

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

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[0:00] I'm going to read 2 Corinthians chapter 8 for us. Make sure you've got a bulletin and a pen. You'll find an outline of my talk inside the bulletins! And this not as we expected.

But they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urge Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

But as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you, see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

And in this matter, I give my judgment. This benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

[1:47] For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

As it is written, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother, who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel.

And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us. For the glory of the Lord himself, and to show our goodwill.

We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us. For we aim at what is honourable, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the sight of man.

[2:55] And with them we are sending our brother, whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit.

And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches. The glory of Christ. So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

This is the word of the Lord. There is something wonderfully relaxing and refreshing about sincerity. We live in a world of lies and manipulation, half-truths and cover-ups, bravado, pomp, virtue signaling rather than virtue substance, whitewashing and sportswashing and greenwashing and so on.

Hidden agendas. We are so used to it, it is hard to imagine a world without it. I often wonder what it would be like to live in a world of truthful advertising. You know, or if we really held people to the truth of what they were promising.

[4:03] Right? You know, that this car, by this car, it will get you from A to B. Rather than, oh, what a feeling. Or build your dreams.

Which is a bit over the top for a car, don't you think? Although Elon Musk's latest car. But anyway. Apparently, when you have a can of Coke, you are opening happiness. Did you know that? Red Bull even promises to give you wings. Even though we all know that it won't. It would be more accurate to say that it will give you rotten teeth, maybe heart palpitations, diabetes.

You know, which is fine, but wouldn't it be good if they just advertised that? You know, have a sugary drink. You might like it. It tastes a bit weird. But, you know, there are health implications to consider.

You know, it's up to you. Catchy. This is where the phrase, and you know, I find this phrase very refreshing. Put your money where your mouth is.

[5:01] Right? This is where that phrase kind of comes in. It's saying, you know, it's calling people out. And saying, hold on just a minute. Let's be straight with one another. It's time to show by your actions that you're not just all talk.

That you really believe what you're saying. I think of Michael Burry. Right? This is where my mind goes. And those guys who predicted the global financial crisis. You know, have you seen the big short or sort of followed this story?

Where they didn't just talk about the economy. They had to put their money down. They risked a lot. They bet against the vast majority of economists. Because they really believed what they were saying and what their analysis was showing them.

Or Catherine and I met a lovely couple once. We've met lots of lovely couples. But anyway, this is one particular couple. They moved from Europe into the deepest, darkest jungles of Papua New Guinea.

Because they had read about the UN's hundred year plan. And they were so horrified by it. That they felt the only reasonable solution was to run and hide.

[6:10] As far from the reaches of the UN as possible. Now they weren't Christians at the time. And so they didn't know about Jesus' sovereign rule over the world. And how, you know, we don't need to be afraid when he's in charge.

As bad as things get. But still, you know, talk about living by your convictions. You know, reading a document. Thinking carefully about it. And moving to the other side of the world.

And not just to, you know, beautiful Brisbane or Australia. But as deep and dark as you can go. Because of your convictions. I think that is impressively sincere.

Don't you? And it's not just going with the flow. It's not just doing what everyone else is doing. It reminds me of Noah.

You know, these people doing crazy things. That everyone around them would kind of ridicule. It would take serious, sincere courage and conviction. Even though, in their case. They ultimately realized they were sincerely wrong.

[7:12] When they became Christians. But our passage today then. It seems to me. Is fundamentally about this idea of sincerity. It's time for the Corinthians. To put their money where their mouth is.

I don't think we've talked yet about the structure of 2 Corinthians. And in part that's because I'm not quite sure I know what it is. So just to be sincere. But at least.

Let me point out one suggestion. Which I think is worth pondering. That it's sort of chronological.

Have you noticed that? If you think back to chapters 1 and 2. Paul's focus was mostly on the past. Going over with the Corinthians. Where things were. Why he changed his travel plans. Etc. Then in chapters 3 to 7. Paul moves into the present. And begins to talk about where things are.

The kind of authentic gospel ministry. He's engaged in. And kind of always is engaged in. And he wants them to join him in. Now as we move into chapters 8 and 9.

[8:10] The question is where to next. Right. Paul has an immediate next step for the Corinthians. As they want to restart their partnership together in earnest.

And then finally when we get to the last section of the letter. Paul wants to talk about the even more distant future. Maybe the next step after that. Or the question is where to ultimately. He talks about his third visit.

