

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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If you would open your Bibles, please, to First Corinthians chapter 8, and then I want to ask you a question. I can preach on grace or I can preach on giving this morning. Which'd you rather me preach on? Now don't answer the question out loud because I already know the answer. Grace or giving? Well the truth of the matter is, I'm gonna preach on both at the same time, all right? Because you're going to learn something very wonderful and very exciting: that all giving is wrapped up in grace. We're going to talk about the grace of giving.

Look if you will here in Second Corinthians chapter 8 and verses 1 and 2, *"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia."* Now that's roughly speaking what we call Greece today. *"How in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."* God poured out grace upon them, and when God poured out grace upon them, even though they were in dire poverty, they became very, very liberal in their giving.

And now Paul goes on and he speaks to the church there at Corinth about giving. Now go down to Second Corinthians chapter 8 verse 7, *"Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,"* aren't these wonderful things? He says also, *"See that ye abound in this grace also."* So don't get the idea that on the one hand there is grace, and on the other hand there is giving. These things go together.

Now let me tell you what our church is all about. I'll just give it to you out of my heart: Magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. That's what we're doing here today: Magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word.

And then number two, we exist for the purpose of: Moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry. That is, we are here to help you to grow up to be mature so you can minister to other people. God's plan is not just for you to come on Sunday morning to sit, soak, and sour, but to serve! Moving believers in Jesus towards maturity and ministry. Have you grown up? You can be young once, but you can be immature for a long, long time.

All right, now here's the third reason we exist: Making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations. That's the third reason that we exist, to go to the man across the street, or to the people across the ocean, and tell them of the saving love of Jesus Christ. If you want to know why there's carpet under your feet this morning, why you're sitting upon a seat, why we're here, why this choir's here, why I'm up here, why we're together, that's what it's all about. Magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, Moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, and Making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations. That's it! That's what

we're all about! You could just put that in other words. You could just call it: The Great Commission. That's exactly what it is. We have taken The Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and just simply rephrased it for our use in this day and this age. And I want to tell you, my dear friend, that if we are not obedient to the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are guilty of high treason against Heaven's King.

Now, we're living in a desperate age. I am telling you, we live in a world today that celebrates depravity. I don't mean that they're just depraved, they celebrate it. And we're a generation that mocks traditional values. The result of broken homes: unwed mothers, sexual plagues, sexual perversion, it abounds! But in the midst of all of this, God has given us a vision.

Again, somebody will ask the question, "What is more important, to strengthen the whole church or to reach the whole world?" You can't answer that because it is strong churches that will reach the world.

Now we're talking about grace, and I want you to listen carefully because when it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing. So, I want you to listen. We're talking here about the grace of giving. Now I'm gonna have a lot of little sub-points today. Don't lose the thing in the sub-points. The sub-points are necessary, but there're three major points.

Number one: **the obligation of grace giving**. Now, listen to me carefully. You may be here thinking, "You know, Pastor, I'm not one of the big guys, one of the big gals, I don't have much to give." Now look if you will in Second Corinthians chapter 8 verses 1 and 2, "*Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*" Put this down. **Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty**. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty.

The people in Macedonia were at rock bottom destitution. On top of that, they had been persecuted. Their living and their goods had been taken from them. And while their standard of living had changed, their standard of life had not changed. Now your standard of living can change; just don't let it get to your standard of life because Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "*A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesses.*" And you know, we may have another recession, we may have another depression. That can change our standard of living but that cannot change our standard of life, Amen? Not if you have life in the Lord Jesus.

And, when your standard of living changes, it cannot even change your standard of giving. These people continued to give. They had joy in the midst of all of this. Here's the formula. Great affliction, deep poverty, plus grace equals abounding joy and abounding liberality.

Now, you want joy? A miserly man is a miserable man. I'm telling you. If you want joy, learn to give. These people gave out of a time of economic distress, not because they had plenty but because they had little.

Well, you say, "I don't have much." Well, come up here and I want to ask you a question. If God cannot trust you with little, do you think He can trust you with much? You think about it.

Now, if I were to ask you a question, if you had a million dollars, what would you do with it? Oh, you say, "Well, man, I'd make a big offering." Do you know the test of what you would do with a million dollars is what you do with what you have? Jesus said in Luke 16 verse 10, "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much.*" As a matter of fact, if you're not faithful with that which is least, you would even have more difficulty being faithful with that which is much because it would seem like you're giving much more. Of course you wouldn't proportionately, but listen, folks. Here's the point. I want you to get it down in your heart and in your mind: Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Everybody can give something.

