

(2 Corinthians) ch.7:6-8:9

by Zac Poonen

God's comfort is available to all believers, and it can be found through fellowship with others and a godly sorrow for sin.

Duration: 44:24

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Philippians 2:9

Topics: "Generous Giving", "Stewardship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of giving in the church and the right attitude behind it. He emphasizes that giving should not be done out of compulsion, but rather out of a desire to serve and bless others. The speaker highlights the example of the churches in Macedonia who gave beyond their ability and willingly participated in supporting believers in need. He also emphasizes that before giving financially, one must first give their heart and life to God, as God desires a person's whole being, not just their money. The sermon concludes by stating that giving is a manifestation of God's grace and a way to share what we have with others.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 2nd Corinthians and chapter 7 and verse 6. In our last study we were considering this wonderful title that's given to God, God who comforts the depressed. We saw in the beginning of our study of 2nd Corinthians in chapter 1 and verse 3 that He's called the God of all comfort. And we could look at it like this, that God is the God who knows to comfort every type of person in whatever situation they are in.

He knows how to encourage them, and where comfort is a very big word, it means encourage, strengthen, lift up, and comfort itself, console, strengthen. In all these things, in all situations, He knows how to encourage and lift up all types of believers in whatever situation they may find themselves in. But here is a very beautiful expression which is of particular help to those who find themselves frequently discouraged and depressed.

God who comforts the depressed. But if we were to examine the source of our depression, very often we find that we are depressed because of earthly things, and because we love material things, or love something of this earth. Now God cannot heal us permanently from such depression and discouragement unless we obey His command to stop setting our mind on the things of earth and have our minds set on the things that are above, and seek His kingdom first, and His righteousness.

And if we obey that, we'll find that God always helps us so that we are never discouraged. God strengthened Paul through fellowship with Titus, and it is through fellowship with other believers that God encourages and strengthens us too. As we see in verse 6. But in verse 7 it says, not only by Titus' coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you.

In other words, Paul was encouraged not only by fellowship with another believer, this is one reason why Jesus sent out His disciples two by two. When there are two believers together, there is an expression of the body of Christ, which is not possible when a believer is all by himself. This is why Jesus said, if two of you agree concerning anything, it shall be granted by my Father in heaven.

And He also said that what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, in the same context. There is an authority that two believers can exercise over Satan's power, which one believer cannot exercise by himself. If it's merely a matter of casting out demons, one believer can do it all by himself.

But when it's binding Satan's authority, which is a far more thing than merely casting out a demon, it requires two. An expression of the body of Christ. And that's what we see here.

Paul alone struggling, tending towards depression, overcoming it, because God gives him fellowship with another believer. And not only through that fellowship, but by the encouraging news that Paul got. And what was the encouraging news? It wasn't a gift of money that encouraged Paul.

No, he was not so materialistically minded as to find his happiness in material gifts. No. His encouragement came from the news that the Corinthians were responding to the correction that he had written in his first letter, and that they had repented.

Think what a spiritually minded person Paul was, that his encouragement came through seeing spiritual development in the lives of other believers. This is how it was. Titus came, and Titus reported to us, he says in verse 7, Your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

Paul heard through Titus of the love that the Corinthian Christians had. Their mourning because he had corrected them. And their zeal and devotion to him.

How sorry they were, how eagerly they took his part, that is God's part, against the person who had sinned. And he says, this just made me thrilled. It made me rejoice.

So that the coming of Titus and the bringing of news of the spiritual development of other believers is what helped Paul to overcome depression. There we can learn two things from those two things Paul mentions here. One, we can overcome depression by seeking fellowship with other believers.

And second, we can overcome depression by being interested in the spiritual welfare of others instead of being preoccupied with our own problems all the time. Paul found delight in the spiritual development of the Corinthian Christians and that's how he overcame the temptation to be depressed himself. There is a lesson there for all of us.

To be free from preoccupation with ourselves, to seek fellowship with other believers and to be interested in the welfare of others. Thus God rewards us by being free from depression ourselves. Verse 8, he says, though I caused you sorrow by my letter, and there he is referring to the first letter to the Corinthians where he had written very strongly to them.