As a sort of judgment day. Which of course is just a shadow of the greater judgment day. We all have to prepare for. Right. But Paul wants to talk about his coming. And he says you know I'm worried that I'm going to.

When I come I'm going to find you. Not as I wish. And then we're going to have to kind of bring judgment day. Kind of you know the Lord is going to judge you through me. So you see how there's this kind of movement. Across the book.

From the past to the present to the future. And if you think about the background to the letter. I think that makes sense. You know after a big fight. It's important that we don't just sweep things under

the carpet.

[9:12] But we process them together. He's trying to begin with. He's trying to establish what happened. Help the Corinthians understand calmly and lovingly and so on.

Where he was coming from. What that was about. Why he behaved like he did and so on. So Paul does that to begin with. And then as he's calling them back into partnership in the gospel.

He wants to start rebuilding things one step at a time. This is what my ministry is about. You know here's what we're on about. And here's what we want you to do next. To join in the partnership. And then here's where we're going a little bit further on.

You know here's our vision for the future. So as I say. I think we're in the section now. Where Paul is urging the Corinthians. To put their money where their mouth is. Remember they have begun to repent.

The news from Titus was good. That they had responded well to Paul's letter. They were ready to come back into partnership with him. But like any good cricket shot.

[10:11] Right? They've got to follow through now. So there are. That probably wasn't a very good cricket shot. But anyway. My technique's terrible. But there are. They've got to follow through. And that's the first thing Paul wants to talk about.

So there are three parts to chapter 8. First of all. In verses 1 to 7. Paul holds up the Macedonians. As a model of generosity. See verse 1. We want you to know brothers.

About the grace of God. That has been given. Among the churches of Macedonia. Macedonia. So. Let's just make sure we've got our geography right here. Remember Corinth is in southern Greece. In Achaia. Macedonia is in northern Greece. And there isn't just one church up there. Of course. There are several churches. In Thessalonica. Berea. Philippi. And maybe in other towns as well. These are all the churches in Macedonia. And Paul is saying. That God's grace. Has been poured out. Upon all the churches. Of Macedonia. It's really important to read this verse carefully.

[11:11] Because. We're about to see something amazing. That the Macedonians did. But it wouldn't be right. To give them all the credit for it. Because in verse 1.

You see. It all starts with. The grace of God. It's like in Paul's letters. To the Philippians. And to the Thessalonians. You might remember. He says. I thank God for you.

Or I always thank God for you. For your faith. Love and hope. For your partnership in the gospel. And so on. So he doesn't thank them. Directly. Right. Even though. You know.

That might not be wrong. Necessarily. But that's not how he frames it. Or the emphasis he wants to. You know. Where he wants to draw our attention. He doesn't thank them. He thanks God. For them. He wants our attention to be on God.

And his gracious work. In our lives. So even here. Paul wants to tell the Corinthians. Not just how great the Macedonians are. But about how great God is.

[12:06] And how great a miracle. God has worked in the hearts of the Macedonians. By pouring out his grace upon them. So verse 2. For in a severe test of affliction.

Their abundance of joy. And their extreme poverty. Have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means. As I can testify.

And beyond their means. Of their own accord. God. Begging us earnestly. For the favour. Of taking part. In the relief. Of the saints. Of course.

We're all used to seeing people. Beg for money. And I'm not trying to. Criticise those people necessarily. Or kick them while they're down. They might need our help. But in this passage. Notice.

How striking it is. When have you ever heard of someone. Begging. For the chance to give. Their money away. I mean. The Macedonians. Begged Paul. Earnestly.

[13:01] He says. For the favour. Of giving their money away. You know. Do me a favour. Take my money. Even though they themselves. Were facing extreme poverty. Right.

Paul says. They were giving. Beyond their means. They couldn't afford to give. What they were giving. They were so eager. To sacrifice. Even what little they had. To try and help out.

Their brothers and sisters. Across the other side of the world. These people. That they had never met. And the word saints here. Is being used. As a technical term. For Jewish Christians.

Right. Early Jewish Christians. From Judea. There was a great. Famine in Judea. Under Emperor Claudius. It's roughly. AD 45 to 48. In Acts chapter 11.

You can read about it. J.C. Fis mentions it as well. It's. You know. It was a big deal. The prophet Agabus. Actually predicted it. In Acts chapter 11. So.

