

Giving

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[0:00] 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and I'll read the first 15 verses.!

And even beyond their ability, entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urge Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

But just as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in your love for us, see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

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 sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

[1:37] And here is my advice 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 he does not have.

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.

Then there will be equality. As it is written, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.

Sometimes it's hard to finish what you've started. I won't ask you to raise your hand, but how many of you committed to doing something on January 1st?

[2:53] You were going to get in shape this year. You were going to read your Bible all the way through. I'm sure a bunch of you made some sort of good beginning on January 1st, but now it's April 10th, and January 1st seems, well, years ago.

And you know that it's sometimes hard to finish what you've started. And that's the problem that Paul addresses when he writes to the church in Corinth.

They had a good start on giving, but they needed help in finishing. They had a good start, but they needed help in finishing. Well, last week we looked at the Laodicean church.

They had compromised with the affluent world around them. They weren't persecuted. They were affluent. They weren't suffering. They had a bigger problem, and the bigger problem was they had this raging case of affluenza.

And Jesus said, I just want to spit you out of my mouth. You think things are going so great. You think you are so rich, but you are wretched.

[4:03] You're poor. You're blind. You're naked. You're pitiful. Last week, I know I was very direct, and I said that in many ways, I'm afraid grace fellowship is like the Laodicean church.

We aren't persecuted. I mean, we know a little bit, but we really can't say that we're persecuted. And we are affluent.

You might not feel that, but the facts are that you are. And it's far too easy for us to do exactly what the Laodiceans did, and that is to measure how they are doing by how much they have.

And that's just like the world around us. That's what the world does. It measures things by what they have and what they've done. And so, the real test to see if we're really like the Laodiceans or not is how much do we give.

We've said that. You can look at your checkbook. Does it say me, me, me, or does it say give, give, give? That's how you can know if you're like Laodicea or not.

[5:12] And maybe that fired up some of you. I hope it did. I hope some of you have begun something. Maybe you said, I do need to start giving more. I see that the way I've been living isn't the way that God wants me to live.

I hope and I pray that you would have been moved to some change, but it isn't easy to finish what you've started. And so, a week has passed.

Not very much time at all, but sometimes the desires that we felt so keenly a week ago, we don't feel any longer. And so, I want to look at four truths from 2 Corinthians chapter 8 that help us to finish well in this grace of giving.

Well, here's the historical context. For some reason, the church in Jerusalem was suffering. They were impoverished. They needed financial help. And so, Paul at this time was going around to all the Gentile churches, and he was getting together a collection for the Jerusalem church to alleviate their problems.

And Corinth was one of these churches. Now, Corinth had started well in this matter of giving. But Paul wants them to end well. And so, as he goes through these first 15 verses as we have it, he gives them four truths that they need to think about, that they need to apply, that they need to put inside their heart, if they're going to be lifelong givers.

[6:42] If the things that they've wanted to do at the beginning, they end up continuing to do. And we see the first truth in the first seven verses. And this is a big passage, and we're going to cover it all, and so we're not going to go into a lot of detail.

But the first seven verses of chapter 8, we see the first truth. And it's this, that grace generates generosity. Grace generates generosity.

Three times in these first seven verses, Paul uses the word grace. We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.

Verse 6, Bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. Verse 7, See that you also excel in this grace of giving. Well, why did Paul expect the Corinthians to be givers?

Well, it was because they were under God's grace. They had received God's grace. God had saved them, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, grace now was flowing into their lives.

[7:47] And one way, that grace always shows itself, in our lives, in the lives of every Christian, is in giving. That's how it had worked in the Macedonians.

The Macedonians were Paul's primary, prime examples of what kind of giving Paul is after, and what kind of giving I am after, what kind of giving we want to be about.

And it was willing, cheerful, sacrificial giving. And that sort of thing doesn't grow on natural man. It doesn't grow on natural man.

And so they were in this most severe trial. They were in an extreme poverty. But the grace was so powerful in them, that their joy overflowed in generosity.