He even wrote to them saying, shall I come to you with a rod? And then asked them to excommunicate that man who was living in sin. He says, though I caused you sorrow, he says, I don't regret it. He doesn't feel sorry, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in writing that letter and it's included in scripture and he certainly didn't have to feel sorry for it because it accomplished a purpose.

He says, though I did regret it, humanly speaking, there was a little grief caused to him that he had to write in such a way to believers. He was tempted to feel sorry, but he says, I can see that the letter caused you sorrow, but only for a while. Yes, he was disturbed that the letter caused them sorrow, but he was glad that it was only for a while and he was much more glad that they repented.

And he says, now I rejoice, verse 9, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led you to repentance. Paul's joy came in seeing others repenting. He didn't write things just to hurt people.

Paul was not such a carnal believer as to write letters merely to hurt others. He says, I didn't want to hurt you, but he says, I'm so glad that you began to grieve for the things that were wrong in your church and that that led to a change of heart. For he says further in verse 9, you were made sorrowful according to the will of God in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

Or in other words, your pain was that which God meant you to have so that you should not lose anything. God allows us to suffer pain and to have discipline in order that we might not suffer spiritual loss. And that's a very wonderful truth.

Sometimes we wonder why God allows us to face pain, pain of various sorts. Here is the answer. So that we might not suffer spiritual loss.

It's better to lose a little comfort and a little pleasure than to be spiritual losers throughout eternity. Because he says here, the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance which we don't have to feel sorry about, without regret. If, when I suffer pain at God's hand, it leads me to repentance from something that is wrong in my life.

We need never feel sorry for the wound that we got or the pain that we suffered. Because the result of it has been something that is of eternal value. And when we look at things from an eternal standpoint, from the standpoint of eternity we will see that pain and suffering are nothing if it has brought godliness.

And then he says in verse 10, he says there are two types of sorrow. There is a sorrow which brings true repentance. But he says there is also a worldly type of sorrow.

And the worldly type of sorrow only brings spiritual death. What is worldly sorrow? We can say worldly sorrow is feeling sorry for ourselves. Because of all the pain we are suffering, people are speaking ill about us and harming us in this way or the other or we are suffering physically or having some sickness and we are perpetually occupied with self-pity and feeling sorry for ourselves.

That type of sorrow only brings spiritual death. Whenever you see a believer in that type of sorrow for himself you can be sure that that's going to lead him deeper into spiritual death. This is not the type of sorrow that Paul is speaking about.

It's not a sorrow because somebody corrected you and rebuked you because you did something wrong. There are believers who are occupied with that type of sorrow and it always brings spiritual death. But if it's a sorrow for one's own sin, Lord, I'm sorry that I hurt you so much.

I grieved you by that thing. The way I acted there was not honoring to you and feeling sorry for oneself because one has sinned against God. And a mourning because of God's honor, not my name, but that God's name is dishonored.

That type of sorrow brings life. So we need to be very careful in our lives that we don't get possessed with a sorrow which is of the world. A feeling sorry for ourselves which will only bring spiritual death.

But that we break free from that type of thing and grieve for sin that dishonors us. Sin that dishonors God's name. A grief and a mourning like Jesus said, Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

That's not mourning for ourselves. That's not shedding tears for ourselves. But because we have dishonored God, bringing repentance and a wholehearted turning from that.

That will always bring spiritual life. Let's turn today to 2nd Corinthians and chapter 7 and verse 10. We were considering in our last study about the two types of sorrows mentioned in that verse.

A sorrow that is according to the will of God which produces repentance which we never will regret in all eternity. A mourning like Jesus spoke in Matthew chapter 5 for our own sin. For that which dishonors God in our life.

For that stupid thing which we have done which has brought dishonor upon God's name. And then the other type of sorrow which is a feeling sorry for ourselves because we have been rebuked and corrected or because we have suffered some pain or difficulty or trial. That type of sorrow always brings spiritual death.

