

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 » God's grace: Gentile church supports Jewish one

Corinthians who excelled in gifts are exhorted to be earnest in their giving

7 But since you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you - see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

The Corinthians - proud of their public debating heritage and encouraged by Paul in chapters 1-7 - are challenged to lead in generosity also.

8-9 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 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 through His poverty might become rich.

"Not commanding" - this was not a command to give - but inviting them to test the sincerity of their love.

The Macedonian churches to the north e.g. Philippi and Thessalonica, as they "gave themselves first to the Lord" had shown their love.

"You know the grace of our Lord" - here meaning God's love shown in saving action for undeserving mankind.

In practice The Corinthians have taken hold of new life in Christ with enthusiasm - sometimes a little too much enthusiasm, it seems. But they were also early to respond and raise money when news of the need in Jerusalem reached them across the Mediterranean in Greece.

But Paul instructs them, it is not dutiful giving that God smiles on, but the joyful kind that relies on His provision and shares it willingly and joyfully. Telling people to give more because they ought to, often has the opposite effect and it is exactly the kind of legalism practised by the Pharisees which Paul highlighted in teaching that Christians were "not under law". Later in his letter, 2 Cor. 9:7, he says that "God loves a cheerful giver". Imitating God's gracious generosity is, as the saying goes, the sincerest form of flattery - better than flattery, sincere worship. This teaching is about us catching God's grace and passing it on - exemplified here as Greeks raised money for a far-distant church of opposing culture and in hardship.

Question In what ways can you worship God, by your trusting in His provision to give and meet needs for others?

10-12 And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

"Eager willingness... is there" - God looks for faith and joy in our giving as part of our worship of Him. Giving 'because we ought' is not acceptable.

13-15 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard-pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

"Too much... too little" - quoting from Exodus 16:18, Israelites gathering manna in the desert, illustrating the kind of equality he has in mind.

"Hard-pressed" - Like giving out of duty, giving as a kind of religious penance is not the willing, Spirit-led enthusiasm that God is seeking.

The Living Word

The Bible readings for Sunday, July 1, 2018 with commentary notes

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Church calendar readings for **Sunday, July 1**, in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand - or read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: How God's grace overturns man's prejudice

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27 - *God's grace: David laments his former persecutor*

Mark 5:21-43 - *God's grace in special favour for excluded woman*

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 - *God's grace: Gentile church supports Jewish one*

2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27 » God's grace: Genuine sorrow after Saul's death

There's to be no rejoicing after the tyrant King Saul is killed

1 After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

"After the death of Saul" - in the battle of Mount Gilboa Saul's sons including Jonathan were killed and Saul was critically wounded, 1 Samuel 31:1-4.

17-18 David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

"Book of Jashar" - early verse account of Israel's exploits, Joshua 10:13, perhaps sung during drill with the bow, Israel's weapon of choice.

19-20 "A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel. How the mighty have fallen! "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.

"Gazelle" - figurative language symbolising a special person, here used for Jonathan.

"Proclaim it not" - For Philistines across their Gath

to Ashkelon territory to celebrate Israel's defeat was reproach to the Lord, not just to Israel.

21-22 "Mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, may no showers fall on your terraced fields. For there the shield of the mighty was despised, the shield of Saul - no longer rubbed with oil. "From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.

"May no showers fall" - grief expressed in curse on the place where Saul and Jonathan perished.

"No longer rubbed with oil" - the shield no longer maintained, no longer needed.

23 "Saul and Jonathan - in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

"Not parted" - Jonathan opposed his father's treatment of David, but gave his life fighting to defend Israel beside his father.

24 "Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

25 "How the mighty have fallen in battle!
Jonathan lies slain on your heights.

*"Your love for me" – no sexual connotation:
Jonathan's commitment to David, at
considerable personal risk, was a truly
remarkable bond.*

26 "I grieve for you, Jonathan my
brother; you were very dear to me. Your
love for me was wonderful, more
wonderful than that of women.

27 "How the mighty have fallen!
The weapons of war have perished!"

In practice If someone had spent years cursing you, making life very difficult for you and had attempted to kill you more than once, how would you feel when they themselves have come to a sticky end? Who among us would not gloat, for a while, anyway?

When David hears the news that King Saul and his close companion and friend Jonathan have both been killed while retreating from the Philistines, he does the opposite. He composes a song of lament to honour them in every way he can think of. Human emotions have been overridden – God's grace is flowing. David had kept his heart clean from resentment for many years; his practice had paid off.

We can do the same and choose not to recount injustice and betrayal, but to love our enemies because we have the Holy Spirit to cause a flow of grace in our hearts.

