

StewardSHIP

Stewardship

SERMON SERIES BY
STEPHEN HERROD

MESSAGE 2:

WHEN GOD'S GRACE IS AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE

PASSAGE: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9
ESV

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—5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 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. 8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For 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.

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this sermon is to emphasize the transformative power of God's grace in shaping the lives of believers, leading to a culture of generosity and faithful stewardship. It uses the example of the Macedonian believers and connects their generosity in the face of the hardships to the idea that true wealth is found in joy amidst afflictions. The sermon encourages believers to let the grace of God work in their lives, fostering generosity regardless of external circumstances. Ultimately, it calls for a response of gratitude and a commitment to live a life of thanksgiving, expressing acknowledgment both verbally and through actions.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of “paying it forward” has ancient roots, but the modern expression has gained popularity since the 20th century. In its modern form, paying it forward refers to the act of doing a good deed for someone without expecting anything in return. The idea is that the recipient of the kindness is

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encouraged to do something kind for somebody else, in response to someone who intentionally did something kind for them. An example of this was in 2014 at a Starbucks in St. Petersburg, Florida. A woman paid for her drink and then asked to pay for the drink of the person behind her in the drive thru. That person received her free drink and returned the favor by paying for the person behind them, and so did that person. This continued with 378 other people doing the same. Friend, this story illustrates a chain of generosity that began with one person paying for someone else's drink, creating a ripple effect. Now in the context of stewardship, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, He was in line before us and He paid the price for our sins, and this grace that has been afforded to us is not just something to receive and understand, but it should shape our lives and generate generosity in, and through, our lives.

SERMON POINTS

1. GOD'S GRACE SHOULD BE THE MOTIVATION FOR YOUR STEWARDSHIP

In the lives of the initial believers in Macedonia, we witness God's grace not as an abstract concept but as a powerful force actively shaping lives and inspiring a

genuine culture of generosity and faithful stewardship among them.

You see, while addressing the initial believers in Corinth through this letter which contains the text used for today's sermon, we find that Paul used the Macedonian believers as an example of generosity to encourage the Corinthian believers to excel in the act of grace also.

You see, for the Macedonian believers, amazing grace was not just something they sang about, but it was also something that motivated their stewardship!

You see, the Macedonia church gave according to their means, but they also gave beyond their means (2 Corinthians 8:3), and Paul lets us know that these people gave according to their means and even behind their means, not by force, not because Paul told them to, but because the grace of God was at work in their lives (2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

The motivation of your stewardship, and hence the motivation for your generosity should be God's grace!

God's grace is a gift from God to you.

It's God's unmerited favor.

It's something you can never earn, would never be able to repay, and can never run out of.

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And this gift from God called grace that you have freely received is to be the motivation of your stewardship! And when your stewardship is rooted in God's grace, you will give generously because you have been shaped and formed by the reality that God gives generously to you. You are to forgive others, because God has graciously forgiven you! The proper response to God's grace is thanksgiving, but not just in word, but also in deed which means that a true, heartfelt response to God's grace will lead you to be a faithful steward over your life, relationships, gifts, time, health, and wealth!

Now get this: God's grace at work in your life fosters generosity, but let me take it further. God's grace at work in your life fosters generosity, regardless of your external circumstances! Now let me take it even further. God's grace at work in your life fosters generosity, regardless of your external circumstances, because when the grace of God is at work internally, it will manifest itself externally no matter what you're going through!

2. *YOUR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP IN SPITE OF WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH IS A VISIBLE SIGN OF AN INVISIBLE GRACE.*

And this was exemplified through the lives of the Lord's initial disciples in Macedonia. Listen to Verse 1-5 again: "We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 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. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)."

Beloved, paradoxically you can experience joy in the midst of persecution and personal suffering when your faithfulness is rooted in the grace of God rather than external circumstances! Paradoxically, you can experience financial hardship, even extreme poverty, and yet still be wealthy because when you are truly following Jesus, you learn that wealth is not about money or material prosperity, but having joy amidst severe affliction and hardships equals wealth!

Beloved, the wealthiest people on this earth are not the names listed on the Forbes 400 list, but the wealthiest people on this earth are the people of God who are experiencing hardships and afflictions, but still have joy!