And so, you put a can of soup on the stove. And there it is. It's cold. It's right out of the can. It's not moving.

[8:45] Maybe if you have a, you know, a can of Campbell's, thick and chunky, it kind of goops out, and it's all gelatin-y in the pot. And you turn the heat on. And you're in a hurry that day.

And so, you turn the heat all the way up. And like I said, you're in a hurry. And so what you do is, you go get dressed or do whatever. You do something else. You leave the pan on the stove. And something begins to happen to that cold, slimy can of soup.

Doesn't it? It starts to heat up. And before you know it, what was just laying listless in the bottom of that pot is now boiling. And if it goes too long, it boils over, and it overflows, and gets all over your stove.

Well, that's what grace does in the heart of a believer. We come out of the can, cold and nasty, and God's grace comes and heats us up.

And the heat, we see, it doesn't come from the inside. It comes from the outside. The heat comes from the stove, and the heat comes from God Himself.

[9:49] But even as we notice that it's God's grace working in us that produces generosity, we also need to see right there with it is our responsibility to excel in the grace of giving.

Paul says, just like you excel in everything else, excel in this grace of giving. If God's grace is really active in you, it does not leave you passive. You're not going to sit there and say, well, I'm just

waiting for God to move me to give.

No, we pursue. It puts a fire in us to give more and more. And, let's dig a little deeper. Because we really need to understand this first truth, or we're going to get it all wrong.

Grace generates generosity. Now, God's grace is like a big box with lots of little boxes inside of it. All the little boxes are His presence to us. And some are shaped one way, and some are shaped another. But they're all inside of this great, His greatest big box to us, and that's our salvation in Jesus Christ.

[11:02] Christ. So, inside, the grace of the gospel, inside of God saving us, it is this grace of giving.

The gospel generates generosity. So, Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he, and he climbed up into the sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see.

And as the Lord came walking by, the Lord looked up into the tree, and He said, Zacchaeus, you come down, I want to come to your house today. Well, I don't know the second verse of that. My wife on the way said, there is a second verse to that song.

But, if there is, then it's going to talk about what happened next. What happened at Zacchaeus' house when Jesus came there? Well, Jesus saved Zacchaeus.

Jesus put forth His power and saved Zacchaeus, and He gave Zacchaeus a new heart. He said, I was a shepherd, and I found my lost sheep, and Zacchaeus is the lost sheep.

[12:08] And do you remember Zacchaeus' response to Jesus and His grace? He said, look, Lord, here and now, I give away half of my possessions.

And if I've cheated anyone out of anything, I'm going to pay back four times. Do you think that left Zacchaeus in a very good financial position? I don't think so. Half of it's right away, and I'm sure he's cheated a lot along the way, and so he's giving out all of his possessions.

Grace came, and Zacchaeus exploded in generosity. Well, why? Because there's this rock-solid logic that's going on inside of every Christian.

And it says this, if God has been so good to me, I have to give away my things. I can't live any longer for myself.

God has been so generous to me, I must be generous to others. And so, if you really get grace, if you really get grace, if you understand the gospel, then you have no problem understanding giving and getting that.

[13:22] Well, someone last Lord's Day asked me, well, why don't we get this? Why, people who are so doctrinally correct in so many areas, why do we struggle in this area?

Why aren't we more generous? Why don't we get this? Because, and I think the answer is because as doctrinally precise as we are, and that is a good thing, we're no longer amazed at grace.

We're no longer amazed at grace. We sing amazing grace, but grace has become commonplace to us. And, I know that's true, because if it wasn't true, then we would be, we would see, we'd be seeing exuberant generosity.

Grace wasn't commonplace to Zacchaeus. Grace wasn't commonplace to the early church when they were giving, giving, giving. Grace had generated giving and generosity.

And so, amazing grace, amazing grace, makes me overflow in generosity. I can't keep my things, I can't love my things, when Jesus died for me.

[14:38] It doesn't make any sense for me to live for me anymore when Jesus died for me. I must live for Him. And so, the heart that gets the gospel gets giving. Giving doesn't earn salvation.

