First to God — Delivery Transcript

2 Corinthians 8:1–7 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 12, 2025 · *Close the Gap*

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All right, well thanks to Skylar for leading us. Thank you for singing along. If you have your Bible, we're going to be in the book of 2nd Corinthians. If you want to turn there, if you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you 2 Corinthians is after Acts before Revelation, somewhere around in there. I don't remember exactly where it's at in the Pew Bibles, but as you're turning there, we're starting a new series this morning, and if you're a guest new to Broadview, we typically preach through books of the Bible, but every now and then we'll do something different, and that's what we're doing these next four to six weeks.

As we look at two chapters in a book called 2 Corinthians, and it's really going to run alongside a capital campaign or a resource initiative that we're doing as a church. And I know as soon as I say those words, if you're a guest today, your thoughts are, man, I picked the wrong Sunday to come to Broadview Baptist church. And I feel you 100% because my first Sunday to Broadview Baptist church, believe it or not, in 2004. They were at the Abilene Civic center and they were doing a big thing talking about the future and it was related to a capital campaign.

And I remember my initial thoughts being, I picked the wrong Sunday to come to church but I was pleasantly surprised because the sermon that pastor David delivered on that day was the same kind of sermon that I heard him deliver every week after that, because Broadview historically has been a church that believes. Not only that the Bible is inspired, that it is uniquely inspired, different than any other work, but that the main job of a preacher is to represent what God has already presented in His Word. The technical term for that is called expository preaching.

It comes from a fancy Greek word that means ex exposite, means to draw out of. I'm not going to give you the Greek term, but it means to draw the meaning out of the text. And so even though this campaign is a resource initiative for a specific thing in the life of our church. The text is going my sermon will be on this text and nothing more and nothing less. It's not like bringing the ideas out from everywhere and putting them onto the text. And so I can promise you that.

Now that being said, the text that we're looking at in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 is a passage that deals with an ancient first century resource initiative. And so it's a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but the church has been doing these, whatever you want to call them, a fundraiser, capital campaign, resource initiatives. From the very beginning, all the way in the first century. And Paul is going to do this in his letter to a church called Corinth. And the Bible addresses it throughout Old and New Testaments. I know that when a guy like me talks about a thing like money, it's uncomfortable.

You might think to yourself this is none of your business and that gets a little icky when a preacher talks about money because it's so personal and it's so emotional. And I understand that. But even though it is kind of not my business what's going on between you and God and your finances, it is his business. And my job is to simply represent what the Bible says. And the Bible talks about money a ton. In fact, more than you would think, to be honest. There's thousands and thousands of verses on money and when you correlate that to the verses that are on things like faith and hope and love it's right up there if not more than those topics.

Jesus, when he talked about money, he talked about money more than heaven and hell combined 18 of his 36 parables dealt with the issue of money. And the reason the Bible talks about money so much is because money is uniquely powerful when it comes to the affections of our heart. Nothing is quite as powerful as money is in displanting or displacing God from the rightful throne in our heart. Nothing like money attracts us to love it. And the way that we love God, to worship it as we should worship God.

And so the Bible is constantly addressing the issue of money because you how you think about money. Is going to be how you think about God and how you think about God is going to shape how you view your money. And so that's one of the reasons we're looking at these two chapters. I really, more than anything else, as we do this campaign, the goal for our congregation is not to meet a fundraising goal, but for God to continue to transform us and disciple us and make us more and more into the image of Christ.

And he can't do that if we talk about every other area except this one area. When this area is one of the most important areas related to being a disciple of Jesus. So that's the that's the kind of two cents before we dive into for second Corinthians. The church in Corinth, if you're not aware, was planted by the apostle Paul. So this letter we're about to read was written. By the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul planted this church in Corinth on what was called his second missionary journey. Paul was unique from a lot of the other disciples of Jesus.