But the Corinthians had responded with a sorrow which was divine. And what did that produce? He says you sorrow in a godly way with a godly sorrow. And see what results it has produced.

Look how seriously you have taken life after that. What a vindication of yourselves. What an eagerness to clear yourselves from blame by setting things right.

By making restitution. How angered you were and your anger was not against people but against sin. Praise God when our anger is against sin that we discover in our own flesh and not against people.

And how you wanted to clear your conscience. What vehement desire. What eagerness and what zeal.

What avenging of wrong. Look how it made you long for my presence. How it stirred up your keenness for the faith.

How ready you were to punish and set right things in the church. Even willing to excommunicate someone in order to keep the church pure. And he says in all these things you have demonstrated yourself to be innocent.

You have cleared your conscience he says. You have completely wiped away that reproach that was upon yourselves in this matter. As far as God is concerned your mourning and your zeal in your repentance has cleared your record before him completely.

It's wonderful to have a zeal like that. We must always examine ourselves whenever we find ourselves in such situations in sorrow. We need to ask ourselves whenever we are in sorrow.

Every believer is this sorrow worldly sorrow then it will lead me to death. I need to get rid of it as soon as possible. Is it godly sorrow that's making me hate sin and not hate people? Mourn for my own failure and not for the failure of others then it will produce life.

In other words if we judge ourselves we get life. If we judge others and feel sorry for ourselves and justify ourselves we are on the way to spiritual death. Worst well so he says although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

And so he says I'm not particularly thinking of the man who did wrong nor for the sake of the one who is suffering wrong. He was thinking of the glory of God. Paul didn't have anything against that man who sinned but he was concerned about the glory of God.

And he says I wrote these things to make you conscious in the sight of God of your own earnest care for us. And when he says us that means for the standards that Paul and the apostle stood for. That they were devoted to those standards and therefore he says this situation was good.

For this reason verse 13 he says we have been comforted. He's explaining how God helped him in his depression. When he was tempted to be depressed rather.

By the coming of Titus and by the news that Titus brought. That the Corinthians had zealously repented and mourned and not been upset with Paul for correcting them. Which they could very easily have been.

Very often carnal Christians get offended with someone with a servant of God correcting them. Instead of judging themselves they get upset with the man who corrects them. That's stupid really.

One were to use an illustration you were to go to a doctor. And a doctor took an x-ray of your chest. And shows you the x-ray that you have tuberculosis.

It's pointless getting upset with the doctor. You should be thankful to him. Thankful that he has shown you your true condition.

And that's how the Corinthians responded. That when Paul in his first letter showed them their true condition. They didn't get upset with the doctor or tear up the x-ray.

They responded and decided that they needed treatment that would rid them of their spiritual tuberculosis. That's wisdom. But it's very rare to find believers like that.

Usually you find them so terribly upset whenever anything is pointed out wrong. And that's why they remain in spiritual death. That's a sorrow of the world.

But this godly sorrow that brought repentance led the Corinthians on to spiritual life. And he says therefore we are comforted. Paul found his encouragement in that.

He didn't want any gifts from the Corinthians. He wasn't looking for any gifts from them. He only wanted their spiritual development.

And he says besides our comfort we rejoice even much more for the joy of Titus. Because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. Think of Paul's attitude.

He says I was so thrilled when I saw Titus rejoicing. Think of having an attitude where our joy increases when we see the joy of another believer. That requires a really spiritual frame of mind.

He says when I saw the joy Titus had, I was rejoicing beyond measure. We were happy, he says. In anything, he says in verse 14, if I had boasted to him about you, Paul had spoken good things about the Corinthians to Titus.

He says I'm not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. Then we see what Paul spoke about other believers behind their back.

That's a very good question to ask ourselves. What do you speak about other believers behind their back? Here it tells us what Paul spoke about the Corinthian believers behind their back. He says I boasted about you to Titus.

He didn't say that the Corinthians are very highly spiritual people. I mean that would have been a lie. But he could say I believe the Corinthians have got a good heart.

