11 are bookends.
    - a. All grace abound to you (just like the Macedonians) so that you can have abundance for EVERY good work.
    - b. God will enrich you in all things FOR all liberality.
- O. Generosity produces a thankful heart toward God (12).
1. Here we see the nature of worship within the work of generosity.
  2. It is easy to see that you are meeting needs.



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- a. Digging wells.
  - b. Sending men to seminary.
  - c. Supplying clothing.
  - d. Supporting missions.
3. But we need to realize that as those gifts go out, these people then lift up voices to God in thanksgiving.
  4. And God is now made much of by His people.
  5. And that is always good.
- P. A generous heart is evidence of the gospel's work (13).
1. To believe the gospel is to be a follower of Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 28:19).
  2. You confess Jesus as Lord? You confess that He has overcome sin, Satan and death by His work on the Cross and the resurrection?
  3. Then give to support the work of the gospel.
- Q. A generous heart produces genuine community (14-15).
1. When you become a partner with others through your giving, there becomes a bond between you.
  2. There are people around the world right now who lift this church up in prayer and thanksgiving each night through your support of Compassion International and Voice of The Martyrs.
  3. And in this there becomes a bond of fellowship that is deep and God-centered.
  4. And so Paul reflects on how giving is really a gift of God that is deep and rich (15).

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. The language used in this passage is unique and is a good way to close this message.
- B. You don't find the idea of tithe here. Instead listen to the word choices:
  1. A collection; a blessing; a priestly service; a fellowship or partnership; a service or ministry.

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2. And then the most important term, *charis* which means grace.
  3. What stands out in this vocabulary used by Paul is that not one of them actually mention money.
  4. Instead it is words related to relationships with others and acts of worship to God. And all of these are connected to God's grace.
- C. If there is one thing you take home with you it is this: **the basis of giving is not on what we shall get out of it, or what others will give in return, but in what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ.**

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## Small Group Questions

- What would it look like for you to give beyond your own ability? (This is a hard question to put before the people, but ask them nonetheless.)
- List two things that are evidences of God's grace in your life. (There cannot be any repeats from the people; rather, let them work together to see the abundance of grace in all of their lives.)