In that when they got saved, Jesus told them, I want you to go to Jerusalem and then Judea and Samaria, and then I want you to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. But they went to Jerusalem and then had to get persecuted before they would go into Judea, and most of them never really got around to the uttermost parts of the earth part of the commission. But the apostle Paul was different. He was he was a go-getter, he was an entrepreneur, and when they sent the first missionaries, Paul and Barnabas were the first candidates to go.

And Paul, in his first missionary journey, went around that main region. I mean, he went beyond, but it was mostly the vicinity of Jerusalem. When he went on his second and third and ultimately his fourth missionary journey, he literally went around the known world. Now unfortunately, we had a tech issue, so I don't have my TV, so I feel kind of out of sorts. I said, how am I going to point to my map? And said there's a laser. So I, woohoo, this is fun. I won't point it at you, sorry.

Paul's first missionary journey actually happened began all the way down here in Jerusalem. That was the destination for his third missionary journey. He's going to start up here in Antioch. He would go up the Syrian coastline all the way around the Turkey, this is where Turkey is today, and then up through Asia. He's going to stop here. He's looking for a guy named Titus because Titus was going to give him a word about how the Christians in Corinth were feeling about the apostle Paul. You got to know Corinth is way over here.

This is southern Greece, Corinth is right there in that little narrow ichthus were a center of trade, a center of wealth and prosperity, and cultural decadence. It was morally loose. In fact they had a s a slang back then that if you were going to Corinthanize That's basically a way of saying I'm going to be sexually promiscuous. I'm going to Corinthanize. And Paul planted that church in 50 A.D.on his second missionary journey. And they, as you might imagine, ended up having quite a few struggles because of the moral complexity and decadence of their culture.

And so when he writes 1 Corinthians, he's writing to address the issues that that were going down in the church, and they did not initially like it. They thought, Paul, you're you know you're out of place. Who are you to say? You're not even a good public speaker, you're bald, you're grouchy. We're done with you. We're going to listen to these other people. And they did initially. And so Paul comes in person three years later, and it was called his painful visit. And then after his painful visit, he writes another letter that we don't have.

It's been lost in history. And that severe letter, he just goes to town. I mean, he rebukes them. He really tells them what's on his mind. And there has been no communication between that severe letter. And what he's hoping to hear back from Titus while he's up here in Troas. He wants to know, are they still mad at me? Have they repented? Are they like back in the game or are they like worshiping the devil? No. Okay, that's what Paul's wondering. He gets to Troas, and guess what? Titus isn't there.

So he sails over here to Macedonia. And he starts visiting the churches that he planted there, churches you'll be familiar with, like Philippi, the letter of Philippians. And Thessalonica, which has the letters of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and Berea. All those church plants are recorded in the book of Acts Well, when he gets to Macedonia, he finds Titus, and Titus essentially tells the apostle Paul, hey brother, they're not mad anymore. You know that letter you wrote 'em? You like just went to town? They get it. They repented. And they took care of business.

They did the church discipline thing. They're apologizing. They want to be back in the fold. They want to jump back into the mission it's all good. And so Paul is writing this letter, our letter, 2 Corinthians, from a place of encouragement. He's excited. But he's up here and he's about to travel down here and he needs to send a letter to do some work to prepare the way. He's going to do three things in this letter. The first is he's going to rebuild some trust, because let's be honest, things got a little nasty.

Second thing is he's going to defend his ministry. He had been attacked as you're not a true apostle, Paul, because you don't have public speaking skills. And you're bald. Not in they didn't say that, but

you know, they had petty reasons. You're so Paul is going to say, you know what, I don't really care what you think about me. I'm a legit apostle and here's why and it's silly that you would suggest otherwise. And then the third thing he's going to do is to challenge them to resume their financial assistance that they had begun but stopped.

For a group of starving Jewish converts in Jerusalem. And that's the important part for what we're about to read. You need to understand that down here in Jerusalem In 47 ish A. D., a megafamine hit the entire area. It was under the reign of Claudius. In fact, the New Testament talks about it in the book of Acts. It says that there was a prophet named Agabas, and he prophesied about a coming famine during the reign of Claudius. And so in response to the famine each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea.

