

The Overflowing Grace of God (Part 2)

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Date: 14 August 2022

Preacher: Phil Pickett

[0 : 0 0] Well this evening we're back looking at two Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 and last week we asked the question what is the natural effect of God's grace when it is poured out on God's people and we saw from the example of the Macedonians that the grace of God naturally overflows into the grace of giving or generosity in other words as surely as rain comes down on mountains and falls into and goes into streams and streams go into the sea. The example of the Macedonians was a beautiful display of God's grace and glory. If you look back in chapter 8 you see just the way in which they couldn't wait to help out all in this collection for the starving church in Jerusalem and as we looked at it as we saw their characters we saw their their eagerness. Well only God's grace flowing into the Macedonians could produce that kind of miraculous generosity they gave in the midst of their poverty they gave in the midst of their persecution and we saw that that just revealed in them the grace of God and we saw that part of that God's grace in chapter 8 where Paul writes in 8 verse 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. That great exchange crusts riches given for us and that we might taking our sin so that mean we might become children of God and if you remember Paul's whole intention was that the Corinthians would in turn remember God's grace to them that rather than store up God's gifts like a dam they would overflow with generosity in their lives in their lives in their time in particular with Lee with their money see that the church in Jerusalem and Judea had been struck by a famine and there's quite a lot of people who are starving there and Paul had been going around the churches in Turkey and Greece and getting up this taking up this collection to help the believers there and the grace of God should naturally overflow in the grace of giving that's the principle that was to govern the

Corinthians generosity that's the principle that should govern our generosity but this week we're going to move more into the practice of giving you might say and our key verse perhaps is chapter 9 verse 7 each one must give us he is decided in his heart not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver God's desires that were cheerful and not reluctant and that in some ways I just think that's probably the key verse because Paul in this next section of chapters 8 and 9 identifies two ways in which the Corinthians or us what we might be reluctant give us and instead Paul helps us to see how actually when we grasp hold of how great God's provision is for us that should naturally overflow to help us to give us so two things that might make us reluctant and then looking at cheerful giving so first of all concern for integrity helps us to be cheerful givers the first Corinthians first concern it seems was how money is handled a concern about fear about how money is handled and we we care about money is handled only this might seem like a strange place to start it might seem like something that you can go through and some admin things you go through looking at the small print of the ball the fall but we care about how money is handled and the Corinthians did too we care about if a government is corrupt just think of the expenses scandal back in 2009 it was uproar because all these people who should have been public servants were actually collecting all this money and using it for their second homes and buying and revamping their homes and all this stuff we care about integrity and we're reluctant to give if we're not sure how that money is used that's why charities are so upfront when they say things like for every pound that you give 84 pence is spent goes to alleviate poverty and 16 pence only 16 pence goes to help with fundraising that kind of thing well Paul knew that the Corinthians might have similar concerns with the financial collection for the starving through some Christians and so his goal in that that part of chapter 8 that we read verses 16 to 24 is to assure them is to assure them that the collection is being handled by men of utmost integrity and just briefly we get the men's credentials if you glance down at verse 23 we told that Titus is Paul's chief delegate and he's described as a fellow worker for your benefit otherwise Titus is an out-of-robbing he's on your side when he comes to get this

collection he's on your side like men likewise two other men in verse 18 and 22 are described as tested and trustworthy these are people who put the gospel first and so Paul concludes in 8 verse 20 we take this course so that no one should blame us about the generous gift being administered by us we aim what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man Paul wants the Corinthians to be assured that these men are honorable because when we're assured of where the money's going that helps us to be cheerful give us but there's another layer as well you see Paul's second goal in telling the Corinthians about this was he wants to show his he wants the Corinthians also and us to be concerned about integrity not just so that we can be wise in our giving but also so that we can tell the difference between true and false gospel ministry and between cross-centred appeals and things that actually distract and detract from the gospel and see if you've been reading all of two Corinthians and you'd have found that