Here's the second thing I want you to understand. **Grace giving is not energized by pressure.** Look if you will now in Second Corinthians 8 verses 3 and 4. Paul speaks of them and he says, "*For to their power I bear record, yea, beyond their power,*" that means beyond their ability, "*they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift.*" Did you hear that? These folks in poverty said, "Paul, please take this gift!" They didn't have to be pressured to give.

That's one thing I've learned here in this church, friend, we don't pressure folks to give, and you come up here again and get real close and I want to tell you something. We will never twist your arm and tell you what you ought to give. We are never going to use some psychological manipulation. We're not going to come and try to maneuver you and tell you, "Now you ought to do this or you ought to do that." No, I've said it before; I want to say it again. Grace giving means that you give out of your heart because you want to. And the preacher is not reduced to some sort of a beggar using gimmicks and tricks and pressures and all of these things, people having to be scolded and shamed and manipulated, threatened to give. These people begged Paul to take the gift. If you find anybody putting pressure on you around here, you let me know and I'll tell Jesus on them. I'll let Jesus put all the

pressure; however, He wants upon you.

Do you know why people get upset when you talk about giving, almost have a spasm? I'll tell you why. Jesus makes it very plain. He says in Luke 12 verse 34, "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" That's the reason some folks don't like it in church. They want to get out of the church building, out where the treasure is. But friend, if your treasure is here, your heart's going to be here. Just all depends on where your treasure is.

Listen to me. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Grace giving is not energized by pressure. Number three; **grace giving is not excused by performance.** Look if you will in Second Corinthians chapter 8 verse 7. Paul says, "*Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*" Now he's talking about giving.

Now he's saying, look, somebody might say, "Look, I'm excused from giving because of my faith. I'll just trust God so other people can give." Or, "I'm excused because of my speech: I preach and I teach and I sing." Or, "My knowledge; I'm one of the people who pour knowledge into this church," or "My diligence or my love." Paul says, "That's fine. All of these things are graces. That's wonderful. Thank God that you have them." But he says, "Now there's another grace, it is the grace of giving. And there's nothing you can do, there's no performance that you can perform, that will excuse you from grace giving. Grace giving is not excused by performance. There is no service, whether it be faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, or love, that is a substitute for grace giving. Say, Amen.

All right, now listen. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty, grace giving is not energized by pressure, grace giving is not excused by performance, and **grace giving is not enforced by power.** Look if you will in Second Corinthians 8 verses 8 and 9. Paul says, "*I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the forwardness of others and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for His sakes He became poor that ye, through His poverty, might be rich.*" Now notice how that begins there. Paul says, "*I speak not by commandment.*" Paul is saying, "I'm not commanding you to give."

Every now and then people say, "You know, the pastors of these big churches, they're just dictators." I always laugh when I hear that. Man, if I were a dictator, you'd all come to prayer meeting. I am a leader, I am a pastor. I'm not a dictator. I can't make you do anything. As a matter of fact, I serve at your pleasure. You could fire me if you wanted to. Please don't. I serve at your pleasure. I am not a dictator; I can't command you to give! I would not command you to give! Paul said to those Corinthians, "*I speak not by commandment!*" Grace giving, my dear friend,

listen to me, grace giving is not enforced by power.

Somebody says, “Well, Pastor, you’re going check up on me, see what I give.” I don’t know what you give; I don’t know what anybody gives. I don’t know what he gives, he gives, I don’t know what he gives, I don’t know what they give, I don’t know what the deacons give, I don’t know what anybody gives, matter of fact, I’m not sure what I give because Joyce writes the checks. I’m sincere about that. I don’t know. My job is to get you to love the Lord Jesus Christ! I’m not commanding you to do anything. I’m just simply telling you what the Bible says.

Now friend, listen. Do you know why we want to give? **We’re motivated by love.** Look if you will again in Second Corinthians 8 verse 8 of this same chapter. Look at the verse. He says, “*To prove the sincerity of your love.*” And do you know where that love comes from? Look in verse 9, “*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might become rich.*” In the light of Calvary, it’s nothing to ask. The person who gives is the person who’s been captured by Calvary.