Notice they did this, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul So when Barnabas and Saul went on their first missionary journey from Antioch and went to all these churches, part of what they were doing was having a fundraiser. And they were saying to these churches, some were Jewish and some were Gentile, they were saying there are Christians in Jerusalem who are starving to death. Why? Well, if you were a rich person and there was a drought, you could kind of live off of your surplus for a couple of years.

But if you were a poor person, you were literally dependent upon the drippings and droppings of grain that rich people left over, and you would kind of subside on that. But if there was no crops, then there was no groceries for poor people. It was so bad. Josephus, who's a Jewish historian, wrote about queen Helena, who was an ad was a queen from the East. She wasn't even around this area. But she really loved the Jews. And so she used her connections in Egypt and had Egyptian corn shipped in just to keep the Jewish people alive in Jerusalem.

That's how bad it was. So if you were poor, it was bad. If you were poor and Jewish, it was real bad. If you were poor and Jewish and converted to Christianity, it was uber bad for you. Because parents, moms, and dads literally had funerals for their children who converted to Christianity. They said, if you're going to convert to this cult, you're dead to me. If you're going to deny your Jewish heritage, if you're going to worship Jesus as God, as the Messiah, you're dead to me. And all of the support networks that they would have had from their synagogues and their business relationships that they would have had from being Jewish and worshiping as they used to worship when they converted to Christianity, they were persona non grata.

And so if you were a Christian, it was tough. And if you were poor and a Christian and a former Jew, literally you had nothing. You were destitute. You were helpless You know in the book of Acts where it says they sold everything and they shared what they had in common, some people point to that as like we should be socialist in this utopian dream. That was not socialism, it was not utopian, it was survival. Because there was nothing to eat. And that was the only way the Christians were going to keep each other alive.

And so they send Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys to say, hey, can you please ask these Greek people who we used to hate their guts, but now we love them in the Lord, can you see if they would be willing to generously take from their money and support people they don't know who are literally there in Corinth hundreds and hundreds of miles away across an ocean in a place they've never been to help people they've never met. And Paul unapologetically he asked for the money. Without question. He says, I want you to give, I want you to give generously, and I want you to every single week set aside some money so that when I get there, I can collect it.

In fact, he doesn't even collect it. He has someone else collect it because he wants to be above board. And then when I get back to Jerusalem, I want to give these starving Christians the assistance that they need as a way to validate the truthfulness of the gospel I'm preaching. Because Paul was preaching a gospel that essentially said Jesus has torn down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Greeks. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for the Jew first, yes, but also for the Gentile, also for the Greek.

And so this, you know prejudice and racial hatred that has existed for centuries between Jews and Gentiles, I want us to show as Christians it dies at the foot of the cross. And when he presents this relief, it's a way to demonstrate the genuineness or the authenticity of the gospel that he had preached. And so a generous heart. Demonstrates a genuine gospel. All of that's going on in the background of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. And for you to really Appreciate what Paul's about to say. You need to understand that background.

Okay, has everybody got it? Feeling good? Alright. So let's pick it up. Genesis. Let's not do that again. 2 Corinthians chapter 8, starting in verse 1. We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia Remember, that's where he's at, up north in Macedonia. Because during a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. I can testify that according to their ability, and even beyond their ability, of their own accord, they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints.

And not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by God's will. So we encouraged Titus, that's Paul's protege. We encouraged Titus that just as he had begun, so he should also complete among you this act of grace. Now Titus is like the pastor for the church in Corinth, and Paul is saying, I want Titus to come back and I want him to challenge you. To get back in the game on giving. And I want you to be inspired by the example of these Macedonian Christians who gave generously even though they're experiencing a severe trial.

Now the question is why? What was their severe trial? And again, to understand that it doesn't say it here in 2 Corinthians, but when you read the book of Acts And you see Paul get to Macedonia and he plants these churches in places like Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea. You see in the book of Acts, he was not welcome. He was hated. They hated him so much that they would enlist the political powers to be to beat him senseless. And the Christians who converted to Christianity in that time period became socially alienated from their peers because Paul came into town preaching a gospel that

disrupted the big business of idolatry in those cities.