Paul has been explaining and defending the true nature of gospel ministry this whole time there's been these so-called super apostles that come on the scene and they had been sacking away the Corinthians money as well as wooing them away from the Paul's gospel because Paul's preaching a gospel and it was about Christ crucified and Paul's life looked weak he was in prison he talks about his beatings in the lashings these guys come on the scene they're like hey listen to us the gospel reprieve reprieve just about being a Christian and actually life being tough they're preaching something that was more about I know how you'd say I guess being a Christian means you're happy healthy and powerful because that's what they looked like and Paul is trying to show his ministry in contrast to them not only in the content of what is taught but also in how he acts towards money and I mean we see and we see how just relevant that is straight away today so often actually along with false teaching comes a wrong attitude towards money millions of dollars every year we see a given to televangelists and false teachers who are seeking their own glory instead of at their own financial gain so Paul's wanting to show in contrast that his ministry is above board and while we're not in current that that principle is very contemporary as questions we need to be concerned about integrity we're surrounded by more and more local and international appeals for our money even if we had a whole lifetime we wouldn't be able to give to all the places that often legitimate causes to ask for money and so what Paul is telling us to be open-handed he doesn't want us to be rash and foolish he wants us to be wise because remember we were reminded last week that our money like everything else belongs to God and so we need to be good stewards of everything that we have been given now if that sounds basic then that's actually a really good thing you might be sitting there thinking you feel you're just saying everything that's obvious because stewards of God's money and don't foolishly throw it away to people who are gonna well fritter it away but that's that's a really good thing if that's basic and that's not something that we should take for granted we should be thankful that we are in a church where money is double counted when there is transparency and accountability with church finances the point is so just to know isn't give more money to church but that we shouldn't take integrity for granted and then we should care about it money has a corrupting power and in the history of the church well we just see how important it is to guard against that just think of the corruption in medieval churches think of well all the huge amounts of money that are basically robbed away from Christians in televangelists or some other mega churches that are all out to just get people's money I found a study from 2013 which estimated that that year there would be 37 billion dollars embezzled out of them total money given to churches about 6% of all money given to churches would be embezzled and that will actually that turned out to be more than all the money that was supposedly went to evangelism it's a massive problem with corruption so while it's natural to us we should we should give thanks and seek to guard our integrity when it comes to money we need to be men and women of integrity we need transparency and accountability we need to insist those things are there as well whether in this church or any organization we're part of it's not you know insisting on integrity isn't saying we don't trust

the people who handle the money it's saying first of all we have a God who cares about integrity and recognizing that and second recognizing that we've fallen humanity we're sinful by nature and the money isn't really corrupting and that none of us can think that we're above would that we're above that Paul Paul makes a point of it he spends two chapters trying to help us to think about this so we need to also have a high concern for integrity Paul's point isn't to make us afraid of giving but rather a concern for integrity should help us to be cheerful because we have confidence then that God's gifts are being stewarded to his glory I realize I've kind of skipped through chapter 6 verses 16 to 24 picked out those main bits you can read it more in detail and but second I want to move on

to chapter 9 if the question is first concern was about integrity their second concern was about God providing for them after they give so our second point trusting God's provision that will help us to be cheerful give us trusting God's provision helps us to be cheerful give us because if so the Corinthians second concern seems to be something like well if I give I'm not sure I'll have enough so I hinted that last week when the