Giving is the evidence of salvation. Robert Murray McShane, he was a Scottish pastor, preacher, was preaching once and he said this, there are many hearing me who now know, who now know well they are not Christians because they do not love to give.

To give largely and liberally, not grudgingly at all, requires a new heart. And so, this truth is a stethoscope.

You can put it on your heart and you can hear if you have a new heart or if you have that old dead heart. Do I love to give? Have I been born again?

Well, if you put the stethoscope to your heart and you don't hear any beating, if you say, I give but I really don't want to, I do it grudgingly, or I don't really do it at all because I think there's a lot better things to do with my money, or, you know, giving is a good idea but I actually never get around to it.

[15:59] If we see all those things, the thing to do is not to try harder. The thing to do is to go to Jesus because Jesus has the one who has the power to change a heart.

Do you remember what Charles Dickens said about Scrooge? He was a grasping old sinner. And I'm afraid if we don't love to give, that's what we are. We're grasping old sinners.

And James says you fattened yourself in the day of slaughter. You've come to the place of judgment and all you've been doing is feeding your mouth to make judgment all the more devastating for you.

And so you need a new heart. Or you're going to be like King Tut. You know King Tut? He had all those riches around him, but inside he was dead and empty. Well, he was a corpse with all of his material around him, but utterly naked before God.

And you need Jesus. I can't do anything. I can't say anything. I can't make it clear to you that you need Jesus. That can make you become a giver.

[17 : 09] You need him to do it. You need his life. You need his death. You can't go on without him. Dive into that grace. Come to him for mercy and giving will follow.

Grace generates generosity. And believers, that's for you too. I think we all need to come back and be amazed at grace. If we're not giving generously and exuberantly and passionately and if we're not really, really excited about giving, it's because we're really, really not getting grace.

We're not getting salvation at all. Well, the second truth is found in verses 8 and 9. The truth here is that giving is the test of love.

Giving is the test of love. Paul says, I'm not commanding you. But I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

Giving is the test of love. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. Now, what is the second greatest commandment?

[18 : 20] It's to love others as you love yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself. So how are you doing? loving? The second commandment, that's a pretty big one.

It's a biggie. So how are you doing at loving? Well, Paul says that you can tell by what kind of love you have, the sincerity of your love, the realness of your love, by your generosity.

By your generosity. So do you really love people like yourself? Well, you can test that by what you give. Well, how does Paul know that that works?

Because he's seen this before. He saw it in Jesus. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Jesus was the ultimate lover, because he was the ultimate giver. He gave up everything. He was rich.

[19 : 25] How rich was he? Well, by very nature, God. He had all the prerogatives of God. He had ultimate power.

He had ultimate glory. He owned everything as the Son of God. He owned the cattle on a thousand hills. He owned angels. He owned people.

He owned kingdoms. There was not a single inch of the whole universe that the Son of God could not say, this is mine. I own this. He was rich.

But look at his love for you. Look at his love for you. He became poor. He made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant.

He owned people and yet became their servant. servants. He divested himself. He gave everything away from himself.

[20 : 26] He stripped himself of everything. He stripped himself of all the perks of divinity to make you rich. And these words need to come to you more than just words.

They need to come to you in the power of the Spirit if you're going to understand this. What did Jesus own? He owned everything. But what did he own at the end? He owned nothing.

Along life's path he had the clothes on his back and in the end he didn't have even those. He had his body and he gave that for you.

He had no home. He impoverished himself to make you rich. And Paul says that is sincere love. Don't talk about love unless you can compare it in some way if it looks something like this.

Are you like Jesus? See we just can't say that I love others like I love myself. Because if we love people the truth is that we will make ourselves poorer for them.

[21 : 36] It's just that simple. If we love others just like we love ourselves we would do all that we could to supply their needs because that's what we do for ourselves.

If I'm thirsty I get myself a drink. If I want a home I buy myself a house. We provide savings for ourselves. You have retirement accounts and bank accounts for yourself for that rainy day. And if we love others we would do for them what we do for ourselves. And we would do for them what they can't do for themselves.

