

I have been the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Olney since August of 2013. This sermon was preached on January 22, 2023. It is part of a larger exposition of 2nd Corinthians. I am currently working through a 20-year preaching plan that will allow me to preach through the entire New Testament and a healthy selection of Old Testament books. I have designed the order of the preaching schedule to alternate between different themes and genres to avoid monotony.

I am providing my manuscript and a slightly edited recording of the sermon audio. You will notice that in the delivery of the sermon, there are some places where I deviate from the manuscript, but on the whole I try to stick closely to what is written.

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OLNEY, TEXAS
JANUARY 22, 2023 10:45 A.M., SANCTUARY SERVICE
CHAD A. EDGINGTON, SENIOR PASTOR
2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-7
“THIS IS GOING TO BE EXPENSIVE”**

Intro:

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8. Our text this morning will be verses 1-7.

I remember back in 2019, I believe in the spring. We began to receive tremendous amounts of rain here in Olney. One morning after church and Sunday school, Jimmy Mayers came and told me that the pre-school teachers had discovered that the basement of the old sanctuary building, their classroom- which we had recently re-modeled, had flooded. We still don't know exactly how the water made it in. It could have been due to the shallow water table, or maybe water running down the street. I walked down to the basement and saw that there were thousands of gallons of water in the basement. I don't know that much about construction or buildings, but I took one look at that basement and I said, “This is going to be expensive.”

In the weeks to come, we discovered that the studs behind the plaster walls had been rotted out due to water damage. The building needed costly repair, or it needed to come down. Once we began to realize that the old building, which had been built in 1916, was no longer fit to serve us. The property committee then began a process of considering how to position this church facility-wise for the next 100 years. When we began to meet with architects and consultants, I took one look at the plans and said, “This is going to be expensive.”

And when I said that, I wasn't talking about the cost of time, or effort, or prayer, or planning... but I was talking about cold, hard cash. And I was actually talking about your cold, hard cash. The money in your pocket, in your bank accounts!

As Adrian Rogers, the famous preacher used to say, "There's gold in them there pews, but the problem is that it is still in your pockets."

Giving is one of those things preachers don't like to talk about. I've gotten over that, because it's in the Bible. It's a theme of scripture- finances and stewardship are a running theme in God's Word.

As we look at 2 Corinthians Chapters 8-9, which are the two chapters in the Bible that most heavily discuss monetary giving, I don't want to seem like I am sounding an alarm, or trying to drum up panic. I've been here a decade- others of you much longer than that. The Lord always meets the needs of this church. We praise God for his faithfulness to us.

But today, I want you to think about the money you give- or don't give- to the church to support the needs of the ministry. And I want you to think about it in the context of your walk with Christ, your sanctification- the process of your becoming more Christ-like every day. This isn't about the budget, the building fund, a duty, or even something that is automatic, but I want you to consider how your giving reflects and reveals your very faith in God and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If that is our approach to giving, we're not going to have a problem building anything.

You may consider your money given to the church as something totally divorced from your spiritual life. But Paul points out this truth to the Corinthians today in our passage that **our sacrificial and generous monetary giving is an important result of the work of God's grace in our lives.** (sermon in a sentence)

Last week our text focused on the comfort and joy that the repentant Corinthian church was bringing to Paul. Now he moves into this section of scripture where he wants to encourage them to follow through on a commitment they had made to give to meet the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering from poverty. To encourage them, he tells them about the believers in Macedonia and how they have also give to the Christians in Jerusalem.

We can break up the passage into three sections:

The Macedonian Christians giving to the Christians in Jerusalem (v.1-4)

The Macedonian Christians giving themselves to the Lord and his Apostle (v.5)

The Macedonian Christians setting an example for the Corinthians (v.6-7)

Look at verse one, as the Macedonian giving is described:

¹ We want you to know, brothers, 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 of taking part in the relief of the saints—

Notice Paul doesn't tell the Corinthians that they need to tithe. He doesn't say, "Let me tell you about the tithe that has been given among the churches of Macedonia." He says something much better when he says, "Let me tell you about the Grace of God that has been given."