Corinthians in verse 13 of chapter 8 Paul says I don't mean that you should be eased and others burdened but this should be a matter of fairness Paul saying he doesn't want them to give their way into poverty once there's be wants each and then where those people have a lot they can provide for those who are lacking now for comes it comes out this again he's wants to assure them that they won't be left wanting and that God's got their back they don't need to be afraid if you look at 9 verse 8 we see that Paul says and God is able to make all grace about you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times you may abound in every good work God is able to make all grace about you that word about is the same word is overflow which we saw come up again and again in chapter 8 chapter 8 verse 1 Paul talked about the example of the Macedonians God's grace overflowing to the Macedonians and that overflowing into their giving later on in chapter 8 he commanded us he Corinthians overflow in the grace of giving and now he gives us the assurance that even as we overflow into giving that's not just a plant that's going to be pouring out one to one way he's saying that God will make every grace overflow to you so that you can overflow in good work God's got your back in other words God's not going to drain you dry the assurance when when we're generous whether it's whatever we have in our life our assurance that the assurance that lies behind our generosity is that we have a generous God who's got our back and will provide for every one of our needs do you notice how comprehensive God's provision is in verse 8 it's all grace abounding to you all sufficiency all times in all things in every good work in every area of life God's got your back that's what Paul's saying you hear about people who work hard their whole life and then just before they're about to retire their company lets them go with a severance package that leaves them barely able to get by they don't get the pension that they were promised they completely let down well God's not like that God doesn't call us to just keep giving out our whole life and then it's like right okay I've used you and chuck us away and it goes on to the next person God promises to provide for all our needs he's not stingy he provides for everyone for all things at all times so that we may abound for every good work God provides for us so that we can overflow in generosity notice the word though in verse 8 it's so that having all sufficiency in other words all we need not necessarily all we want and that's really important God is a promise he hear that if we are generous with our money that will get a promotion all that we'll get a bigger house or better holiday or happier life for better health even that's that's how some people might twist this verse to say that there isn't even a promise that God will necessarily give us back or we give away God will give us all we need but we can trust that because as we've seen if you have we've seen so much we've been looking at the past few psalms as we've been looking at two Corinthians God doesn't abandon his people he's faithful the whole point in the quotes in chapter 8 verse 15 that was a reminder back to the

[15 : 24] Exodus where the people were wandering through the desert and they left Egypt and with this promise that God would take them to the land and they thought God had forgotten they've got a promise to provide for their needs and they were in the desert thinking God where are you we're following we're doing what you commanded you said you've got our back where are you and they started grumbling what did God do he poured down man from heaven got a whole flock of quail to land in the camp so they could eat even though they were grumbling about God provides for his people and as Jesus said to his disciples we see that not only God providing a history but also in creation Jesus said to his disciples do not be anxious about your life your father knows what you need if God so close the grass which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven how much more will he close you we can look around we can see so much in the nature around us we can see and just the birds in the cliff top God provides for them will provide for us and so Paul's point is this to the Corinthians to Carl away free church that we can open our hands without fear because we have a generous

God who will provide for our needs I think that important that point is important to emphasize because that's not normally what we fall back when we think of what we trust in order to give see normally our trust can be money rather than God actually we give if you think that money's got our back rather than if God's got our back we think okay right I haven't have enough in my back I got a

surplus okay I can give some of this now this is not saying that we shouldn't be wise we shouldn't budget but I think we can often think if we've got a comfortable cushion of money well then at this point we're able to start thinking about being generous nothing there's two main lines that stoke that particular fear of generosity the first is that money gives us independence freedom to live the lifestyle we want that's the promise of the world that that's what money gives us the Bible says that that's false for one thing when we're not true we're never we're never truly independent we earn money we work hard for it but every good gift and every perfect gift is from the Father above money belongs to God we're never independent in that way Roy's dependent on God how whether we have little whether we have much and second money can be dangerous if we're if we're trying to if our goal in life is to have a cushion of money that will make us feel comfortable and secure very quickly that could be an idol and something that we live for and something that we rely on rather than resting on God and very quickly that cushion become popped and that's a blue imagery but very good very quickly that can disappear and then that promise of money giving independence it's a promise that it can't give there's lots of rich people who are really very unhappy Jesus says himself life does not consist in an abundance of possessions that's the first line the second line though is that well is that money gives us I mean as an independence gives us security as well we can think that we're safe if we've got a steady wage if we've got house insurance if we've got if we own a house or whatever we can very easily think that we don't need God to be secure we've got God he secures our eternity he secures after death but actually our money secures my hair and now listen to what Proverbs says about fragility of wealth says castles a glance at riches and they are gone for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle money and possessions are fleeting pensions are wrong insurances are wrong but those things can fail and if you put all our hope in them we're sure to be disappointed money doesn't give us security money doesn't have our back so having money today for shouldn't be the reason for our giving it's again it's great to budget it's good to be careful with money but having money and having surplus trusting in that that's not the reason why we give we give because God's got our back not because money's got our back we give because we have a God who is provided everything we need and will continue to provide for we need that's the promise that Paul goes on he gives the Corinthians if you look at verse 9 and 10 with me Paul describes that the best insurance best security package anyone could ever have he says as it is written he is distributed freely he is given to the poor his righteousness endures forever he who supplies seed to the soul and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness verse 9 and 10 are a compound quote of Psalm 112 verse 9 and Isaiah 55 verse 10 and Paul is not saying that the Corinthians will earn brownie points of righteousness for