You can't say you love your neighbor if you if your fellow man is starving and you do nothing to help them. And brothers and sisters that's not a fantasy that's not a theory that's not a possibility that's reality.

reality. That's reality for many Christians. So we can go to India and there are thousands of Christians who because they are in the minority they are beaten and ostracized and they cannot provide for their families.

[22 : 56] They cannot provide for their own. They need our help. But too often we say we show favoritism to ourselves.

We play favorites and I'm my own favorite. Those people are starving but I want this. I've earned this.

I deserve that. Those people are starving but I want this and so I'll just pretend like they aren't there. I'll pretend like I don't know about that. I'll pretend like I can't figure out how to help them.

I'll act like I can't. I'll treat myself better than them. I'll buy this latest gadget. I'll buy more clothes while my brothers and sisters go naked.

God blessed me anyways, hasn't He? Isn't it right that I should enjoy His good gifts? Isn't it right that I should enjoy these things? And for all those excuses, that's just favoritism.

[24 : 09] Listen to what James says. If you keep the royal law found in scripture, love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right.

But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law breakers. And brothers and sisters, we are law breakers.

I don't know how else it could be. Too often, so often, consistently, we spend our money on our pleasures when we know full well that Christians are suffering.

And there are needy people. And we don't care, and that's favoritism. What else could it be? we need Jesus to change our hearts.

We need his heart in us. And we need to drive this truth home to ourselves. Giving is the test of love. Because Jesus showed the sincerity of his love for us by impoverishing himself, by giving.

[25 : 12] And he gave it all. And if we, like I said, if we get Jesus giving, if we get Jesus and his grace, then we'll understand giving. And if we don't get Jesus giving, if we don't understand that, and if that doesn't come home to us, then all my words are foolishness.

We won't get it. We don't appreciate giving. We won't give ourselves. But giving is the test of love. Well, now the third truth.

It's found in verses 10 through 12. And it's this. God loves a cheerful giver. God loves a cheerful giver.

The Corinthians were first in line when it came time to give. And they were first in line to say, you know what, we'll give to our poor brothers in Jerusalem.

But it's easy at the beginning, and sometimes it's not so easy in the end. And so Paul says remember, you need to remember something, that your attitude is more important than the amount.

[26 : 23] Your attitude is more important than your amount. You see that in verse 12. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

So the key thing is the willingness, it's not the amount. The great lie of the devil is this, in this matter, is I can't give enough to make a difference.

And so I might as well not do it. And that's a lie. It's a deceit, and we believe it. So here's this hungry crowd of people.

You remember this story. Hungry crowd of people, and Jesus has mercy on them. They don't have any food, and he says to his disciples, give them something to eat.

And the disciples are like, yeah, right, I mean, are we crazy? We don't have enough money for that, and we don't have enough bread for that. Well, they go through the crowd, and they find a boy with two small fishes and five little loaves of bread.

[27 : 35] And you remember what the disciples said next. But how can so little feed so many? Do you get the point? Like, what's the point? this little gift doesn't help this matter.

And they were wrong. What's the point, Lord? Well, what did Jesus do? Well, he took that small gift, he took that small little lunch that the little boy gave, and he multiplied it.

And he multiplied it. Now, can you imagine, I was thinking about this, can you imagine what that little boy had to say to his mom when he came home that night? Mom, mom, you'll never believe it. You'll never believe what happened. Everyone needed food, and all there was was my little lunch, and I gave it to Jesus, and guess what? He fed everybody with it.

the boy gladly gave the little that he had, and Jesus used it, and he multiplied it, and it covered the needs that Jesus wanted it to cover.

[28:41] And you know what? Jesus gave that boy a story that he could tell for the rest of his life of how, I mean, can you just imagine the lifelong joy that that boy had as he grew up to be a man, when he thought there was one time I was generous, and Jesus made it go so far.

He used it for a whole hungry crowd. Now the point is, the size of your giving, or your gift, is meaningless in some respects.

