

Grace that Gives
2 Corinthians 8:1-15
Sermon Notes

Introduction

Matthew 28:19-20

“19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mission of Heritage: Making disciples here and around the world

The word disciple appears frequently in the New Testament, with it being found in the gospels and the book of Acts more than 230 times.

Disciple - From *manthano* in the Greek meaning a learner or pupil.

A suggested definition:

A person who responds to the call of Jesus in faith, resulting in a relationship of obedience through which Jesus shares his own life and the disciple embarks on a lifetime journey of learning in order to become like the master.

We are in a 9-part series on discipleship. The elders recently created a discipleship wheel as an illustration for what discipleship means at Heritage. It contains 8 disciplines that are taken from the scripture and modeled in the life of Christ. These disciplines are graces that are

1. Modeled in Christ Jesus
2. Motivated by the grace we have received
3. Intended to share God's grace with others

This week we will discuss giving.

A large amount of Scripture deals with the use of wealth and possessions. It speaks to us as being stewards of His resources.

1 Peter 4:10

“10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”

While Peter does not specifically include finances in his list of gifts in the above example, the concept of being a steward or faithful caretaker of that which God has given is applicable to all our resources that we have been supplied including not only spiritual gifts but also things like time and money.

A word on giving...

1. The 10% tithe (under Old Testament Law) was a specific requirement that served a specific purpose and
2. Neither Jesus nor any other New Testament author under the direction of the Holy Spirit assigns or affirms 10% as a standard rule.

Consider:

Superiority of Covenant through Jesus compared to that given by Moses. Living in the light of the revealed Christ, we have tremendously greater blessings. Wouldn't that compel us to an even greater giving of ourselves to Gospel work and the things of God?

Mark 12: 41-44

"41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'"

Jesus still "watches" how people contribute to the offering. He will accomplish his purposes regardless... but giving is a tangible way in which his people can participate in the work He is doing in the world. It is a matter of obedience, but we cannot do it on our own.

Background - 2 Corinthians, the book

The church at Corinth

- Paul was instrumental in starting the church in Corinth
 - Located in region of Achaia, in southern Greece
- It did not take long for problems to arise within the church
 - Favoritism, disunity, sexual immorality, abuse of sacraments, etc.
- 1 Corinthians was written by Paul (around 55 AD) to address these issues
- False teachers sowed division, undercutting Paul's leadership
- Paul writes 2 Corinthians later in his 3rd missionary journey

Structure of 2 Corinthians

- Chapters 1-7: Reconciliation and instruction
- Chapters 8-9: Generosity and giving
- Chapters 10-13: Apologetic of Paul's ministry

Background- The collection

Paul took up multiple collections during his ministry.

Examples:

1. In response to a famine (Acts 11:27-30)
2. Ongoing effort for the Jerusalem church.

The church in Jerusalem

- Poor
- Ostracized
- Persecuted

Paul encouraged a planned, systematic special offering in several of the gentile churches, including the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Now concerning^[a] the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

When we come to our text in 2 Corinthians they had not completed the offering

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 Grace that gives generously

¹ We want you to know, brothers,^[a] 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^[b] 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.

The first 5 verses detail the offering from the churches of Macedonia.

Principles of giving generously.

- It's not circumstantial
- It's proportionate to ability or capacity to give
- It's sacrificial
- It's done thankfully, cheerfully
- It's voluntary

How can someone give in this way?

By verse 1 "the grace of God"

And in verse 5 "they gave themselves first to the Lord"

The grace of God who, by the Spirit, was leading them and they (Macedonian churches) responded in obedience to the leading of the Spirit. It is not merely a financial act. It is spiritual surrender.

The supreme act of worship is giving yourself to God.

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

They determined in their hearts it was the will of God to give and giving such a gift was good and acceptable.

If the grace of God is working in us, then we too are able to give like the Macedonians.

2 Corinthians 8:6-8

Generosity from maturity, proven by love

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^[c]—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.

In verse 7 Paul writes that the Corinthians excel (From *perissos* - to superabound in quantity or quality. To have an abundance) in -

- In Faith
- In Speech
- In Knowledge
- In Earnestness

They had not excelled in the grace of generous giving.

No one area can be substituted for another. When we do that, what we are really saying is I don't want to submit to you (Lord) in this area of my life.

Money is amoral. The problem is spiritual tension with how we view it and use it.

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Examples of challenges or barriers:

- Lack of trust
- Misplaced priorities
- Wrong view of giving

In verse 8 Paul encourages growth in this spiritual discipline. From that growth we can choose to give generously. By this act the Corinthians can demonstrate the sincerity (greek from genesia) or legitimacy of their love.

Having the right perspective will give us the motivation for giving generously. Lets look at verse 9.

2 Corinthians 8:9

Grace given through Christ Jesus

⁹For 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.

Jesus became poor for our sake and sacrificed himself. Through him our spiritual poverty is turned to riches.

We give not to earn grace and not to prove our worth but because grace has already been given.

1 John 3:16

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

When we give sacrificially we in effect “imitate” God. Our giving is motivated by His giving.

2 Corinthians 8:10-12

Submitting to God’s work in you

¹⁰ And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. ¹¹ So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

Returns to his exhortation “so now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it.”

Good intentions are not a substitute for biblical obedience.

James 2:15-16

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

God is interested in completed commitments.

Recall in 1 Corinthians Paul had given instructions on how to set aside money for this offering and while the time for this approach had passed he encourages them here to respond with what they do have, whatever it may be because what makes a gift acceptable to God is not how much. “For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable.”

2 Corinthians 8:13-15

A shared life

¹³ For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness¹⁴ your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.¹⁵ As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

As christians,
We are to be of one heart and one mind.
We should embrace a common purpose.
We are called to live a shared life.
because we are the members of one body.

Paul encourages mutual care and the goal is fairness without hardship. Equity, not equality.

This principle is modeled after God's provision in the wilderness (Exodus 16). God provided manna from heaven and the people gathered, some more, some less according to their ability, but all the needs were met. While it doesn't state directly, the impression here is that they shared what they had.

Supporting the body in this way promotes unity among the parts.

Conclusion

In Exodus 25 God gave instruction to Moses from the building of the tabernacle.

Exodus 25:1-2

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution."

And the Response is in Exodus 35:4-29

Verses 4-19 give more specifics as to the details of the contribution

Verse 20-29 is the response

- everyone whose spirit moved him, brought the Lord's contribution

Ask the Lord to examine your hearts.

Ask the Spirit to stir you to generosity.

Ask the Spirit to help you to follow its leading.