[13:59] And when. When he did. The disciples in Antioch. Determined. Everyone. According to his ability. To send relief. To the brothers. Living in Judea. And they did so. Sending it.

To the elders. By the hand of Barnabas. And Saul. Now. Several years later. Sounds like the Christians. In Judea. Are still suffering. After the impacts. Of the famine. It had a very.

You know. Long tail. And economically. Perhaps for other reasons too. Maybe persecution. Is plaguing them. So. Paul's fundraising efforts. Have now spread far and wide.

Across the entire empire. Even to Greece. And in Macedonia. They were begging him. For the favor. Of taking part. In the relief of.

The saints. The. The Jewish Christians. When is the last time. You begged. To give away your money. I think of the poor widow.

[14:54] Jesus commands. You remember. She put into the temple. Into the coffers of the temple. All that she had to live on. Or the. The saying of Jesus. Paul quotes in Acts chapter 20.

To the Ephesian elders. He says in verse 33. I coveted no one's silver. Or gold. Or apparel. You yourselves know. That these hands minister. To my necessities. And to those who are with me.

In all things. I've shown you. That by working hard. In this way. We must help the weak. And remember. The words of the Lord Jesus. How he himself said. It is more blessed to give.

Than to receive. I wonder if you really. Believe that. It's honestly a great. Challenge to me. And I'm not really sure. That I do.

Believe that. With all my heart. I mean. I love getting things. I can see the blessing. Of receiving things. Right. I can see the great. Blessing. To receive a present. Or to be able to go out.

[15:50] And buy something. For myself. And I'm not. Complete pagan. You know. I recognize.

That these are good gifts. From God. I'm thanking God. For all the things. I'm receiving. But I find it harder.

To see the blessing. Of giving things away. Why? Jesus turns our expectations. Upside down. Doesn't he? And just to help.

Us here. I was thinking about this. This week. For myself. If you can think about. Why is it a blessing? And why is it more blessed. To give than to receive?

I think fundamentally. It's because it brings us. Closer to God. I think. It's because Jesus himself.

Was a giver. We will come to that. In a moment. In the passages. As we've. As we've just sung.

So being a giver. You see. Draws us into closer fellowship. With. Our savior. When I give away. I come closer to my God. Being a giver.

[16:46] Blesses me. Because. It frees me. From the self-centeredness. The perverse. Inward lookingness. Of my natural. Sinful self. Being a giver.

Is part of being renewed. In the image. Of my creator. For God. Is the greatest giver. Of all. And so Lord. Make me a giver. I'm begging.

To make. The Lord. To make me a giver. We all. We all need things. There's nothing wrong. With receiving. But. Let's remember. Brothers and sisters. The sweeter. Blessing. Of giving.

Things away. And let's beg. The Lord for it. Notice how Paul says. In verse 5. This was not. As we expected.

You see. Even. Even Paul was surprised. By this miraculous. Generosity. Among the. The Macedonians. And. This is crucial. He says. It was part of their.

[17:47] Devotion to the Lord. And to us. You see. They didn't just give money. But they gave. Themselves. First to the Lord. And then. By the will of God. To us.

Sometimes people. Give money. Don't they? As a way. Of avoiding. Giving themselves. You know. Because it's easier. To tap a credit card. Than to wholeheartedly. Devote yourself. To someone.

Or to a cause. You know. The foolish parent. Who thinks that. Money can make up for time. Or for love. But notice how. For the Macedonians. It wasn't like that. And it was wholehearted.

It said money was just an expression. Of their sincere. Total commitment. Both to the Lord Jesus. And to Paul. And his team of co-workers.

Again. Sometimes. People claim to love the Lord. Don't they? But they don't love Paul. Or they claim to love God. But they don't love God's people. The scriptures consistently teach us against.

[18:47] Teach against such hypocrisy. If we really love God. We'll love our neighbor. Who's made in God's image. If we really love God. We'll love God's people. Especially. We'll love God's apostle.

Even more. Especially. People who teach the gospel to us. On the other hand. Sometimes people love people. People love community.

They might even love church. But they don't really love God. For the Macedonians. See how such nonsense is unthinkable. Unthinkable. That the two go hand in hand. So Paul is wanting to hold up the Macedonians.

As a model for all of us. For the Corinthians. To perhaps challenge their sluggishness. To encourage them. You know. I think of partnerships.

