

Gracious Because of Grace

Text: 2 Cor. 8:1-9

Introduction

Annual Check-up

When you go to the doctor for your annual check-up, he/she often pokes, prods, and presses various places, all the while asking, "Does this hurt? What about this?" If you cry out in pain, one of two things has happened. Either doctor has pushed too hard or there's something wrong, and the doctor says, "We'd better do some tests. It's not supposed to hurt there!"

So it is when preachers preach on financial responsibility, and some people cry out in discomfort. Either the preacher has pushed too hard, or perhaps there is something wrong. In that case, we should admit, "We need the Great Physician because it's not supposed to hurt there."

BIBLE

Talking today and next week about giving. Bible subject. Not popular, but should be.

Parables: In Matthew, Mark, and Luke 1 of 6 verses deals with money.

Of the 29 parables Christ told, 16 deal with a person and his money.

FACTS: Income Americans give to charity: Poorest households: 5.5%; wealthiest households: 2.9%.

QUOTES

- The trouble is that too many people are spending money they haven't yet earned for things they don't need impress people they don't like.
- It's not what you do with the million if fortune should e'er be your lot, but what are you doing at present with dollar and quarter you've got. --Anonymous
- When it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing. --Jimmy Carter
- Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving. --Peter Marshall
- Do your giving while you're living so you're knowing where it's going. --Anonymous
- I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess. --Martin Luther
- I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we spare. --C. S. Lewis
- God judges what we give by what we keep. --G. Mueller
- He who gives what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice. --Sir Henry Taylor
- If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving. --Mother Teresa

Definitions:

→Generous: unconditional sharing, James 1:1-5. God gives because of who he is, not because of who we are.

Alexander the Great: The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins. A courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented, "Sir, coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?"

Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving."

→Gracious: filled with grace, but we have missed the general meaning of grace, we have overspecialized it, made it a religious world, lost any context/meaning in the secular world. A person is gracious because they are giving.

*Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure;
Where your treasure is, there is your heart;
Where your heart is, there is your happiness. - Augustine*

Ten Foundational Truths

#1--8:2, not a function of outward circumstances, or of wealth, is possible even in poverty

2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

Three Levels of Giving

1. You have to (law)
2. You ought to (obligation)
3. You want to (grace)

#2--8:3, not a function of one's ability

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

#3--8:4, is a ministry to others (9:1)

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

#4--8:5, is easier when one first gives self

5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

#5--8:6, is a grace, an act of kindness

6 So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

#6--8:8, reveals our genuine love

8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

HUMOR: Did you see the bumper sticker: Tithe if you love Jesus. Any fool can honk.

#7--8:9, makes us like Christ

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands that I still possess. –Corrie Ten Boom

#8--8:12, is what makes our gift acceptable

12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

#9--8:13, does not require that we give to the point of our suffering, God has enough for all
13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.

#10--9:5, blesses others

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation.

Results

Two men were marooned on an Island. One man paced back and forth worried and scared while the other man sat back and was sunning himself. The first man said to the second man, "aren't you afraid we are about to die." "No," said the second man, "I make \$10,000 a week and tithe faithfully to my church every week. My preacher will find me."