You talk to some people about giving, they have a nervous breakdown. The preacher’s called a beggar. Why do we give? Not to build a building; not to keep the church afloat; not, God forbid, for a tax deduction, though you ought to take those so you can give more; not for appearances, but because of Calvary’s love; because of Calvary’s love. That’s what Paul says. Look, he says, “*Look, just prove your love, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.*”

All right, so, what I’m trying to say here, I’m talking about the obligation of grace giving. Have you got that point? That’s the obligation. And what we’re saying is, there’s no excuse, there’s no excuse if you’ve known the grace of God.

Now here’s the second point. Ah, we’re going to talk about **the operation of grace giving**, that’s the second point, the operation of it. How is it to operate? Well, look if you will in Second Corinthians 8 verse 11 now. Number one is to be **marked by performance**. It is not excused by performance, what you have done, but it is to be marked by performance, what you will do. “*Now, therefore, perform the doing of it.*” Do it! It’s easy to talk about giving. It’s easy to preach about giving. But grace giving is marked by performance! We sing, “Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be.” Well that needs to get translated into your life. I hear people always talking about what they aim to give. They’re aiming. I say, pull the trigger.

And let me say this, that there’s some of you who have a legacy; you probably don’t even realize that you have as much legacy as you do. There’s going to be an

enormous transfer of wealth in the next decade and you're doubting about making that money work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me borrow a phrase from the tennis shoe people, Just do it. Just do it. And do it so you can have the joy of giving it! Don't let somebody else disburse it! Don't miss the joy! And as a wise man said, "Do your giving while you're living, then you're knowing where it's going." Why should you die and let somebody else divide up your estate and spend that money for stuff that you wouldn't spend it on? Or why should you leave too much to spoil and ruin your kids? Now a wise man leaves an inheritance for his children, but if he's a wise man, he's going to leave a wise inheritance.

What is the operation of grace giving? It is marked by performance, it is **measured by providence**. Look if you will now in Second Corinthians 8 verses 12 through 15, "*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted,*" listen to this, this is a key verse, "*according to what a man hath and not according to that he hath not.*" The great question is not what would you do with it if you had it; the great question is what are you going to do with what you've got? Now watch it, "*For I mean not that other men be eased and ye be burdened, but by an equality that now at this time your abundance may be a supply of their want, that their abundance also may be a supply of your want, that there may be an equality.* As it is written, '*He that gathered much had nothing over and he that gathered little had no lack.*'" Now what's he mean by that? He's just simply saying, "Let's just give according to God's blessing, according to what you have." It is to be marked by performance. It is to be measured by providence.

Now some of you have providentially been blessed by, more than other people. Do you think you have more because you work more than other people or because you're smarter than other people or because you're more godly than other people or more honest than other people? No. Listen, I'm gonna tell you. Some of you have money just by sheer providence. There are other people who love God just as much as you, just as smart as you, they work just as much as you do, and yet God has been so good to you! Now you give!

You know, the Bible says in First Corinthians chapter 16 verse 2, "*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store according as God hath prospered him.*" Has God prospered you? Well then, be grateful for that. This is not Communism. He's not saying that, "Everything's to be put into one pot." No, that's not what he's saying. But he's saying this, "It's not equal gifts but equal sacrifice." Look again in Second Corinthians 8 verse 13 of this same chapter. He says, "*For I mean not that other men be eased and ye be burdened.*" He's not trying to say, "If you've got a lot, then you have to carry the burden of those who don't have much." He's not saying that at all. He's just simply saying, "Let there be equal sacrifice. They may not be equal gifts." Sometimes there're people who have less who give more.

Jesus one day was watching the offering being taken in the Temple. Now I said I don't know how much you give. I don't, but I'll tell you One who does, that's Jesus. He was watching the offering. And He saw a little widow. And there were many wealthy people there, and thank God for them. And they came and they put in much. And then this little widow put in a couple of pennies. It was her whole living; it was everything that she had! A couple of pennies. And Jesus said in Matthew 12 verses 41 and 42, "*She gave more than all of them.*" He didn't say, "She gave more than any of them." All of them put together! A few pennies. You see, how does our Lord measure your gift? Not by what you don't have but by what you do have. Luke 12:48, "*Now whomsoever much is given, the same shall much be required.*"

Is the Bible against being rich? No! The Bible says in Deuteronomy 8 verse 18, "*It's the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth.*" The Bible says that Abraham was very rich in silver and gold in Genesis 13 verse 2. King David, a man after God's own heart, died a good old age, full of days, riches and honor, First Chronicles 29 verse 28. Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was buried, was called a rich man, Matthew 27 verse 57. Barnabas was a rich man. Mary and Martha were rich, Acts 4 verses 36 to 37. In John 12 verses 1 through 3 we see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead, lived in a home that had a guest room and so forth. The Bible's not opposed to any of that. But I'll tell you what the Bible is opposed to, my dear friend: ruthless greed and hoarding.