It's hard to commit. And throw yourself all into a partnership. When you're not sure if anyone else is on board. And going to be joining you with it. But Paul is holding up the Macedonians.

[19 : 44] As great partners in the gospel. To encourage the Corinthians. To join in as well. So verse 6. Accordingly Paul says. We urge Titus.

That as he had started. So he should complete among you. This act of grace. But as you excel in everything. In faith. In speech. In knowledge. In all earnestness. And in our love for you. See that you excel in this act of grace also.

Right. So. We hear about when the Corinthians. Started this. Back in the book of. 1 Corinthians.

Right. In 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Paul gave instructions. Now concerning the collection for the saints.

As I directed the churches of Galatia. So you also are to do. Which is interesting isn't it. Right. You can see how Paul's. Collection is global. The Galatians were included as well.

That's Turkey. Greece. Syria. Syria. So Paul now is wanting the Corinthians to finish what they started.

[20 : 57] But were derailed from. Of course in those days. It wasn't so easy just to transfer money across the world. You know. The click of a button. So there's all this sort of administration and organization that has to be done.

The money had to be physically carried across the sea. And protected along dangerous roads and so on. So it's a huge undertaking. And Paul collects men from each town.

Accredited by letter. So that each church that's giving. Can know that their money. Is being safely delivered. And Paul is not flattering the Corinthians here.

All of this vocab in verse 7 is loaded. Right. The Corinthians were very proud of their gifts of speech.

And knowledge. If you remember back to the first letter. Right. So the language is targeted.

What Paul is saying is a bit of a subtle rebuke. Right. He's saying what really matters is overflowing grace. Not how gifted you are. But how much you give.

[21 : 56] Right. Do you hear that? Not how gifted you are. But how much you give. I think Bill Collier often says. And I've heard second hand reports of this.

So I don't know. But if it is Bill. I think he's very wise. That the worst thing you can do. Is not fail. But be successful. At things that don't matter.

Isn't that a great point. There are lots of talented people in the world. The Corinthians. We're a very talented bunch. By the sounds of things. But Paul wanted them to be a loving bunch.

A people characterized by grace. Generosity. Other person centeredness. I know that we are a very talented bunch. Are we a very generous.

Gracious. Loving bunch. Sometimes giftedness. Puffs people up. But Paul says. What matters is not how gifted you are.

[22 : 58] But how much you give. How generous you are. If we are very gifted. Let's keep using our gifts. To give. To serve.

To love. But you can't command grace exactly. Can you? Right. So this is where Paul goes next. For grace to be truly grace.

It can't be squeezed out of you. You know. You can't do it as a matter of obligation. Or law. Or embarrassment. Someone's twisting your arm. You know. Be generous. Be gracious.

So. In verses 8 to 15. Paul wants to clarify a few things. I've called this section. The challenge. But in some ways. Paul says here. More about what he's not saying.

Than what he is saying. Right. The challenge is to be generous. But Paul says in verse 8. I say this. Not as a command. Or in verse 12.

[23 : 53] If the readiness is there. It is acceptable. According to what a person has. Not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean. That others should be eased. And burdened. You see how he keeps trying to clarify.

What he's saying. With these caveats. With these negative statements. You can't command grace. It needs to come from the heart. So I'm not saying this as a command.

But as verse 8. Continues. What Paul really wants is to prove. By the earnestness of others. That your love also is genuine. The idea here.

The idea of proving. Has to do with examining something. Closely. Scrutinizing it. To see if it's real. Testing it. You know. Like a litmus test or something. Like the way you might test.

A nugget of gold. To see if it's real. This word is kind of used. In that context. So Paul is saying. You know. Likewise. You can test a Christian. To see if they're real.

[24 : 49] Have they really received. Grace. Then they'll be. Overflowing with grace. Wishful thinking. Is not the same thing. As genuine Christian assurance. Grief.

Is not the same thing. As repentance. As we saw last week. Just saying. That you really feel. Like a Christian. Is not the same thing. As actually being born again.

And bearing the fruit of the spirit. And friends. I know we've. We've touched on this. A few times. Over previous. Weeks. And I've had.

Some good discussions. With people about it actually. Which I've really appreciated. So I just want to clarify. Some things. I know this is sometimes. An uncomfortable. And a bit of a scary topic. Especially if you're feeling. Stuck in. Some particular sin. But Paul's goal is. Is twofold. And this is. Like origami.

