

Session 3 – What We Work For | 2 Corinthians

8:1-9 | 3/16/14

- Introduction
 - We have been talking about the abilities that God gives us to work, that we were not designed by God simply to do nothing but that we have a purpose
 - We saw that we have a profession as well as a ministry, that our God given abilities are used to serve both purposes.
 - Having a profession God has blessed us with income, with money to feed our families, to give us clothes and a roof over our heads.
 - To have income is a gift of God, but as we will see we are not simply to use it all for ourselves, but that it is a gift that we can use to do God's work.
 - We will see that giving back to God is actually an act of obedience and worship.
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9**
- To give with joy is by the grace of God | 2 Corinthians 8:1-2
 - In this passage of scripture Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about the churches of Macedonia and is using them as an example to encourage the Corinthians in their giving.
 - These verses we are going to read here from Paul show in much detail how a Christian's attitude should look with their giving and what the purpose of giving is.
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2**
 - Generosity is motivated by the grace of God.
 - The act of giving (with true generosity) is motivated by God.
 - There are two types of giving.
 - To give out of excess and abundance or because of obligation.
 - To give generously and sacrificially by the grace of God.
 - As we will see from the example of the churches of Macedonia that they fell into the later.
 - We will look at why this type of giving is different from the world's view of giving and what that means to God.
 - As Paul speaks of the churches of Macedonia we can see that he doesn't commend their act of giving as that of some noble human work, but instead he attributes it to the grace of God.
 - Because people are very selfish in nature and are very concerned for ourselves. However because of God's grace and the fact that the church there in Macedonia was listening and obeying God we see that they have been very generous givers.
 - God uses believers, he uses Christians to show his grace upon others.
 - It is by the grace of God that we have income in the first place, and it is also by the grace of God that our hearts have the desire to give sacrificially to the poor to give to the church because we want to obey and do God's will.
 - This giving that God gives us is different than what the world may think of giving.
 - It is not giving out of excess of what you don't need, it is not giving out of obligation or to look good in front of others.
 - This giving that God gives is the ability to give sacrificially back to God for God.
 - To do this with joy knowing that it is an act of worship and it is to put others before ourselves.
 - God is giving us the desire to do this and this is actually a gift and not a burden.

- True generosity being shown by a Christian is a gift of God.
 - One my think well to have the desire to want to give my money away well that's just plain evil! Who wants to give away their stuff?
 - In reality though to be a benevolent giver is a gift from God that is a spiritual gift.
 - God gives spiritual gifts to the Christian and one of these is giving.
 - Romans 12:6a, 8
 - “According to the **grace** given to us, we have different **gifts**:.....if exhorting, in exhortation; **giving, with generosity**;....”
 - Paul makes it clear here in Romans 12:6 that these spiritual gifts are because of God's grace.
 - God's gift of giving is not an act or show but one of true generosity.
 - There is a difference between the giving of the Christian by God's grace and the giving of the world.
 - It is by God's grace that we give with true generosity.
 - To be sure there are people who are not Christians who give, but the true and holy gift of giving with true generosity and giving sacrificially with love from the heart comes from God.
 - To give even when you do not have anything to give can only come from God.
 - The world may give a small portion of excess to look good in front of others, and at other times it truly is out of caring for the person in need.
 - However to give when you have absolutely nothing to give shows if it is from God.
 - To give with generosity is a strong statement, it is not to give because one feels obligated or because you need a tax break, but because you do it out of worship and your love for God.
 - It is a gift of God that as Christians we are called to exercise and use this gift.
- To give with joy when you have nothing to give.
 - In verse 2 Paul speaks of what the grace of God is capable of in the life of a believer.
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 8:2**
 - These churches were going through a severe and great trial of affliction of being in poverty.
 - These churches were going through very difficult times, the economy was likely bad and they were in poverty.
 - These churches didn't have much of anything. They barely had enough to get by let alone any excess.
 - Yet they gave anyways when they had nothing.
 - When we think of giving it may seem easy for us if we give from our excess. If we know we have everything else taken care of and then with what is left over we give from that.
 - **That makes us comfortable** because we are not pushing the limits in any way.
 - However that is not what the churches of Macedonia did, they did not give from there excess **they gave when they didn't have anything to give.**
 - To give with Joy
 - The most significant statement from this verse is the fact that when they gave when they had nothing to give, they were broke and in poverty. Yet they gave anyways and **they did it with joy.**
 - Their joy in giving was greater that the anguish of their poverty.
 - More important to them was the well-being of others than themselves.