The more important matter is your heart. Is there willingness there? William Buffett, you know, the Oracle of Omaha, he's like one of the top three richest peoples in the world, he just became the largest dollar-wise philanthropist in the world.

So, dollar for dollar, he's the most generous man in the whole world. My question is, what is that in God's eyes? What is that in God's eyes?

William Buffett today will probably make more money than I will my entire life. I'm sure he will. I don't know how much he makes on a Sunday, but I'm sure it's more than I'll make. And he'll probably give today more than I will ever give in my whole life.

[29:58] But Jesus is looking at our hearts. Is the willingness there? God loves a cheerful giver. So don't listen to Satan's lie and say, well, I can't make a difference.

Well, of course you can't. I mean, that's what you need to say to Satan. Of course you can't. Of course I can't. I can't by myself. And you know what, that little boy's lunch, it couldn't feed a multitude. But with God, all things are possible.

Of course you can't give what you don't have. And that's the other main point here. You can't give out of things that you don't have. I mean, we could long and dream to win the lottery so that we could give it all away, but you know what, it's not going to happen.

And so we give out of what we have. And if you give joyfully, and you give according to what you are a lot, if you give according to that, then God smiles.

Now remember, brothers and sisters, God gave according to what He had. God gave according to what He had. God loves a cheerful giver because He Himself is a cheerful giver.

[31:15] I don't think we can possibly understand, it's going to sound strange, I don't think we can possibly understand the joy that God felt as He gave His Son up for us.

It was a painful gift, but aren't usually the most painful, the most sacrificial gifts? Doesn't God usually connect the greatest joys to those things?

Doesn't the joy usually follow the pain? And so this gift of His own Son pierced His heart. It tore at His heart strings, but at the same time, what joy He must have felt as He gave the gift.

They will know my love when they see this gift. They will love me when they see this gift. I will save them from the deepest hell and exalt them to the highest heaven with this gift. And though it cost me all, though it cost me my own precious Son, though it cost me the most treasured thing I have, I gladly pay it.

Do you see how mysterious the cross is? There's wrath, and there's love, and there's joy, and there's sorrow, and they're just mingled so perfectly.

[32:36] God did not begrudge us the gift of His Son, or there would have been no love in it. But He loved us, and so He willingly gave Him up. It was His pleasure to bruise His Son, Isaiah says.

And it hurt so bad. But what joy! I'll wash away their sins. I'll bring them to myself. They will see my glory, they will see my glorious holiness, and my glorious majesty, and they will be everlastingly happy because of this gift.

Brothers, God loves a cheerful giver because He is a cheerful giver. And so let that grace sink in. You'll never be a lifelong giver if you don't get this, if you don't get God's grace.

Well, here's the third, or here's the fourth truth. That was the third truth. Here's the fourth and final truth. God, our giving is God's answer to poverty.

Giving is God's answer to poverty. So let's read again verses 13 and 14. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.

[34:01] At the present time, your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn, their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.

As it is written, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Well, what's the key word in those verses?

It's the word equality. Equality. So here's the situation in 2 Corinthians. We've talked about this. The Christians in Judea are poor. They're suffering.

The Christians in Corinth are affluent. they're wealthy. They have plenty. And so what does Paul want to see in this situation? Well, he wants to see equality.

He wants everyone's needs provided. He doesn't want all the wealthy Corinthians to give up everything they have because that would just make them poor, and then the church in Judea would be rich, and that would just shift the problem from one area to another.

[35:13] He wants equality. He wants everyone's needs to be supplied. And so this was God's solution for poverty in the universal church, in the worldwide church.

This isn't communism, okay? I mean, a lot of people have taken this and said, oh, this is communism. It's not communism where the state owns everything. This isn't living off the state.

This isn't a welfare situation. this is generosity. This is God's plan for dealing with poverty, and it's generosity. This is plan A, and there's no plan B.

So, do you see what that has to do with you? Do you see what that has to do with you and me? We are the wealthy ones.