I believe that those Christians will respond to the truth. They're growing. They take time to grow.

But I believe they're responding to the truth. In that way he could boast about them in an honest way without flattering them or without saying things that were obviously untrue. And that's a tremendous example for us as servants of God.

As we've seen, 2 Corinthians is a letter that reveals the inner life of the apostle Paul that made him such an effective servant of God. And we cannot be effective servants of God if we don't speak good things about other believers behind their back. Whatever our Bible knowledge may be, if we don't have control over our tongue in the things that we speak about others behind their back.

Dear friends, James chapter 1 verse 26 says your religion is worth zero. Whatever Bible knowledge you may have. There we see Paul's religion.

He boasted about these Corinthians. And the Corinthians were not spiritual. Yet he could speak good things.

And it's a wonderful thing when we can see something good in other believers. Even though they are not spiritual. And he says, now I'm so delighted that all the things I boasted about to Titus are actually proved true.

That means that when the Corinthians responded in repentance, it proved that what Paul had said about the Corinthians to Titus was true. That they had a good heart and would respond to the truth. And then he says about Titus also, he says his affection abounds all the more toward you.

As he remembers the obedience of you all and how you received him with fear and trembling. There's a verse in Hebrews chapter 10. The central passage really in the book of Hebrews.

And in that passage, verses 19 to 25. One verse, Hebrews 10.24 says, let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works. It's a wonderful thing to learn how to stimulate others to love.

And here we see an example of that. When Paul told the Corinthian Christians that brother Titus loves you very much in Christ. His affection for you is very great.

You can imagine how he would have stirred up love in the heart of the Corinthians towards Titus. Think of having such a ministry where you are seeking to draw believers closer to other believers. It's one thing to tell the Corinthians how much I love you in Christ.

But to tell them, here's another brother who really loves you in Christ. His heart is drawn towards you. That's a way of drawing believers to one another.

Just a few words, one sentence would be enough to stir up love in the hearts of the Corinthians towards Titus. So that Titus would have a good relationship with the Corinthians. Paul was not interested in having an exclusive relationship with the Corinthian believers himself.

That type of selfishness we sometimes see in Christianity. Some servant of God who wants to just have a personal relationship with a few believers. And he doesn't want them to have any high opinion of anyone else.

But here he draws them to Titus. And he says, I rejoice, verse 16, that in everything I have confidence in you. You give me ground for great confidence, he says.

What wonderful words. Whereby he stirred the Corinthians. Love in the Corinthians' heart.

Not only towards himself, but towards Titus also. And there we have a very good example for all of us to follow if we seek to serve the Lord ourselves. Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians and chapter 8. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about the collection of money which was being taken in their midst for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

And these are some exhortations challenging them to give to help the poor believers in Judea. Now we need to be very careful when we read this section of scripture. Because a great love of money dwells in the flesh of all believers.

And it's very easy for those who are preachers of the gospel to use these two chapters in a wrong way. And to misunderstand them. To use them as a foundation for his own begging for money from others.

And that's a tendency we have to really seek to avoid. We need to see the context in which Paul writes. And a few facts concerning his asking for this money.

First of all notice that Paul writes to those who came to Christ through him. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 he says you can have 10,000 teachers but you don't have many fathers. For he says I became your father through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4.15. He would not write to the Roman Christians like this. Or to the Christians in Colossae like this. Because he was not their father.

So before we use these chapters and seek to imitate Paul here. We need to ask ourselves whether we are writing to those who are our children in the gospel. Or to believers with whom we do not have such a relationship.

The church in Corinth was established by Paul. It was one of the churches over which he was an apostle. He had established it.

He was a father there. And he had a right to write to such because they were his own children. It was like asking his own children.

The other thing we need to notice here is that he was not asking for money to support his own ministry. No. Paul would never do such a thing.

This is not what people normally call deputation. To raise money for one's own support. That's not what we see in chapters 8 and 9. What we see here is Paul's concern that those who have much of this world's goods.

And the people in Corinth did have. Should share their abundance with other believers in other places who have less. And so he was exhorting them to give.