their generosity rather Paul saying that God's gonna provide not just for your physical need but your spiritual needs God what God provides is comprehensive he provides for the past he provides for the present he provides for the future we contrast in God's provision for the future because his trap record is already his greatest gift Jesus Christ as we saw he gave him what in his riches Christ gave up those riches to give us and though he was rich he became poor he gave up all those riches his righteousness giving them to us so that we buy his poverty might become rich he gave us righteousness in status the most we moment we trust in God we're declared righteous in God's sight it's a free gift since God has provided so much for us in Jesus Christ since he has provided promised to continue to providing for our needs into eternity we don't need to be afraid we don't need to be afraid when we give we can open our hands and cheer for giving that's Paul's point so first the concern for integrity helps cheerful giving second trusting God's provision helps cheer for giving and third we should ask how then shall we give over the past few

Sundays we've talked a lot about I might say the theory behind generosity for the Corinthians and us there's no but there's no point in talking about talking about theory that never turns into practice is there and Paul tells the Corinthians that generosity should be marked by three main things we see those in the three adjectives in verse 7 voluntary bountiful and cheerful and voluntary we see if you look at the masternings example voluntary you see how voluntary was that that was the eagerly begs for the privilege of giving and Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to feel pressured into giving all generosity should be an overflow from the gospel it should be an overflow from recognizing God's grace to us if it doesn't well that's not really what God wants but it's just and if we're trying to pressure people into give to giving that's ripping away God's grace that's nothing that's unbiblical all giving should come as a response to God's grace that's why it's to be voluntary second is to be bountiful

Macedonians overflowed in a wealth of generosity amidst their poverty that's what Paul says and so he writes and so that's why he writes in verse 6 the point is this whoever so sparingly will also reap sparingly whoever sows bound to flee will also reap bound to flee Paul wants us to be bountiful givers generous givers because generous giving produces above the crop a bountiful yield and that includes that it that includes righteousness for us it's not just about for the yields for those we give to Paul saying it's a great blessing for you in terms of righteousness for us in terms of a bumper crop for us Paul's telling them that when God's grace abounds in them it means joy for them it means righteousness for them they grow more like Christ as they give about giving will look different for different people while we're told to overflow with what we have it's very easy to think about to think in the Old

