

2 Corinthians 8:1-9:5

Intro

Arms wide open to a generous God

1) The Macedonian Christians

To really get this passage – first sentence

- Doesn't start with a guilt trip
- Simply wants them to know something
- Wants us to know something
- Lies @ the heart of this passage
- In fact lies @ the heart of the whole bible

- Wants you to know – brothers & sisters
- The Grace of God
- 6x in this chapter – closest concentration of the word in the book
 - o What does this mean
 - o God's grace
 - o He loved us before we loved him
 - o He loved us when we were totally unworthy of his love
 - o When we had said no
 - o The primal "no"
 - o When we turned our backs on God & didn't want anything else to do with him
 - o The whole story of the bible
 - o Exodus
 - o Jesus
- Can actually see this

- in their Brothers & sisters far away in Macedonia
- Look out – look @ the Macedonian Christians
- This is where the grace of God is happening

This is the surprising thing

- But what do we hear about
 - o "the most severe trial...extreme poverty"
 - o Then we read more
 - o We find two contrasts
 - o Because we would never put them together
 - o Severe Trial - Joy, Extreme poverty - Generosity
 - o This is God's grace
 - o In the midst of a severe trial, joy
 - o In the midst of extreme poverty, generosity
- People are facing a severe trial & extreme poverty
 - o With arms wide open
 - o Arms wide open to God
 - Given themselves to God (8:5)
 - o Arms wide open to their brothers & sisters far away
 - Gave as much as they were able & even more (8:3)
 - Without even being asked
- How
 - o Go back to verse 1
 - o The grace of God
 - o Given to them
 - o God had given everything to them
 - o & they knew it
 - o All they could do was respond

- With arms wide open

2) Arms wide open

This is where Paul suddenly gets personal (vs 6)

- Look @ them
 - Look @ the grace of God given to them
 - You do the same
 - In fact I'm going to send Titus to encourage you in this
 - This what
 - This act of grace
 - To have your arms wide open to a generous God
 - & wide open to your brothers & sisters overseas
 - In fact how wide you open your arms is a test
 - A test of how like him you really are
 - How sincere your love is

Truth is that we find this difficult

- Look @ Christians like that & think
- we could never do that
- We could never behave like that
- Point is we're totally right
- We can't
- Not about what we can & can't do
- It's about what he can do through us
- How deeply his love can impact us

Problem starts

- Struggle to know this love

- May be because we just feel unable to believe it
 - Maybe as simple as our Memory
 - Memories include lonely houses
 - Dark rooms
 - Parents
 - Loved us
 - May have really loved us
 - But incapable of showing it
 - Memories may include times of real trauma
 - Lives literally torn apart
 - By events beyond our control
 - However far we run
 - However hard we try
 - Can't get away from these memories
- Or we find it hard to believe that God really is looking after us / generous to us
 - once we believed God would always look after us
 - Somewhere, somehow
 - Let us down
 - Sickness
 - Work
 - Life - Constant stream of problems
 - No-one else seems to have to deal with
 - Slowly drifting
 - From the faith of our youth
 - Holding God @ Arms length
 - Don't trust him

- Maybe not the problem
 - o Really know something of God's love
 - o Seen his provision
 - o Somehow life seems to be robbing us
 - o Of our chance to respond to him
 - o To show him our love
 - o To give all we can

- o "...though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor..."

Simple answer

John Coles More Lord

More of your grace

Our arms are tight shut

Open them out to you

3) The Generous God

- Why Paul reminds them something that they already know
- 8:9 – 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..."
 - o they've already met this grace
 - o This pure generosity
 - o Poured out for us
 - o In Christ
 - o Who responded to a hostile world
 - o With arms wide open
 - o Arms wide open for us
 - o On a cross
 - o As Paul says