But remember not one pie of that would Paul take himself. It was to go in its entirety to the poor believers in Judea. So those are two important principles that we need to bear in mind as we look at this chapter.

That any asking believers to give money must always be preceded by asking ourselves this question. Are these believers our children in Christ? Otherwise we have no right to ask them. Is this a church that has been established through our labors? Otherwise we've got no right to ask them.

It's not wisdom to ask otherwise. Secondly, is this money that's being collected, even a small percentage of it coming to us or our ministry? Then we should not ask. If it's going in its entirety to someone else and we get nothing out of it.

Then we have fulfilled both conditions. That's a very important principle. If we are not to misapply and misuse this portion of God's holy word to some selfish application to our own life.

Having said that, we can see here how Paul felt free to urge those who had much to share with those who had little. Jesus himself did that. He urged those who had two coats to give one to the other brother who didn't have one.

Was Jesus asking for himself? Was he asking them to share their coats with him? Far from it. He was asking them to share it with others. In Matthew chapter 5. John the Baptist said that too.

Now we see here that Paul was using that same principle. To share what we have with others who are in need. Jesus said sell what you have and give to charity.

The same principle. Share what we have with others. 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 1. Brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.

There are many applications of the grace of God. And we find the word grace comes a number of times in Corinthians. And here is a manifestation of God's grace.

That it made the churches in Macedonia learn how to give financially to the help of others in need. And that is another proof that God's grace has come upon believers. That is what we see in this passage.

If you have not learned to give to serve the Lord and to help other poorer believers. That is an indication that you have not experienced some part of God's grace. Because he says I want to make known to you this particular aspect of God's grace.

That has been shown to the churches of Macedonia how in the midst of their heavy trial. Which proved their steadfastness. And in the midst of their deep poverty.

They manifested such a wealth of liberality. Now it is one thing to give when we have an abundance. For rich Pharisees to put a hundred rupee note into the offering box probably cost them nothing.

But for a poor widow to put in two mites like Jesus said cost her everything. And these Christians in Macedonia their troubles were so many. They had been tried so hard.

And yet in the midst of all this they were so happy. That in the midst of their poverty. They showed themselves lavishly open handed.

Generous. A flood of rich generosity he says. This is the phrase in one translation.

A flood of generosity. And you find that generally speaking that is true even today in the 20th century. Like it was in the first century.

That the most generous believers are the poor believers. The rich believers are usually stingy and miserly. And that is why they are spiritually poor.

But God has chosen the poor of the world James 2.5. Rich in faith. And rich in generosity too. For generosity is a mark one mark of true spirituality.

For Paul says I testify he says I can bear record for this fact. I bear witness to this. That according to their ability and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord.

Notice this. They gave not only according to their means. But even more than one would think they were able to afford.

They actually gave more than they could afford to give. In other words they denied themselves certain things. In order to be able to help the poor believers in other places.

And the other wonderful thing here is that they gave from the impulse of their own hearts. Without the slightest urging from me or from anyone else. Paul didn't have to write to the churches in Macedonia.

As soon as they were aware of a need in the churches in Judea. They responded immediately without a letter from Paul. To the Corinthians Paul had to write.

But he says to the Macedonians I didn't have to write at all. There was not even the slightest urging from me or from anyone else. And they gave freely.

And not only that he says they begged us with much entreaty. To give them the favor of participating in the support of the saints. Think of that.

Think of believers begging. Saying please accept this gift dear brother. And pass it on to those poor believers who are in need.

There we see what a spiritual frame of mind these Macedonian Christians had. Compare that with the stinginess and miserliness that we find among so many believers today. Who are always looking for opportunities to get something free rather than give.

And who can be so insensitive to the needs of other poorer believers. They begged us means Paul was hesitant to take the money which the Macedonians are giving for the poor believers in Jerusalem. Because he saw that they were so poor and they gave so much.

They themselves would be in need. And that they had to sort of force Paul to take that money. Saying please take it.

They begged us most urgently. He says this is a privilege for us to be able to help others. And he says don't deny us this privilege.