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Maybe that's why that lady would sing that song, "after all, after everything I've seen, I still have joy! Through the storm, and rain, through heartaches, yes and pain, thank God I still have joy!"

Beloved, your faithful stewardship in spite of what you're going through is a visible sign of an invisible grace!
It is a visible sign that you are not controlled by your external circumstances, the sickness you are dealing with, the hardships that you are facing, the grief that you are experiencing, but the grace of the Lord on the inside is working on the outside, o' what a wonderful change has come! Is that your story? Are you a witness to this? If so, you didn't used to be that way; You used to be tossed and driven by your problems! You used to be tossed and driven by your issues! You used to be tossed and driven by what you're dealing with, but ever since you unwrapped the gift of grace and clothe yourself with it, you are faithful regardless of what you're going through externally, because the grace of God is at work internally!

Let me encourage you: you may be going through, dealing with financial hardship, parenting and/or grandparenting may be wearing you down, relationships burning you out, struggling with grief, but I encourage you to let the grace of God work in your life.

Let me tell you that when you let the grace of God work in your life and you:

- forgive as you have been forgiven,
- forgive even though you didn't get an apology,
- bless them that curse you,
- pray for those who scandalize your name and talk behind your back
- give your energy to your spouse your children, your grandchildren, your family, your church
- give in poverty and you give in surplus

Let me tell you that the thing you give is also the thing you receive!

Jesus said it like this:

"give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:38)."

Beloved, when you meet the emotional need for someone else, emotional comfort is going to come back to you!

When you give love, love is coming back to you! When you forgive others, you will be forgiven! When you give financially, financial blessings will come back to you! When you do good to others, goodness will come back to you! Whatever "it" is, the "it" that you give will be returned to you!

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Beloved, let the grace of God work in your life!

3. *TRUE GIVING AND GENEROSITY IS LINKED TO EXPERIENCING THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.*

Let us not only learn from the example of the Macedonians, but let us also learn from the example of Jesus the Christ, our Lord. As I remind you of 2 Corinthians 8:9, please approach it without applying a capitalist lens or interpretation. Verse 9 says, "For 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."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ embodies God's merciful action on our behalf, signifying God's free, effective, inexhaustible, goodwill active in and through Jesus Christ. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for your sake became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Beloved, as recipients of this amazing grace, how can you close your hearts, purses, wallets, gifts, services, and abilities? God's generosity in the gift of grace and the profound sacrifice of Jesus the Christ requires that Christian be generous in giving to others. True giving extends beyond

money; it involves the giving of yourself. The Gospel is not about what we can get from God but what God has given to us, so that we can give of ourselves to others. True giving is linked to experiencing the grace of God in Christ, where recipients of this grace do not have to earn this gift, but simply be in need and it is freely given. And our generosity stems from that grace working on us, in us, and through us.

On my flight back to Detroit this week, I was reminded of the Greek word "eucharisteo" and its etymology. The root word of eucharisteo is "charis," meaning "grace," with the adverb "eu" attached, signifying "good." So, eucharisteo literally means "good grace." In English, it is commonly translated and used as a verb – 'give thanks.' Therefore, when we give thanks, we are acknowledging and expressing gratitude to God for His good grace. To give thanks is to properly recognize that God's grace works well.

And now I leave you with this: A faithful steward of the Lord Jesus Christ is a true disciple of Jesus that not only says thank you with their lips, but also says thank you with their life.

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QUOTES BY STEPHEN HERROD

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“When your stewardship is rooted in God’s grace, you will give generously because you have been shaped and formed by the reality that God gives generously to you.”

“The proper response to God’s grace is thanksgiving, but not just in word, but also in deed which means that a true, heartfelt response to God’s grace will lead you to be a faithful steward over your life, relationships, gifts, time, health, and wealth.”

“Paradoxically you can experience joy in the midst of persecution and personal suffering when your faithfulness is rooted in the grace of God rather than external circumstances. Paradoxically, you can experience financial hardship, even extreme poverty, and yet still be wealthy because when you are truly following Jesus, you learn that wealth is not about money or material prosperity, but having joy amidst severe affliction and hardships equals wealth!”

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people of God who are experiencing hardships and afflictions, yet still have joy.”

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