- They knew the money was going to the poor, even though they were likely very close to being as poor as those that were receiving the money they gave anyways.
- They gave from their hearts and did so in worship and sacrificially to God.
- These churches gave not because of obligation. No they gave cheerfully from their hearts.
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - “Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
 - Not reluctantly or out of necessity but because of what is in your heart.
- God gave them a joy that they could not ignore, one that outweighed their own needs.
- This is truly by God’s grace, as we would never give out of our poverty on our own, out of our excess sure, but not out of our poverty.
- To have joy in our giving even when we ourselves are suffering could only come from God.
 - Could you see the world giving in this situation? No I don’t think so.
 - Will the world give out of their excess yes they sure will, they do it all the time.
 - **But will the world give when they have nothing to give?**
 - That separates the Christians from the world, as that is only accomplished by God’s grace.
- Giving with generosity.
 - As Paul stated in Romans 12:8 we are to give with generosity and that was made very clear by the churches of Macedonia.
 - These believers were single-minded in their selfless generosity to God and to others.
 - This is the example for all Christians to give selflessly to God and to others.
 - To put others before ourselves is a mark of a true Christian, to give because we love God and others more than we love ourselves.
- **Have you experienced the joy of giving with true generosity compared to giving out of excess or obligation?**
- **What do you think about giving as the Macedonians when you have nothing to give?**
- To give beyond our ability | 2 Corinthians 8:3-7
 - ***Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-7***
 - In verse 3 there are three important truths we see about the attitudes of the givers from the churches of Macedonia.
 - To give “freely willing”
 - This is translated in the NKJV “freely willing” while the Holman uses “on their own”.
 - Paul testified that they on their own they gave freely according to their own abilities.
 - It is by God’s grace that they have the benevolence to give, but it must also be freely done.
 - Not from pressure by others, not because it will look bad if you don’t give, but because you freely want to do it out of obedience to God and for the benefit of others.
 - This was the manner in which the churches of Macedonia gave and it is the manner in which we Christians should also give.

- To give according to our ability
 - Paul says they gave according to their ability.
 - To give according to our ability is not a set number or percentage even, but to give based on the abilities to give that God has provided us.
 - Each of us have different abilities to give, we each make different amounts of income.
 - Some Christians make a lot some make a little.
 - The amount that we give is not what is important, but if we are giving sacrificially according to our abilities.
 - To give is sacrificial, meaning it's a sacrifice. We are taking income that God has given us and giving it back to him in an amount that is a sacrifice.
 - Meaning it's not from our excess and what is left over but from our first fruits of our labors.
 - Our giving must be in proportion to what we have.
 - If whatever you give isn't in any way sacrificial then you are likely not giving to your full ability nor is it proportional.
 - The giving of \$5000 by someone who is worth billions is not proportionate to their abilities.
 - If we are only giving from our excess we are not giving sacrificially.
 - That is what it really comes down to.
 - **Whatever your abilities are for giving is between you and God.**
 - **But what is biblically clear is that whatever your true ability is, it WILL be sacrificial.**
- To give beyond our ability.
 - Paul also recognizes that they had given beyond their ability.
 - So we may be thinking ok what does THAT look like, to go beyond our ability.
 - While there is no numbers or percentages that we could use for this I think best to describe this with an example from the Bible.
 - The Widow's Gift | Mark 12:41-44
 - **Read Mark 12:41-44**
 - Jesus made the example of the widow's two small coins a great teaching moment for his disciples.
 - The widow who was in poverty like the churches of Macedonia gave out of her poverty and she gave EVERYTHING that she had all that she had to live one.
 - This is an example to give beyond our ability.
 - **She had nothing yet gave everything.**
 - While her example is not one we are may feel called to do, nor does God expect each of us to sell everything we own.
 - The widow's example does show that her heart was truly in the right place. That she took the act of giving as an important act to show her worship to God.
 - She most certainly gave sacrificially to God.
 - Let her example encourage us to go above and beyond in our giving to God.
- **How will you decide what your ability to give looks like?**
 - God will bless the generous giver
 - In fact not only is it sacrificial to give but God says he will bless those that give abundantly and sacrificially.
 - 2 Corinthians 9:6