What a wonderful thing it is. Believers can have that attitude even today. Of course we got to be careful that we don't give money to spiritual swindlers.

Who are seeking to take advantage of us. Or to any Tom, Dick and Harry who comes in the name of Christ. But that we seek to give with wisdom.

If you can find a man with Paul like Paul. You can give freely. Knowing that he will not touch it himself.

Then he will pass it on to people in need. The early apostles, the early Christians. We read in Acts chapter 4 laid their money at the apostles feet.

They gave it to those in whom they had confidence. We read in Acts 4.35. It is very important that we give money to those in whom we have confidence. The churches in Macedonia gave it to Paul.

Looking at those first four verses. We can find much spiritual profit that will teach us. How we ourselves can give of our substance for the Lord's work.

Let's turn today to 2nd Corinthians and chapter 8. We were considering in our last study about the way in which the churches in Macedonia. Gave of their gifts for the Lord's work. And we see here that the spirit in which they gave.

Was what Paul was commending to the churches, to the church in Corinth. He says they gave beyond their ability. Verse 3. And they gave of their own accord.

And verse 4. They begged for this privilege and honor of participating in the support of those believers who were in need. In the midst of all the trials they were going through. Verse 2. They learnt how to give to others.

As we mentioned in our last study. Paul was not asking money for himself. He was asking for other poor believers.

Not one bit of this money would come into Paul's pocket. Either for his life, support or for his ministry. It was going in its entirety to others.

And this is why he gives the example of these Macedonian Christians to the church in Corinth. He says they gave, verse 5, not as we had expected or hoped. But in a far better way.

They gave beyond our expectation. Because first, before they gave their money. They gave themselves to the Lord.

In other words, Paul says I had expected a mere cash payment. But instead they made a complete dedication of themselves first to the Lord. And then to us as God's servants by the will of God.

They submitted to God completely. They dedicated their lives to Him. And then they submitted to the authority of those who were apostles over them.

Who God had given to them as fathers. And then they gave their money. And that teaches us something very important.

That God doesn't want a man's money if he hasn't given him his heart and life. The first command in scripture is to give our hearts to the Lord. And then our bodies.

Our money comes much later. And it's very important for us to bear this in mind in all Christian giving. In the third epistle of John, John says in the tenth verse, the third epistle of John.

That true servants of God, third John verse seven. Would accept nothing from unbelievers. Why is it a servant of God cannot accept financial support from unbelievers? Third John seven.

Because God himself does not want a man's money. If a man hasn't given his heart and life and body to him. And that's what we see in second Corinthians eight five.

They first, before giving their money. They first gave themselves to the Lord. And to us by the will of God.

So the will of God is that we give ourselves first. If you haven't given your heart, God doesn't want your money. I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God.

Romans twelve one. That you give a type. No.

That you present your bodies. A living sacrifice to God. And once you've given your body.

Then you can give your money. If you haven't given your body. God doesn't want your money.

And so there we see something very important. And it's very important for any of us. Who are servants of God.

To make sure that our covetousness. Which dwells in our flesh. Does not lead us to receive money from anyone and everyone.

Find out first whether the man's given his heart and life to God. And then only can we receive his money. Otherwise we are not worthy to be representatives of God.

Verse six. Second Corinthians eight six. Consequently we urge Titus.

That as he had previously made a beginning. So he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. So he says Titus had already come to you.

And he had met you. And he had seen the response you had to my first letter of correction. He says now the one who has commenced that work.

He says I wanted him to come and complete it. This gracious work as well. He's already seen the beginnings of a good work there in your repentance.

As we saw in chapter seven. Now he says I want him to see a completion of that work of grace. In your learning how to give.

And now he gives a strong exhortation. He says just as you abound in everything. In faith.

In utterance. In knowledge. In all earnestness.

And in the love we inspired. And you see that you abound in this gracious work also. And there we see Paul challenging them.

He says you people are abounding in Bible knowledge. Why don't you abound in learning to give as well? What a challenge that is to those who are seeking to abound in Bible knowledge today. What a word.