You've got to remember the Greeks worshipped the Greek pantheon. They worshipped idols like Apollo and Ares, and they had temples built to these Greek gods, and every temple had its own priest. And every priest had his own store where you could buy what you needed to buy so that you could make sacrifices to the particular God and in making sacrifices to that particular God you would be in right relationship with that God and that God would bless you. And so it was big business. To prey on people's hunger to know God and to be right with God, and they would exploit them financially, becoming very, very wealthy by saying, you got to buy money to worship Ares.

And when Paul comes into town he says they're lying to you there is no Ares. There is no Apollo. These gods are false gods. They're fake gods. The God you worship is this unknown God? That's the real God. He's the God of heaven and earth, he's the God who created everything, there's only one of him, and he has revealed himself through the person of Jesus Christ, and Jesus came. So that you could be reconciled to God, not by paying money, not by making sacrifices, but through his sacrifice, which is an act of free grace that you can receive if you'll repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus.

And so that went over like gangbusters, right? And if people were like, I don't want to worship this idol anymore. I don't want to spend any money anymore. If I can have a relationship with God. By free grace, they repented of sin. They put their trust in Jesus and people were getting saved like crazy. And the people who were getting rich were mad. How dare you, Paul? You're ruining everything. You're causing a ruckus. And so they beat him senseless. And then the people who became Christians were, today we would call it getting canceled.

They were canceled because you have the wrong views now. You're not going to go to the church of Apollo with me anymore. I'm not going to shop at your house anymore You got to remember their economy was called a patronage economy. The way they made money was by selling their wares. They sold their okra, you know, at their house. Maybe not okra, I don't know. They sold their olives out out of their house. They sold their wine out of their house. They sold produce. And that's how you made money. You didn't go work for the man from nine to five and get your paycheck and get your groceries at Walmart.

That just wasn't a thing. And so if you didn't worship the gods, the idol gods, and your friends who used to worship with you kind of felt like they were alienated because of your new religion. Then they weren't going to shop at your house. And if they don't shop at your house, then you don't get to buy your groceries. And so now all of a sudden you're poor. Now all of a sudden you're hurting. All of a sudden Jesus is costing you. Jesus in your notes, he's sometimes bad for business.

And that's what they were beginning to find out by associating with the apostle Paul and believing the gospel that he proclaimed, I'm going to have to suffer for Jesus and it's going to hit me financially. And Paul is saying, even though. They are suffering, even though they are under a severe trial and they have experienced extreme poverty. It in no way lessened their generosity. They have given

cheerfully, they have given voluntarily, they have given generously because they understand that hardship. Is no excuse for a lack of generosity. Hardship in your notes doesn't nullify a generous heart.

And the reason they were able to believe that is because of what Paul's about to explain to this church in Corinth. He's essentially saying you've got to change your thinking about giving so that you see it through the lens of grace. Look at verse 7 again. Again, I say again. We didn't read it. Look at verse 7. Now as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love for us, excel also in this act of grace. Now for the Greeks, they knew what the word grace was.

They used the word grace a lot. But when Paul says, I want you to think about your giving as an act of grace, that was radical. He is essentially likening your giving in church world, your giving to support other poor people or a need. He's saying that is actually similar growing in that grace is similar to growing in your knowledge about God, growing in your service to God, growing in your passion and zeal for God. Just like a lot of people think about Christian maturity, like I've got to learn a lot of the Bible, I got to do a lot of theology, and I got to serve in the church so I can be a strong Christian.

Paul is saying, you want to be a real strong Christian? You need to learn to give. If you learn to give and you treat giving like a grace, like all of these other things you think are graces, then it then you will excel like these Macedonians are excelling. You will mature in your Christian faith. Like these Christians are maturing. So what does that mean? When you think of giving as a grace, if you were a Greek person, it's A totally new category. For the Greeks, to give grace was essentially to give a favor to someone, assuming that that person would have to pay you back.