[25 : 45] You know. Paul's goal is twofold. It doesn't matter. And this is. This is a cheap joke. But. This is the preacher's goal. Always I think. To comfort the disturbed.

And to disturb the comfortable. You heard that old adage. It's a good one. The preacher is. The preacher's aim is to comfort the disturbed. And to disturb the comfortable. And sometimes. Unfortunately. I confess. Inadvertently. We end up comforting. The already comfortable. And disturbing. The already disturbed. Which is troubling. I'm not trying to do that. And I'm sure that's sometimes.

My fault. But also. I think. That's just often. The nature of. Church life. That the sheep. Are sensitive. To their sins.

And sometimes. Feel like imposters. While the goats. Are arrogant. And unrepentant. And rebukes. Just keep bouncing off them. So everyone keeps.

[26 : 41] Hearing the wrong thing. If you know what I mean. Remember. That was one of the proverbs. We looked at last week. A rebuke. Goes deeper. Into a man of understanding. Than a hundred blows.

Into a fool. So I'm not quite sure. How to overcome that. Other than to say. That that's somehow. How it works. We've got to try. And think of ourselves. With honesty.

And sober. Judgment. If. What Paul says here. Cuts you to the heart. Let me. Let me comfort you. You might not need to feel. So discouraged. You might be doing fine.

Just keep pressing on. Or on the other hand. If you're feeling comfortable. Let anyone who thinks he stands. Take heed. Lest he fall. Don't get too complacent. You know.

Are you sure you're one of the sheep? I know you've still got sins. Lingered. You know. The arrogance. Is surely exactly. What a goat would say. In other words.

[27 : 36] This is a. This is a complex subject. And I can't say everything. There is to say from. Up the front. So it'd just be a good thing. To keep chatting about afterwards. Over morning tea. Morning tea. Is a very important part. Of church life. In this passage.

Paul is wanting to test. The Corinthians. By comparing them. To the Macedonians. And holding them up. As it were. To the light. Of Macedonian generosity. Macedonian generosity.

Is going to. Test them. It's going to. Reveal something to them. And expose them. And hopefully.

Paul is hoping. That it'll show up. The genuineness of their love.

Lest of course. They fail to pass the test. As he will put it later on. In the letter. And so. Do you see. So it has this kind of. Double edge to it. It can be encouraging.

It can be. A warning. Admonishing. And we need to take it. In the same way. How do you feel. In the light. Of this Macedonian generosity.

[28 : 36] Have we really. Experienced God's grace. Now perhaps. The most beautiful verse. Of the whole passage. Is in verse nine. Right. We've already been singing.

About it. This is. This is the one. For memorizing. Paul says. For you know. The grace. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though. He was rich. Yet for your sake.

He became. Poor. So that you. By his poverty. Might become rich. What a beautiful way. Of putting the gospel. That our Lord Jesus Christ. And the king.

Of the whole universe. Once upon a time. Before the incarnation. He was rich. He lived. In radiant glory. And splendor. With his father. Forever. And ever.

This verse. Affirms the pre-existence. Of the son. And then he became poor. He exchanged.

Sapphire paved. Quartz. For a stable floor.

[29 : 29] Isn't that a beautiful line? And then of course. He sunk even lower. The son of man. Had nowhere. To lay his head. During his ministry. Was exhausted.

Harassed. And he suffered. And died. In humiliation. And weakness. Under the wrath of God. All for us. He who knew no sin.

Became sin. So that in him. We might become. The righteousness of God. So that by his poverty. We might become rich. Remember.

Going back to chapter 6. Paul talked about. How the Corinthians. Possess everything. In Christ. We have everything. Did you know that? We have become rich. We have righteousness.

We have peace. We have hope. And joy. True riches. All the treasures. Of wisdom. And knowledge. Are hidden in him. We have the whole new creation.

[30 : 27] To look forward to. We are heirs. Of the world. If you are a Christian. Do you realize. That you possess everything. In the end.

Don't worry. You will not miss out. On anything of value. And why? Because Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ. Became poor.

Again. Think about the power. And weakness. Theme in 2 Corinthians. We all know. The power of wealth. What people can do. With wealth. But notice here.

How the cross. Turns. Worldly values. Upside down. Here. Paul is talking about. The power of poverty. Jesus. Didn't accomplish something. Didn't accomplish.