As you abound in knowledge. Seek to abound in learning to give to others. There are many who claim to abound in spiritual gifts.

Very good. Why not learn to abound in giving financial gifts also to others in need? Otherwise there's something stunted and distorted and warped in our Christianity. It's good to abound in faith.

Faith to move mountains. It's good to abound in utterance as it says in verse seven. The ability to speak and teach the word of God with power.

In knowledge. It's a wonderful thing to abound in excel in knowledge of the truth. To abound in earnestness, zeal, in devotion.

You abound in love. Wonderful. In your loving treatment of us you have abounded.

Now he says abound also in this gracious work of helping other believers in need. But he's very careful not to exceed his boundaries. He says I'm not giving you a commandment.

But I'm only seeking to prove the sincerity of your love. Through the earnestness of others. He says I'm not saying this in the spirit of lording it over you.

But to prove that your love is genuine. By telling you how keen these other Christians in Macedonia have been. He says I'm putting your love to the test now.

And so Paul's very careful that he does not exercise his apostolic authority to force the Corinthians to give. It's a very interesting thing that in the entire New Testament from the beginning of the New Covenant in Acts chapter two onwards. There is not a single command to tithe.

Tithing is an Old Testament command. In the New Testament the command is give cheerfully. Give according to your ability.

Not a percentage, not quantity. But the quality of giving is what is emphasized in the New Covenant. Because God is now treating us like mature sons, not like servants.

And so it is wrong for any pastor or any servant of God to force believers to give even a tithe. Some pastors do it by threatening them with dire consequences of God's punishment upon them. If they do not give their tithe etc.

All these things are utterly unworthy of a true servant of God. Do it like Paul did it. Not by command, he says.

I do not say this as a command. But give cheerfully. He later on says, God loves a cheerful giver, he says in chapter nine.

In earlier on in his first letter, 1 Corinthians 16.2, he said let each man give according as God has prospered him. 1 Corinthians 16.2. That would have been a wonderful opportunity to say at least 10% or more than 10% since you're in the New Covenant. But he doesn't use any type of such carnal reasoning or worldly type of pressure.

He just says as God has prospered you and leaves it at that. And we should also be willing to leave it at that. When we go beyond that it is because of our own covetousness.

When we use all types of other phrases to put pressure on believers to give. Beware of this dear friends if you're a servant of God that you don't put pressure on anyone to give. Let them give cheerfully and if they don't want to give let them not give.

God doesn't want it. God loves a cheerful giver. He doesn't love a man who is forced to give something.

But he gives the example of Jesus. He says you know, verse nine, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says if you want to see an example see Jesus' example.

That though he was rich, and he was rich in heaven, he had everything. He became poor so that we through his poverty might become rich. What a wonderful example.

He humbled himself and became a servant. He impoverished himself for our sakes so that we might become rich through his poverty. And in every area of the Christian life, even in the area of giving, it's far better to use a verse like 2 Corinthians 8, 9 and point the example of Jesus Christ than point out some Old Testament commandment saying you are cursed with a curse if you don't bring the tithe into the storehouse and I will open the windows of heaven if you bring the tithe.

Paul doesn't use any of those verses from Malachi which believers use these days and pastors use these days. He says look at Jesus. That is the spiritual way, dear friends, of always drawing believers to a higher spiritual level.

In any area, look at Jesus' example and then leave those believers free to act according to their light and their desire. Otherwise it will be out of compulsion and God doesn't want it. He says I give my opinion.

I give my opinion in this matter, verse 10, for this is to your advantage who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this but also to desire doing it. Now finish doing it. He says I give my opinion.

Not a command, verse 8, but an opinion. And he says this is for your advantage. Notice the care with which Paul speaks.

No compulsion. He says I'm saying for your good. It's more blessed to give than to receive.

Look at the example of Jesus and give for your own benefit. I'm not getting anything out of it but you'll get something out of it because you'll reap according to what you sow. He goes on to say that.

It's very important that we follow Paul's example in these chapters in all our financial matters, particularly in the church.

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