You see, the Bible, in Matthew 6:19, speaks of those who treasure up to themselves riches. And the word treasure is the word we get our word thesaurus from. It means a collection. There's some people just collect things. I mean, they don't need them. They're just sitting there and they're just collecting it, they're hoarding these things up. Now God wants you to enjoy the fruit of your labor. But my dear friend, if you have quit making money and started keeping score, if you just have a collection of good things so that you can just look upon them and there're people out there, and there's a need and there's something that can be done for the Lord Jesus Christ, then for Jesus' sake, get it in circulation so you can be blessed. "A bell is not a bell until you ring it. A song is not a song until you sing it." Joy is not joy until you share it. Love is not love till you give it away. And wealth is not wealth unless it's in circulation. If it's sitting there in a bank and it never does anything, or in a vault, it might as well be cardboard.

Now listen, grace giving is marked by performance, it is measured by providence, according to God's blessings upon you, and it is to be **managed by prudence**. Look if you will beginning now in verses 16 through 18 of this same chapter, Second Corinthians 8, "*But thanks be to God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.*" Now who was Titus? Well Titus was a church executive, a leader, he was Paul's chosen ambassador, "*For indeed he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward of his own accord, he went unto you, and we*

have sent with him the brother.” So Titus came to get the offering and a brother, because from the mouth of two or more witnesses a thing shall be established, “*Whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches.*”

Now what kind of people ought to be handling the offerings? Number one, **men of compassion**, whose praise is in the Gospel. God forbid, God forbid, if any pastor’s listening to me right now, any of you embryonic theologs in seminary, listening to me right now, don’t you get on your finance committee, any man, any woman, who is not concerned with the saving of souls. Get men, women of compassion! Paul said, “*Titus and that brother, their heart, their praise is in the Gospel.*” Men of compassion and **men of consecration**. I’m just saying what happens to your money when you give it. Men of compassion handle it and men of consecration.

Look if you will in Second Corinthians 8 verse 19, “*And not that only, but who also was chosen of the churches to travel with us, with this grace which is administered by us, this grace,*” he’s talking about the giving, “*which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord.*” Now don’t you get on your finance committee any man who’s not interested not only in the Gospels but in the glory of God. That’s what we’re all about, friend, to be men who handle everything to the glory of God.

You know one of things that happens sometimes in churches? People get the idea that the church is divided into the sacred and the secular, and that the pastor is to take care of the sacred, and the finance committee is to take care of the secular. There’s a Greek word for that, it’s called baloney. I am telling you, my dear friend, that everything we do is to be for the glory of God; for the glory of God! You give to the glory of God, and therefore the money is to be managed by men, men of compassion, men of consecration, and **men of character**.

Look if you will in verses 20 and 21 of Second Corinthians 8, “*Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*” “*Providing for honest things.*” Those who handle the funds must have absolute, impeccable integrity and honesty and full accountability. “*In the sight of God,*” he says, “*and also in the sight of men.*” We would not for a moment allow what you give to be handled without honesty and accountability.

And then, not only men of compassion and men of consecration and men of character, and men, but **men of competency**. Look if you will also in Second Corinthians 8 verses 22 and 23. And it says, “*And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things.*” Diligent. That’s it.

Now here’s the third and final thing. We have talked about the obligation of

grace giving. We've talked about the operation of grace giving, and by the way, all of this just coming right out of the Bible. Now here's the third thing I want you to see, very quickly. I want you to see **the opportunity of grace giving**. What an incredible opportunity there is when we give by grace.

Number one, and we're gonna move right on to chapter 9 now. The chapter divisions are only there to keep preachers from preaching too long. They're not in the original. So we're gonna move into chapter 9 here. What do we do when we give by grace? Number one, we, **we encourage the saints**. Look if you will in the last part of verse 2 in Second Corinthians chapter 9, "*Your zeal hath provoked very many.*" You know what that means? When you're on fire for Jesus, you just set other people on fire.