The tithe, as I see it, is not commanded in the New Testament. In fact, giving in the Old Testament was different. There were many different kinds of offerings that were given. And those specific offerings don't seem to be carried over into the new covenant. What is commanded in the new covenant is much more dynamic and expensive. We are called to faithful, generous, sacrificial, and cheerful giving. And the real mercy is that the tithe is understood to be a good guide for generous money giving. I say it is a mercy because we naturally would come up with a much higher number if we were determining how much we should keep and how much we should give if we were going to be generous to a person who had saved us from death, much less eternal death. So, while the tithe isn't in view here, don't think for minute that less than the tithe is in view here. The way the Macedonian giving is described doesn't sound like they were holding much back.

Their giving reflected a few things. First it reflected **God's grace**.

What is the grace of God?

The grace of God is the Father giving his one and only son.

The grace of God is the compassion of Jesus on the lowest of the low.

The grace of God is Jesus laying down his life for the sheep.

The grace of God is the gift of the Holy Spirit

The grace of God is giving you what Jesus deserves.

The grace of God is Jesus taking all your sin upon himself.

Second, they gave during a very difficult time. Verse 2 says they were afflicted, but in the midst of the persecution that caused “extreme poverty,” they had an abundance of joy. They had a certain perspective that only poverty can give, and it caused them to overflow with generosity.

The immediate thought we have when we hear that verse is of the widow in Mark 12 who came to the temple treasury to give an offering. She was surrounded by rich people who were giving much, but she came and threw her two mites into the collection plate, and Jesus praised her because she gave it all.

She walked to the temple, determined to give for the pure joy of worship, even though she had no idea where the next meal was coming from. She probably thought to herself on the way, “This is going to be expensive.” But what an amazing thing that her act of giving was seen by God himself, and she was commended by God himself.

Verses 3 and 4 tell us that they gave according to their means and then some. That is the sacrifice.

When I was in college and my friends and I used to go to a buffet, CiCi’s, Pancho’s, or the Chinese restaurant, we would say, “OK, you know what to do, don’t eat until you are full, eat until it hurts.”

That was ridiculous, but it’s a good way to think about giving. We should give until it hurts. Don’t just give what you can afford to give, give to the point that you feel it. We should always be looking for ways we can spare a little here or there.

And in verse 4 we see that they actually begged to give.

What a joy that was for Paul. I love it when we have a need here and it is met so fast I have to tell people to stop giving. Nothing is quite as amazing when God’s people give.

And he mentions this in verse 5. He says, we didn’t expect this... But these people weren’t just giving to the Jerusalem Church. No, it was deeper. Notice verse 5:

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Their money giving was a result of them giving themselves to the Lord and his ministers.

How can you be that kind of giver, give yourself to the Lord, put yourself under the authority of Scripture? The apostles aren’t here anymore, but their teaching is preserved in Scripture.

The growth in your walk with Christ will happen when you surrender it all to him and submit yourself to God's Word.

The giving and the example was so powerful that he was going to send Titus to Corinth to receive their gifts. They had pledged to give, but they hadn't done it.

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—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

The last verse is Paul's real argument. He says: You are overflowing in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in earnestness, and you have our overflowing love for you- make sure you are overflowing in giving.

Something is wrong, if all these areas are abounding but this one isn't.

We might say that Paul is really "getting into their business."

Paul had just been amazed. It would be similar to how amazed we would be if a church from the jungles of Ecuador that we see on the videos that Mat Kountz (*missionary we support @ FBCO*) sends us gave \$1,000,000 to our building fund because they heard that our basement flooded. We would say, "They can't afford that." We would be inspired by their love for us, we would ask ourselves whether our faith was showing up so brightly where the rubber meets the road.

Somehow, in the way that God has arranged things, your love for Jesus isn't most reflected on your face during the music at church. It's more truly reflected in your bank statement.

Why has God set it up that way that our bank account is a barometer of our faith? It is because we need the training. I can say I have faith all day long, but how is that faith muscle really built up? It is built up through my faithful, practiced giving. I'm practicing putting things in God's hands. Because there is a time coming when you will face a trial or circumstance where you will have to put your whole life in his hands. You will be ready because you have been practicing trust.