- “Remember this. The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously.”
 - If we sow sparingly, by only giving from our excess we will reap little, but if we give sacrificially we will reap generously.
- God has also made it clear that he will bless abundantly those that are generous and sacrificial in their giving.
 - Malachi 3:10
 - “Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way,” says the Lord of Hosts. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.”
 - This is one of the few times where God has stated for us to actually test him.
 - God makes it clear that he will bless us in our giving and he says we are free to test him.
 - He will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessings without measure.
 - So the more we give to God the more he will bless us. This is fact and truth, but requires faith to carry through.
 - This goes against worldly wisdom that the more I give to others the more I will receive. Sounds like bad investment advice right?
 - But God will reward this giving; it may not be monetarily it could be in many other forms. But God will honor this if we freely give.
- **Have you experienced God’s blessings from your giving?**
- Giving is a privilege not an obligation.
 - The churches of Macedonia not only gave above and beyond their abilities but they looked at the act of giving as a privilege.
 - 2 Corinthians 8:4
 - “they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints,”
 - They begged Paul to let them give, because they knew the joy that it brought them by giving sacrificially according to their abilities.
 - To give was worth more to them than trying to save what they had because of their poverty.
 - They knew it was more blessed to give than to receive.
 - Acts 20:35
 - “In every way I’ve shown you that by laboring like this, it is necessary to help the weak and to keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, **‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”
- Give first to the Lord
 - 2 Corinthians 8:5
 - “and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God’s will.”
 - The Macedonians gave first to the Lord, and then they gave to man, which was the will of God.
 - They understood that their first priority was to give to God.
 - We are to give to God the first fruits of our labors.
 - Proverbs 3:9-10

- “Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of you entire harvest; then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine.
 - We are to give to God first this shows that he has priority.
 - If we give him the left overs then we show that he is not a priority for us in our giving.
 - **Giving to God first goes with sacrificial giving, because you may have to give up something if you give to first to God.**
- Excel in God’s grace of giving
 - 2 Corinthians 8:7
 - “Now as you excel in everything—faith, speech, knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this grace”
 - Paul recognized the other Christian virtues that the Corinthians possessed, their faith, speech, knowledge, diligence and in love.
 - He equally wanted them to excel in the grace of giving.
 - This act or spiritual gift that was bestowed upon a Christian was just as important as the others.
 - One might think well I’ll give priority to proclaiming God’s word and knowledge of the Bible, but I’m not going to put much into the act of giving.
 - By the grace of God he gave us this gift of giving and it is just as important, and it is an act of love and worship for God.
 - God does not need our money, but the act of giving shows where are heart is and he uses that money to further his kingdom.
 - To be used as a blessing for others who are in need.
- Christ came in poverty for us | 2 Corinthians 8:8-9
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 8:9-9**
 - Freewill giving is not a command but a sign of love.
 - Paul did not give them a command to give, because for it to be sacrificial it must be of God’s grace and one freely choosing to give.
 - But to give like this shows the genuineness of our love.
 - Christ became poor so that we might become rich
 - Paul concludes this section with an example of Christ.
 - That Christ who was rich beyond measure gave up all of that for us to come to earth and live as a man in poverty.
 - He did this for our sake as a sacrifice for us.
 - So just as Christ gave up everything and became a sacrifice for us, we also should give of what we have sacrificially for others.
- Closing
 - Sacrificial giving according to our abilities is what all Christians should strive for.
 - We need to give to God first, from our first fruits and not what is left over or solely from our excess.
 - God loves a cheerful giver who gives from their heart knowing that doing God’s work.