When Homer wrote about the three charities, there's a lot of famous paintings about the three charities. One of the three charities he identified as Paris, which is this Greek word for grace. And the three charities were mythical embodiments of this, we'll call it a circle of favor, a reciprocal circle, where you give a favor. And the favor blesses the other person. And then when that other person benefits from your favor, they're obligated to benefit you back. So it'd be like today if took you out to lunch. Hey, hey, let me buy your lunch today.

Oh wow, thank you so much. That's really gracious of you. Next time, I'll cover it. Next time I'll get Arby's or wherever you eat like to eat lunch. Cotton patch. Arby's are my face. And if you couldn't pay them back financially, then it was kind of implied that I will give you honor back. When wealthy patrons would support some nonprofit, for example, they didn't have nonprofits, but just imagine they're supporting a need. And if that person couldn't pay them back financially, they would say something along the lines of, then you better put my name on the building.

Etch my name into the ceiling. Etch my name into the pillars, the Corinthian pillars. Because there was a circle of honor, a circle of favor. And what Paul does, and they do the Christians did this with the word agape too, the word for love. They infused it with new theological significance. And they basically said, true grace doesn't begin and end in the individual. True grace begins and ends in God. Because God, the source of every good gift, comes from above. It comes from God, the Father of lights, as James calls him.

And so when God gives grace, yes, it can benefit you, it can bless you but the favor doesn't go back to you. The favor goes back to the source of the grace, which is God. And so you may get grace from God and you may give grace from God, but the favor doesn't come back to you. It comes back to God And so it changes the circle. The circle of grace doesn't begin and end in you. The circle of grace begins and ends in God. And Paul is saying, I want you to think about generosity in that way.

I don't want you to think about generosity as I've got money and I'm going to bless you, so you better pay me back or you better like me or you better praise me. He's saying, no, no, no. Christian generosity, it begins and ends in God. And when you begin to think of your giving through that lens of grace, it changes everything. Literally everything. And Paul identifies three specific areas that are transformed when you give from this perspective. And it just so happens that the three areas of transformation coincide with the three most common reasons that people don't want to give.

And those are because you are suffering affliction, number one, because you are poor yourself, number two. And because you have limits that keep you from doing what you want. I'd love to give but I just have a I just have these I can only do so much. My abilities stop right here, and so even if I wanted to, I can't. And Paul is going to say, well, if you will give through grace. If you will see your giving through the lens of grace, God's grace will meet you in your poverty.

He will meet you in your affliction. And he will meet you at your capacity and weaknesses and limits. And he will transform them. Now let me show you this. Let's read it again. Chapter 8, verse 2. During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy. And their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. Hopefully you can see those adjectives. Severe trial, abundant joy. That's a paradox, right? Why would I have abundant joy if I'm in a severe trial? And Paul is saying, because of the grace of God.

When you give, even in the midst of a severe trial, the grace of God meets you in your affliction so that you can have joy. So that when you give, it actually unleashes happiness and joy in your heart that you wouldn't have otherwise experienced without the generosity. Jesus himself said it's more blessed to give than receive. The word translated blessed means happy. And so Jesus is basically saying, even if you're having the worst day ever, worst week, worst word, worst month, worst year ever, okay, you're under severe affliction. When you give from a place of affliction, it's like the sun shines through the clouds and you get a smile on your face and it's a little silver lining in the midst of the horror show that has been your life.

That's what God does when you grace give He puts the sun through the clouds and all of a sudden it's like, wow, that's cool. I was having a terrible time and when I blessed that waiter with a Magnificent tip, all of a sudden my heart just became happy. And if you've never done that, you don't know what I'm talking about, but if you have you do. There's something that happens that's. When you grace give, when your giving isn't about you and it doesn't begin and end in you, it begins and ends in God.

Blessing someone with the grace of God brings joy out of your affliction. That's the first thing. The second thing is it brings riches. Out of your poverty. Now let me be careful in this because there are

TV preachers who will say, if you sow a dollar into my ministry. You know you'll be a wealthy man. I shouldn't name names, but one of my favorite prosperity preachers, by favorite I mean I don't like them, but Joel Osteen he ha he tells a story about him and Veronica driving by this house and he said, Veronica, I saw a house.