I got a letter once from a little couple in our church. I mean, they were down, they didn't have anything financially, their job had gone from them. We had a love offering. They had in their bank account five hundred dollars and that was it, I mean five hundred dollars. You know what they did? They gave all five hundred. You say, "They're crazy!" Well they were nuts, but they're fastened to a good bolt. Let me tell you something.

They said, "Pastor, I just want to share this testimony with you." In the days following that, God wonderfully and providentially placed in their hands ten times what they gave. Now I'm not promising that to you, but I'm just simply saying this folks, listen. When I read that, you know what that did to me? Made me want to give. You see, when somebody gives like that, what does it do? It encourages saints.

I can remember one time when we're getting ready to come out here. One of our businessmen, I knew what had happened to him, I knew that he'd had a great reversal in his business. We were sitting around a table and he said, "Now gentlemen, I don't want to say this in the wrong spirit, but I just want to tell you what God moved me to give," and when he said that I said, "He can't do that. That's an impossibility." But he did it. And friend, I've seen God's hand upon that man's life and God's hand upon that ministry.

You see, when you, what is the opportunity? Number one, it is an opportunity to encourage saints. Number two, it is **an opportunity to enrich the sower**. And he calls giving sowing. Look if you will in Second Corinthians 9 verses 6 through 11 now, chapter 9 verse 6, "*But this I say, 'He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, but he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully, every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver!'*"

Have you ever seen a farmer go out here and just weep and weep and weep because he's putting seed in the ground? No! He is sowing because he knows that God gives both bread to the eater and seed for the sower, that's what he goes on to say. God wants you to eat; He knows you've got to eat. But what fools we are if we don't put seed in the ground! What somebody places in God's hand is never lost, it is not a gift, it is an investment. Whether you believe that or not, you don't change the truth where Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "*Give and it will be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together shall men give unto your bosom.*"

What is the opportunity? It is an opportunity to encourage the saints. It is an opportunity to enrich the sower. And finally, it is **an opportunity to exalt the Savior**, to exalt the Savior. Look if you will here in Second Corinthians, verses 12 through 13 of chapter 9. Look at it right now, "*For the administration of this serveth not only supply the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God while by the experiment of this administration, they glorify God.*" Whew! You know, people come here and they say, "These folks are crazy, look at them, they're all delirious, they're happy, they're giving money to God! But I'll tell you one thing," they say, "They have something more than Sunday morning religion. They glorify God!" It is an opportunity to encourage the saints, to enrich the sower, to exalt the Savior.

And you know how he ends this thing? In verse 15 of Second Corinthians 9, here's what he says right at the end. He just closes it out, and here's the way he closes it out. He says, "*And thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*" "*His unspeakable gift.*" That's Jesus! That's the whole argument. He said over there in Second Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 8, "*For ye see the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, though He were rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that He, through His poverty ye might be rich.*" Is he talking about a bank full of money? No, no, no, no. "*For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" Romans 10 verses 12 to 13.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. That's it, "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*" Now let me just switch a little bit now and stop talking about giving, and let's talk about receiving. God has given you a gift. It is a gift that Adrian cannot describe, neither could Paul. He just said, "It's unspeakable." That's the gift of grace, that's the gift of salvation, that's the gift where you say, "Lord Jesus, come into my poor old heart, forgive my sin, cleanse me, save me, Jesus."

Would you just, with your heads bowed and your eyes closed, just kind of reach up by faith, the hand of faith, and take the gift of grace right now and ask

Jesus to save you? When He saves you He will forgive every sin. When He saves you He will cleanse every sin. When He saves you He will put His Holy Spirit in your heart. That's not an emotional feeling. I can't describe it, but He'll be there. He'll put His Spirit in your life to give you power. And when you die He'll take you to Heaven.

Would you pray a prayer like this? "Lord Jesus, my sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Thank You, Jesus, that You gave Your life for me. Thank You for that unspeakable gift. Come into my heart. Come into my heart, forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus." Pray that prayer from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Pray it. Mean it. "Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then just pray by faith this way. "Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word. And Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. My life is no longer my own. All that I am and have and ever hope to be, I now place in Your hands. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Jesus, by Your grace, I'll never be ashamed of You. By Your grace I'll follow You wherever You lead me. Not in order to be saved, but because You have saved me, I'll do this, Lord Jesus. I love You, Jesus. In Your name I pray, Amen."