Our salvation. From on high. Using his great power. And wealth. You know. His strength. The way. Sort of some. Great philanthropist. Might do it. And again. You know. There's nothing. Necessarily wrong with that.

[31 : 20] Bill Gates or something. Just. Giving out money. And doing good with it. Or something like that. But Jesus. Didn't accomplish. Our salvation. By wealth. He accomplished.

Our salvation. By impoverishing himself. By becoming weak. Making himself a slave. Suffering. Being humiliated. He thought about the power. Of weakness. Or the power of poverty. Now.

Basically. Paul wants to clarify. One other thing. In this section. And it's built around. This idea of fairness. In verses 13 and 14. It's repeated. He says. I don't mean. That others should be eased. And you burdened. But that as a matter of fairness. And so on. Now. I think this is a little bit. Of an enigma. Or a puzzle. To be honest. It's sort of in tension. With this comment earlier.

[32 : 16] If you think about it. Where. In order for grace to be grace. It has to be free. So he's not commanding them. It's not a law. But then here. Fairness.

This word fairness. Has to do with justice. You know. And obligation. It is about the law. And what's right. And then Paul quotes from the law. From the book of Exodus. In other words.

Paul is a grace man. But he's also not anti-law. Right. The Christian ethic. Is a bit more complex. Than. Than choosing between law and grace.

It's more that. By God's grace. God is creating a community. That fulfills the law. Right. By God's grace. He is creating a community.

That fulfills the law. Right. So God's desire. Is that from the heart. We would eagerly seek. Justice. And fairness. And to share with others.

[33 : 13] What we have. Because we love one another. And love fulfills the law. And it isn't right. That people should starve. While others of us. Have abundance.

Okay. Which brings us finally. To the last section of the chapter. Which we're not going to spend. Hardly any time on. But in the end. Paul just wants to reassure. The Corinthians. About the character.

Of the men who will be carrying. The money. These three men that he describes. Two of whom we don't know. They are honorable men. They are men of integrity. They are men who earnestly.

Love the Corinthians. Like Titus. And therefore will. Will steward their gift. With great care. This last section is. A great model of. Of transparency for us. Of diligence in these things.

Of care with finances. And Paul was not just a dreamer. You know. Or even a sort of theologian. Or just an evangelist. He was also a practical. Very godly administrator.

[34:10] And organizer. And he put in place. Really wise plans. And his purpose. His motivation is there. In verse 21. For we aim at what is honorable. Not only in the Lord's sight.

But also in the sight of man. Right. We want to just make sure. That all of our ministries. All of our handling of your money. Is squeaky clean. So that we put no stumbling block. In anyone's way. So that no one's suspicious. Or has cause to be worried. Which I just think. Is a great reminder. For us coming up to the AGM next week. No. The week after. Okay.

But let me wrap up. As we think about this passage. Once again. It's about. Overflowing grace. It's about sincerity. It's about putting your money. Where your mouth is.

What does gospel partnership. Really look like. What does it really look like. To have your life. Flooded and overwhelmed. By God's grace.

[35:07] It looks like. Passing on that grace to others. Letting love and grace. Overflow from you. Being generous. Even sacrificially generous. Have you understood.

The great news. That our Lord Jesus. Became poor. So that we might become rich. If you have. You'll be ready to become poor. That others might become rich.

Giving of yourself. So not just giving money. But giving time and energy as well. Your whole self. But money is an important part of that. Especially because we live in such a materialistic culture. That worships mammon. Jesus warned us. Didn't he. About making our lives. Building our lives. Around worshipping wealth. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Do you want that blessing? It's more blessed to give than to receive. Chiefly because being givers. Brings us into closer fellowship with God. And with our Lord Jesus Christ.

[36:09] The greatest givers of all. What a glorious blessing. To know Jesus. And to become more and more like him. Let's pray. Let's beg our God.

To make us givers. Let's do that now. Gracious Father God. Make us givers. Please.

Please. Fill us up with such a keen sense of your grace. Transform us by your powerful grace. That we would overflow in generosity and love for others.

Help us to love each other. To love all those who belong to your family. Thank you for our fellowship with churches around about us. For the FIC churches. And other churches in this city.

Help us to love them as we have opportunity. Help us to love the poor. And to love the lost. With increasing fervor and zeal. As your grace transforms us.

[37:07] And as we see more clearly each day. Jesus great love for us. Making himself poor. So that we might be rich. So we ask all these things in Jesus name.

Amen.