I declare that's my house. I declare in the name of Jesus it's my house. And of course they got the house, but that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible doesn't teach you declare your ministry, you declare your house. It doesn't say you give to get. But it does teach again and again and again that one of the ways to bring God into your financial situation is through generosity. Now, here he's not saying you'll become financially rich. He doesn't say that. What does he say? By their extreme poverty, they overflowed in wealth, but it was a wealth of what?

A wealth of generosity. Now, why is it if you're poor, when you give from a place of poverty, it makes you rich in generosity? Well, to know that, you've got to understand what is generosity. Generosity is not what a lot of us assume. It's not about how much you give. It's not about a number. What makes a gift generous or not generous is about how much it costs you to give that number. How much did that number require you to trust in God because I gave until it hurt? That's generosity.

The best example of this is Jesus' parable of the widow's might. Some of you have this in your small group. This morning. Jesus sitting across from the temple and all of these people are walking by and they're putting in their money. And the way it worked back then is they put their dollar their their coins in these big brass trumpets. And it would make this loud noise, like wow, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. And it was a way of saying, wow, wow, wow, look how generous I am. And the religious leaders and the people who wanted to show off would it'd be like today if I took a hundred dollar bill and I went to Abling Teachers Federal Credit Union, I said, give me a bunch of.

Of pennies and they'd say, go to that machine over there. And if all the pennies would come out and then I'd take a big five gallon bucket of coins and just make this big loud trumpet sound. And Jesus is watching these rich people do that, and he's saying, wow, that's something else. And then this little old lady, widow lady, it doesn't say that she's little. I just imagine her being little, hunched over on her little cane. And she has two widows mites. They're not called widows mites. They're two they're called two minus.

And it would have represented one sixty-fourth of a day's wage. Today it would be like, I don't know, a buck, maybe two bucks so thank two dollar coins and she drops them into the little trumpet piggy bank and it makes a little chicklink and everyone probably would have thought wow she's chinchy you know that's not very generous. And Jesus looks at her because he had just rebuked the religious leaders for devouring widows' homes. He knows that's literally the only two dollars she has left to her name. And he commends the widow for her trust in the Lord because in giving only two dollars, she was infinitely more generous.

Than these people who gave large amounts because generosity isn't about the amount that you give as much as it is the trust it requires when you give it. And so if you don't start with very much, if you're a

poor person and you're starting with a very little, then when you give from that little bit, it makes the generosity just exponentially larger. And so you can become rich. In generosity, even though you're poor. And gee and I think what Paul is saying is don't let your financial Hardships keep you from participating in this river of grace that is coming from God to the saints in Jerusalem, and that if you step into that river, you get the grace of God, and He brings joy out of your suffering, and He brings prosperity out of your poverty and blesses you in ways that he never otherwise would have if you didn't see your giving through the lens of grace.

So it brings joy out of affliction and wealth, riches out of poverty. The last thing is it brings potential out of your limits, new potential out of your limits. Look at verse 3. I can testify that according to their ability and even beyond their ability of their own accord, they begged us earnestly for the privilege. Of sharing in the ministry to the saints. And so I don't know what that means exactly when it says they gave beyond their ability. It could mean that they gave a certain amount, but they pledged something more, and in order to meet that pledge, God had to come through in a miraculous way.

And bless them with provision that they did not have before, and so they gave beyond their ability. It could mean that or it could mean that they gave beyond what was expected of them. They gave to the point of it hurting and requiring d it was discomfort, it was uncomfortable. And that discomfort required an extra layer of trust in God because it was beyond their means. I think it's less likely that because in verse 13, Paul actually says, I'm not asking you to do this. So that others would get relieved, but you would experience hardship.