Question Why did Jesus say it was so important for us to forgive without condition? Think of the Lord's Prayer...

Mark 5:21-43 » God's grace shown in special favour for excluded woman

**Two different people publicly put
faith in Jesus**

21 When Jesus had again crossed over
by boat to the other side of the lake, a
large crowd gathered around Him while
He was by the lake.

*"The other side" – He had been on the eastern
Gadara and Decapolis side of the lake, and now
crossed back to the Capernaum and Galilee side.*

22-24 Then one of the synagogue leaders,
named Jairus, came, and when he saw
Jesus, he fell at His feet He pleaded
earnestly with Him, "My little daughter is
dying. Please come and put your hands
on her so that she will be healed and live."
So Jesus went with him. A large crowd
followed and pressed around Him.

*"Synagogue leaders" – laymen, mostly
Pharisees, who organised services.*

25-26 And a woman was there who had
been subject to bleeding for twelve

years. She had suffered a great deal
under the care of many doctors and
had spent all she had, yet instead of
getting better she grew worse.

*"A woman was there" – but ceremonially
unclean owing to her condition, and not allowed
in the temple court reserved for women.*

27-29 When she heard about Jesus, she
came up behind Him in the crowd and
touched His cloak, because she thought,
"If I just touch His clothes, I will be
healed." Immediately her bleeding
stopped and she felt in her body that
she was freed from her suffering.

*By the Law, Leviticus 15:19-23, she renders Jesus
ceremonially unclean. However, He heals her (and
makes her clean) as One greater than purity laws.*

30 At once Jesus realised that power
had gone out from Him. He turned
around in the crowd and asked, "Who
touched my clothes?"

31 "You see the people crowding against
you," His disciples answered, "and yet you
can ask, 'Who touched Me?'"

*"Who touched Me?" – He senses something, a
spiritual transaction, more than just touch
because of the nudges of many in the crowd.*

32-34 But Jesus kept looking around to
see who had done it. Then the woman,
knowing what had happened to her,
came and fell at His feet and, trembling
with fear, told Him the whole truth. He
said to her, "Daughter, your faith has
healed you. Go in peace and be freed
from your suffering."

*According to the Law she had rendered many in
the crowd unclean and feared condemnation.
Mark depicts how her fear turned to faith.*

*"Daughter" – from shunned outsider she has
become part of the family of God.*

*"Healed" – the word 'sozo' has the broader
meaning of healed, delivered, saved. Faith in Jesus
for physical healing led to faith for salvation.*

35 While Jesus was still speaking, some
people came from the house of Jairus,
the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is
dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher
any more?"

36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told
him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

*"Don't be afraid" – 'Do not fear...' Fear and faith
are opposites, more than unbelief and faith.
Willpower is needed to kick-start the change.*

In practice Remembering the suffragette movement of 100 years ago reminds us that we, too, have easily overlooked exclusivity, which is a denial of the gospel being Good News for everyone. It is also a denial of God's grace in which the Bible teaches us He is "not a respecter of persons". This story overturned the social mores of Jewish culture in the first century in more ways than one, with grace flowing to a woman and one, who by the rules and conventions, should not have been there at all, let alone healed. This confronts our human tendency to make church a club of like-minded people. Of course we feel more comfortable around people with whom we share background and affinities, but this is the point. God showed His grace and generosity to us by calling us, just as we were! He wants us to be like that to others.

Question Where might our way of looking at things *exclude* rather than *include*?

37-40 He did not let anyone follow Him
except Peter, James and John the
brother of James. When they came to
the home of the synagogue leader,
Jesus saw a commotion, with people
crying and wailing loudly. He went in and
said to them, "Why all this commotion and
wailing? The child is not dead but
asleep." But they laughed at Him.

After He put them all out, he took
the child's father and mother and
the disciples who were with Him,
and went in where the child was.

*"Peter, James and John" – senior apprentices only
in a small room and early days of the ministry.*

*"They laughed at Him" – the unbelieving
crowd and community mourners "wailing
loudly" created an unbelieving spirituality.*

41-43 He took her by the hand and
said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which
means "Little girl, I say to you, get
up!"). Immediately the girl stood up
and began to walk around (she was
twelve years old). At this they were
completely astonished. He gave strict
orders not to let anyone know about
this, and told them to give her
something to eat.

*"Talitha koum" – Only Mark's gospel includes
the vernacular used by Jesus and the disciples.*

*"Not to let anyone know" – in Galilee Jesus'
growing popularity could have caused a crisis
long before His ministry had run its course.*