Jesus said it like this: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:21)

Part of the cost of following Jesus does come down to faithful, sacrificial, cheerful giving to meet needs. To pay the preacher, to keep the lights on, to build new buildings, to purchase literature for discipleship, to buy the food we serve the children on Wednesday evenings, to buy the transient gasoline to get out of town, to help with light bills and to purchase things to help with orphaned foster children, to care for widows. You want to really follow Jesus? “It is going to be expensive.”

But giving money is an interesting thing. It is either the easiest thing you do, or the hardest. I give a tithe (10% gross, and then an offering on top of that). It doesn't pain me. I don't think about what else I could have done with the money. I don't expect anything in return. I started doing this years ago. It is a habit. Not giving a tithe is unthinkable to me, especially as the pastor of the church, but remember I was not always been a preacher. And I felt the same way back then as a lawyer or a teacher or whatever else I've done.

When I write that check, I need to not just consider my giving, but I need to consider God's giving...this is what makes it a spiritual act.

The grace of God is the Father looking upon your wretched, sin-soaked, sin-thrilled, Christ-hating soul and he deciding he is going to bring you to himself. And he says to his son, “This is going to be expensive.” And then Jesus willingly pays the price.

There are some here who give more than others. But prayer, Bible reading, loving people who are different, giving up time, sharing the gospel, these are the “holes” in your holiness.

For others of you, you don't give faithfully, or sacrificially, or with any sort of joy. The idea of giving a tithe seems impossible. You don't talk about it with your spouse because you don't want to become convicted. But I'm getting in your back-yard here and telling you that if you are a member, and you aren't giving substantially to the needs of God's people here, you need to repent of that, because that is a “hole” in your holiness. It's a spiritual issue.

So as we look at these two chapters over the next several weeks, here is what I hope.

I hope that if you are an automatic giver, your understanding of it will be revolutionized and you will find a new joy in it, but I also hope you will be challenged to look for another area where you are less generous, and you will change.

To the one who doesn't have an income: You aren't asked to give what you don't have. I hope that you will also find those areas where you are stingy. And especially for you younger people, I hope these words of God will burn into you, so that you will know exactly what to do when you get that first paycheck.

And to those who simply can't bring themselves to give: Times are uncertain. You don't have very much. Can you imagine the Lord doing something in your heart to where you were like these Macedonians? They could have found a thousand reasons not to give. They had much better reasons not to give than you do.

But see how eager they were. Can you imagine yourself actually eager to give like them? Can you stop and picture for just a moment writing a check that represented true generosity, true sacrifice, maybe for you that would be 10% maybe more, but what if you had as much joy in giving, as you do in buying Christmas presents for your children.

"I can't do it," you say. Give yourself first to the Lord. Then the rest becomes easy.

Geoff Thomas told this story in his sermon on this passage. There was a missionary who was dealing with a tribal chief and telling him about God. The chief was trying to please the missionary's God, so he gave the missionary a horse, then a belt, then jewelry, and some clothes. The missionary told him. "God doesn't want your things. He wants you." The chief replied, "That is a wise God. He knows if he has me, he has everything I have."

I want you to remember back to the moment you understood the gospel and you believed on Jesus as your savior and lord. If you heard the true gospel preached, if a preacher pleaded with you to deny yourself, and to take up your cross every day and follow Jesus, he wasn't asking you to put money in the plate for Jesus, he essentially was asking you to put your whole self in there. To give up your life. There was probably something you realized and said to yourself as you squirmed in your seat and as you took that first step to walk an aisle, or attend a baptism class, or to come talk to me... "This is going to be expensive."

If you will remember that you are giving Jesus your life, because he gave his life for you, you will not struggle to give. You won't push back against doing it either.

Nobody in heaven wishes they had given less... The Bible doesn't have a category for a stingy Christian. If you're there, something is wrong. You need to repent, or you need to finally surrender your life to Christ.

If God's grace is real in your life, then everything changes,
and one aspect of everything changing is that you develop
a heart that is faithful, generous, and cheerful in monetary giving.

Works Consulted:

- Geoff Thomas, mp3 sermon recording, 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, www.monergism.com
- Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Vol. 40 Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Waco: Word, 1986.
- John Phillips, *Exploring 2 Corinthians*, The John Phillips Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.