It's not about you becoming poor so that they become middle class. I'm asking you to give from what you have so that you can bless them. I don't want you to become poor in the process. And so it's I'm not sure exactly what he means, but here's what I do know. When Christians begin to view giving through the lens of grace, there will be those who say, God, I may not be able to give what I want to give. To address this need, but if you would be pleased to provide for me in ways that are beyond my capacity.

Then I will be joyful and happy to forward that provision onto this need. Call it whatever you want to give it, faith pledging, faith giving. But in this giving campaign that we're doing, already I've received a testimony from someone who is in a difficult financial situation. They want to be able to give X, Y, or Z dollar. They didn't have it in terms of liquid cash, and so they put a asset up for sale and they put a certain number that they would have to receive from that asset. In order to honor the pledge that they felt like God was calling them to give.

And that individual received an offer on that asset that was to the cent exactly what was needed in order to meet the pledge. And in that way they were able to give beyond their ability, and that's exactly what Paul is describing here. And when you see giving not beginning and ending with you it's not about you. It's about God and what God wants to do through you. Then not only do you experience joy in your affliction and prosperity and wealth in your poverty You experience God extending your capacity, blessing you in ways that you can give beyond what you imagined you would be able to, because God was faithful.

To do it because it wasn't about you, it was about him. And God loves to make things about himself. He loves for people to see him for the good and glorious God that He is. And when you say, God, I want to be a tool in that process, He says, I'd love to bless you. I would love to enable you to participate in this glory circle so that I receive what I am due. And so it enables you to give beyond your limits. Now those three things, like I said, are the three main excuses people give for why they can't give, right?

When those little sad puppy dogs come on the TV commercials, please give so the puppies can live. I get a little moved, you know, I like puppies. And I've never once written a check to one of those company companies. One because I give all my money to this church. Two, when I do feel even a little inkling to do something like that, those three excuses come to the surface. I'd be happy to help the puppies, but I got a little something going on right now and I don't have any extra.

I financially am strapped. I just can't do this. And even I'd love to do it if I just had a little more capital, if I just had a little more flexibility. And so I don't give. Now the puppies is a silly example, but an example like this, Close the Gap, well we're trying to raise funds for is to take our original sanctuary, which is now our main building fellowship hall, and transform it into sanctuary space for our student ministry for a grade six to twelve. They don't have their own space, and the space that they use right now, they're already outgrowing.

And when Broadview first began, you may not know this, but they began from a group of 12 or so believers meeting in these cottage prayer meetings. And as they were praying to God in those prayer meetings, God put on them corporately a burden for a new church plant on the south side of Abilene. And at that time there was literally nothing south of south 27th. Nothing but mesquite trees and red dirt to the south of south 27th. It's not like that anymore, obviously, but with a broad view of what God could do.

With a church plant on the southern edge of Abilene who was all in, who had given themselves first to God and were willing to be generous to the point of sacrifice and uncomfort, discomfort. So that God might use them to help other people find new life in Jesus because they committed to that. God was faithful to build Broadview Baptist church. And one year later they bought 1. 4 acres, and then one year after that they built a little sanctuary on top of that 1. 4 acres. And that sanctuary is what we call the main building fellowship hall today.

After they built that sanctuary, tough times came. They barely made it. They barely survived. But in 1975, David Kayson came. And God moved on that Sunday morning and made it very clear that he was to be their pastor. To David, he was to be that Broadview was to be his church. And God faithfully grew Broadview over the next thirty-seven years under pastor David's leadership and they built a lot of buildings. One of them we're sitting in right now. In 1985. And it required a lot of sacrifice. It required a lot of faith.

It required. Every person to look at those three excuses that I just mentioned and say, you know what, it doesn't have to be an excuse if I see it through the lens of grace. If I see is God wanting to use me

and his commitment to reach a new generation for Jesus, to reach new young adults, to reach teenagers, whatever the case may be, whatever the building campaign it was. Because I have a vision, because I see what God is doing through this resource initiative to help us move forward and helping people discover new life in Jesus, then I'll be willing to participate.