We are the wealthy ones. Grace Fellowship, you are wealthy Corinth, just like you were wealthy Laodicea, you're wealthy Corinth, and what is God's purposes for your wealth?

[36:16] It's not for you to keep buying more and more for yourself. It's that your plenty will supply their need. Your plenty is for their need.

It's not for your wants. It's for their needs, not for your wants. And I hear someone thinking, but what about 1 Timothy 4?

Some of you are saying, I don't even know what that says. But 1 Timothy 4 says, everything created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. Doesn't that mean that God wants us to enjoy the things he's given me?

Doesn't that mean that I can glorify God with my wealth if I say thank you? It's good for me to keep enjoying God's things as long as I return to him a thank you?

Well, I've heard that argument over and over again, but that is not the point of 1 Timothy. And we abuse it if we do. Paul was talking to people who were saying, or he was talking against people who were saying, marriage is bad, food is bad, and those things are bad in and of themselves.

[37:28] And to that Paul says, no, I mean, they're good. Marriage is good, all foods are good, but it doesn't follow from that passage that you should heap up on yourself more and more of these good things while your brother starves and is imprisoned.

And like I said last week, when 26,000 children die every day of starvation, 1 Timothy 4 does not say, oh, keep saying thank you and you don't have to worry about that.

God's purpose is purpose for your wealth, your plenty is not so that you can go on buying more and more things, nicer houses, nicer furniture, more things for yourself, but in the whole time, well, you say, well, I can glorify God with my wealth.

I can glorify God with my money. God is glorified when I say thank you. All things are good. They are good, so why don't you give them to someone else and let them say thank you?

Because when their needs are met, trust me, their glory, their worship is greater than when you just get more and more things that you want. So one time, John Wesley had just finished buying some pictures for his apartment, his place where he was living, his room, when one of the chambermaids, one of the people that cleaned the rooms, came to his door, and it was a winter day, and he noticed that she had nothing on but this like a thin linen gown to protect her against the cold weather.

[39:03] Well, he reached into his pocket to pull out some money to give her so that she could buy a coat, and he looked, and he didn't have nearly enough.

He didn't hardly have any money to give to her. And it struck him. The Lord was not pleased with how he had spent his money.

He asked himself, Will your master say, Well done, good and faithful steward? You have adorned your walls with your money that might have protected this poor creature from the cold.

Oh, justice, oh, mercy, are not these pictures the blood of that woman? Were the pictures that Wesley hung about his apartment wrong?

No. But it was wrong. It was very wrong to buy unnecessary decorations for his house when there was a freezing woman at his door.

[40:09] Listen to John Calvin on this passage. God has enjoined, has commanded upon us, he's given to us, he's commanded upon us frugality and temperance and has forbidden that anyone should go to excess, taking advantage of his abundance.

Let those then that have riches consider that their abundance was not intended to be laid out in intemperance or excess, but in relieving the necessities of the brethren.

Too often, I've taken advantage of my abundance, abundance. But God didn't intend my abundance so that I could heap up treasures on earth, but so that I could give to those who are in need.

That's God's plan for poverty. It's generous giving. And I'm afraid, brothers and sisters, that we've been too far astray.

we've missed it. We've been blind like Laodicea. And that's why when we come to James 5, we don't get what his words mean when he says, rich man, weep.

[41:27] And we say, well, first of all, we say, well, I'm not rich. We lie to ourselves that way. And then if we do finally confess that, you know what, we are the rich ones, we say, why would I weep when God has blessed me with so much?

Aren't these things so good? Why should I weep over them? And James says, weep because our wealth has rotted. The moths have eaten our clothes, the gold and silver has corroded, and their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire.

He says, you have hoarded wealth in the last days. You know what sends people to hell? When you're in the last days, the final days of this earth, and you're hoarding wealth.

And he says, all that wealth, all it's going to do is eat your flesh. It's going to burn you up. And Jesus comes to us because he loves us.

Just like he came to the church in Laodicea and he says, repent. Repent. Be in earnest. And brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming to us and he's saying, are you going to live like I did?