[24 : 31] Testament to think about that 10% tithing and people often talk about that as a guideline for giving actually if you look in the Old Testament people are often probably normally gave a lot more than that 10% is just part of the money I've added up all the sacrifices and stuff and it actually needed more 40% but let's just let's take 10% anyway bountiful giving means that depending on our financial situation for some people that will be too much but for some people that will be too little the point is isn't God is God isn't telling us a number of what we should give but rather what our hearts should be like that they should be overflowing in generosity so that we're bountiful in our giving the other thing we see in verse 7 is that we should be cheerful give us there's no coercion there's no reluctance there should be a joy in giving a freedom and an open-handedness that can't come from just coercion a joy in giving only comes when it overflows from recognizing what we have been given by God and trusting in his provision for us when that generosity comes for that cheerful giving might let's say I don't know we could be giving to giving to our church we could be giving to another work in church planting or missionary overseas whatever direction that is we can often think when it comes to deciding how much we give or how much should I give that's often what we think about how much do I have to give or Paul's aim is that the more and more we focus on how much God has given us the more we're captured by his gift of Christ the more we're assured by his constant provision for us actually the question won't be asking isn't how much should I give how much can I give what can I give in response to all that God has given me what can I how can I overflow if we're talking about money then how much money can I give away and what can I support what can I use God use what God has given me if we're talking about time well how can I give away my time how can I use all that God has given me to serve the church family to care for other people we're talking about energy how much energy can I give how much can I pour myself out into making Jesus know how much can I pour myself out into encouraging his people how can I overflow in my love for others as we focus on all that God has given us as we're assured that all of all that he has given and will continue to give that hopefully turns out how much should I give into how much can I give the Bible I think it's interesting the Bible is a prescriptive Bible isn't ever prescriptive on generosity in how much we should give but I think that is more challenging because it forces us to each sit back each one of us and ask what does generous giving look like for me we've seen it for the Macedonians it looked like an overflow of generosity in the midst of poverty and persecution we don't know what it looked like the

Corinthians in the end we don't get that another three or four all in the park for us maybe that's something we can keep talking about over coffee and with our friends in that over the over the kitchen table what does generosity look like for me in every area of life we might say we're spending really good being generous in one area maybe we're really good maybe God has opened our hearts and we're good at being generous with our money the question for us might be well how can I be generous with my time or how can I be generous with my speech in the way I talk to people or even in talking to people and talk to people I don't find easy those are good questions I think for us all to ask I want to conclude by coming back to the grace of God grace of God we've seen naturally overflows in the grace of giving voluntarily cheerfully abundantly and by doing all these things we display God's grace Paul began chapter 8 by saying the example of the Macedonians was like a wonderful sculpture of God's grace and I think it's telling that he ends chapter 9 by basically saying a similar thing and then verses 13 to 15 he says that when people see your service they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel and the generosity of your contribution in other words Paul saying when people when people see how much God has changed you to make you generous givers they're gonna say praise be to God and that's what we want that's what that's our aim for us I am isn't that people saying look at our free church

look at the people they're generous that's not right I am is that people look at our God and say wow they have an amazing God God they didn't used to be like that but God changed them to be really generous in every area of their life to one another that's our aim that's a desire that God is glorified in all things what higher privilege is there than being used for God's glory that we can to can demonstrate his grace to us that we too can demonstrate the power of the gospel as we overflowing his grace so let's pray that he'll do that amongst us to his glory let's pray Heavenly Father we thank you for all that you have given us we thank you most of all the gift of Jesus Christ and Lord we pray that as we focus and meditate on your gifts to us as we as we rest in the abundance of all that you've given us and continue to provide as we remember that you've got our glory pray that you would help us to overflow in giving in our time in our money in our energy and in all things that we can think of and all the gifts you've given us make us church to overflows to serve one another and to witness for you and to give glory to you in that and pray this in Jesus name we're gonna close by singing Psalm 145 so I'm praising God all years and all years done let's start the sin so okay I will extol your name forevermore. Day after day, your praise I will proclaim.
Grace is the Lord most worthy of all praise. His witness none can search or comprehend.
[32 : 13] Each generation will recount your deeds. Unto the next your mighty eyes moment.
They praise the splendour of your majesty. The power of the works that you have done.
I too will meditate upon your deeds. And your majesty, as I will be known.
They will rejoice in your benevolence. And your abundant grace they'll celebrate.
The righteousness that you have shown to them. In praise and joyful song they will relate.
[33 : 40] Now with the Lord of peace give himself, give you peace at all times. May God be witherful, that's all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.