And they dug deep and they participated. Different people at different levels. Remember, generosity is not about the dollar figure. It's about what it takes from you to make that dollar figure happen. And God built this church to what it is today. To the point that now in our environment we're running out of room with our student ministry and many Sundays we're running out of room in this room right here and we're needing to close that facility gap and that's what Close the Gap is about and what I'm challenging every one of you to do in sharing this message this morning is before you think about a number, before you get mad at me for even asking, would you give yourself first to God?

I don't know how you think about your money. Some of you may think about it along these lines. Some of you may. This may be new for you. Instead of thinking about this pledge or this giving as beginning and ending with you. Think about it as beginning and ending with God and God choosing to use you to advance his grace to a new generation who's growing up in a digital Babylon that is crazy. They need a place where they can find true life, new life in Jesus. And if he would say to your heart, I want you to participate, and here's how, and you would say to yourself, yeah, but I'm in affliction.

Yeah, but I'm poor. Yeah, but I can't. Would you let the text this morning challenge you that those were excuses the Christians in Macedonia refused to offer? And as a result, God worked through them in miraculous ways. And let them inspire in you a level of generosity, just like Paul is encouraging to be inspired in Corinth, so that when you go peck up one of those brochures and you read through what the campaign's about, you do so with a heart fully surrendered to the Lord. How do you receive that? How do you give in that way?

First you give yourself first to God. You got to die to yourself. You give yourself to God. Then you make the gift about God's glory, not your glory. Remember? The circle is different. It doesn't begin and end with you. It begins and ends with God. And ultimately, if you're not a Christian, the grace of God begins with receiving grace through his son. We're saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He says a little later in 2 Corinthians 8-9. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich for our sake, he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

He's talking about what Jesus did on the cross. He was the crown jewel of heaven. He had literally everything at his disposal, but he took on flesh, he became obedient as a servant, and obedient to the point of death and death on a cross. He emptied himself so that you and I could receive the incredible riches of salvation. Forgiveness of sin, not because we deserve it. Because we deserve the opposite. We deserve what Jesus bore on the cross. We deserve the wrath of God, but Jesus gave us the grace of God because he was willing to bear the wrath for us.

And if you're not a Christian, maybe this morning that's where it begins for you. A heart of generosity is born out of. A heart regenerated by the grace of God. And it begins with admitting that you are a sinner, separated from God, that you cannot save yourself. And believing that Jesus is the Son of God, that God sent into this world to make provision for your sin debt. And that by repenting of your sin and believing that Jesus is who he said he is. And that he accomplished through his death what he said he would accomplish, namely absorbing the wrath of God so that you could be forgiven.

When you repent of your sin and you believe on Jesus, you believe those things to be true, and you confess him as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. And when God saves you, he will create in you a new heart that sees God as the beginning and end of every grace. Every good and perfect gift comes from above, and you will be delighted. To jump into that river of grace that is going to the nations and to every generation and participating in this campaign would begin there.

And there alone. And ultimately that's true whether you're a Christian or not a Christian this morning. That's why we're starting here. Would you, as we enter into this time of response, ask the Lord, God, I want to begin I want to give myself to you afresh and anew, fully surrendered, as we enter into this season as a church and as we bow our heads together and we enter into this time of invitation. I'm going to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart so that you'll know with great clarity what it looks like for you to move forward as we join hands together as a church family.

And seek to Close the Gap and extend Jesus to every generation. So Heavenly Father, we thank you for this text and for the just awesome practical help you give your people through your word. As a pastor young, never raised money before, never tried to build a building before. There's a lot of insecurities I have. But to know that you've already revealed in your word what it looks like for churches to partner together to meet an important need, we just celebrate that. I thank you for it, and I pray that your word would do the work right now.

For every individual and even in my own heart that we would begin by seeing grace as applied to our finances and seeing our finances through the lens of your grace. And that renewing in us a fresh gratitude for what you have done for us in Christ, you would create in us a heart of generosity. So that we can say to the next generation, the kingdom of God matters more to me than the American dream. And your salvation matters more to me than getting a car this year as opposed to next year.

Would you help us to be wise, to be open and receptive to the words that you want to speak as we respond now? And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.