[42:38] Are you going to be my disciples? Disciples are people that follow after a master. Are you going to walk after me or not? I live for the next world. The joy set before him.

Remember, he endured suffering, the cross. I live for the next world, will you? Jesus has given us great wealth. He has given us financially immensely.

And so let's do great good things with it. Let's send it all ahead. And so that we can enjoy it forever and ever. That's what Jesus is saying when he says, store up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

Use those things that you have on earth now to make for yourselves treasure in heaven.

And so let's do that. Let's send it all ahead so that we can enjoy it forever and ever. let's give away our things so much and do something so crazy that our neighbors will actually notice and think, what is up with them?

And maybe they'll ask us then, why do you have this hope that's in you? They don't seem to ask me that very much when I'm enjoying all these things in my life.

[43:47] So let's live like there's a heaven to win and there's a world to overcome. come and there's a throne to gain because there is.

There is. So right now, Grace Fellowship, we have a golden opportunity to glorify God to the ends of the world, the ends of the earth.

Right now, there are opportunities to be grabbed, to be used, limited opportunities. There are ministries to support. There are children to rescue.

There are people to reach with the gospel. There are Bible translation projects to fund. There are children in orphanages going hungry while we strive to lose weight and we should do something about it.

Don't put it off. Grace Fellowship, as you excel in so many things, excel in this grace of giving. ministry. And if you want practical suggestions, ask.

[44:52] And if you want ministries, I know some wonderful ministries that could use you, that could use your money, that go to great and wonderful causes. And brothers and sisters, the bottom

line is this, has God saved you with a bloody, costly gift of his son?

has he loved you? Has he called you heavenward? If so, then we need to live like it.

We need to love like it. We need to give like it. And aren't you tired of these sick worlds passing pleasures and possessions and just heaping up more and more and it just gets sicker and sicker.

And so if you want to escape that, you have to give. You have to give sacrificially and you'll, then you'll know the smile of God. The smile of God is we're so much more than the smile of this world.

And Jesus says, if you repent, if you hear my voice, what? I'll come in and I'll eat with you. I'll dine with you. Anyone who hears, anyone who repents, Jesus said, I'll come in and dine with them.

[46:07] And like I said last week, it doesn't matter if everyone else misses it. And if everyone else who's hearing this closes their ears and says, I'm not going to make a change.

If you will, if you will repent, if you will hear, Jesus will come in and dine with you. And to those who overcome, he promises a throne to rule with him forever.

forever. So what more could you want? What more could you want? What more could entice you than Jesus' fellowship, than ruling and living forever with him?

So let's seize this day and let's seize the money that we have and make it count for now and for eternity. It's the only way to live if we've seen how much God has loved us.

It's the only way to live. Our Heavenly Father, we would ask that you would please give us grace to see the wonder of your grace.

[47:21] That you would open up our eyes like you opened Saul's eyes on the road to Tarsus to see the glory of the exalted Jesus. And how he gave up all that glory.

the glory that he had from you from the beginning. And he gave it all up for us and died a most shameful death. Totally impoverished, totally naked, totally alone, and in total pain.

And let us, let that message reverberate in our own hearts so that it transforms us. And so the things that we desire would be different.

and we would no longer desire to have the things of this earth that are so passing and so fleeting and so little compared to his love.

That we would say with Paul, I consider everything a loss. I consider it all rubbish. Not only our righteousness, but all of the things that we have put value on compared to knowing Jesus.

[48:28] us. And I pray for the brothers and sisters here who will start to make sacrificial giving a part of their life and who start to give up things to the point where it really begins to hurt that you would meet them, that you would richly reward them.

Lord, save those who are in love with this world, in love with the anchor and it's dragging them down into hell and they won't let go.

will you please open their eyes to see their great, great need, their desperate situation. Only you can do it.

So you will get all the glory for doing it. So we ask that you would, for your own name's sake, hear our prayer and answer us according to your good will. In Jesus' name, Amen.