

“Confident Where There Are Needs”

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:7-15

Graphics: rock climbing, climbing gear, mountain, ropes, carabiner, harness, belaying

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are called to be confident in God’s provision, love, grace, and mercy. Often, when physical affliction, scrutiny, lies, unmet needs, and weakness are present in our lives, we tend to take our eyes off Jesus and focus on the immediate problems. The Apostle Paul gives us encouragement to be confident in God no matter what. Like a rock climber who faces all kinds of adversity, God has given us the tools to win the race for eternity with Him.

Focus Phrase: God gives me confidence to completely meet needs of others.

1. Introduction

A. PRAY!

B. This series of sermons from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians is called **CONFIDENT**.

C. And even though the world defines confidence as some sorted version of *self-assured conviction and self-reliance*, that’s NOT how God defines confidence.

D. To be CONFIDENT as a follower of Jesus is to **trust God’s provision**. It’s to put **faith in Jesus’ call** to live His life. It’s to **hear God’s truth** about yourself and the world around you.

i. Confidence is about being in relationship with a powerful God who made the universe, and yet knows the number of hairs on your head.

ii. Confidence is about trusting a powerful God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and yet provides for every need in your life.

E. This morning, we’ll see Paul turn his attention to a direct appeal for the Corinthian church to give money to meet the needs of the Christian church in Jerusalem. To be confident in meeting needs through giving.

F. The church in Jerusalem was the epicenter of the growing body of those who were following the resurrected Jesus. The church in Jerusalem was also the place where persecution was happening and the Christians there were in need.

G. Paul’s job, as he went out far and wide in mission, to all the cities around the region, was to not only share the Good News of Jesus, but also to appeal for funds to be used for ministry in Jerusalem...to meet the needs of the believers there. Because there was wealth in some of those cities, Paul was challenging them to share it for the sake of the Kingdom.

H. In full disclosure for us this morning, this message is totally about giving. It’s about the opportunity and blessing to give our resources of money and time like Paul challenged the first century church.

- I. We - as followers of Jesus Christ in 2021 - are called to be CONFIDENT as a church in meeting the needs that God identifies in our lives...in the church...in our community...and in our region and world.
- J. We have teams of people in place with solid servant leaders who are ready to broker the time and money we give for the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- K. The call for each of us is to prayerfully and generously meet those needs. That grows from our confidence that God is abundant and will continue to meet EVERY need WE have, so that we can meet the needs of those around us.
- L. We've been using rock climbing gear to help us get a visual for the different ways God is calling us to be confident. We're tempted to be fearful of that which is difficult or unknown. We're tempted to want to do this life OUR way. We're tempted to take our eyes off Jesus.
- M. Yet, if the rope, that is Jesus' life, is attached to the carabiner that closes the gap between your life and the life of Jesus...and that carabiner is attached to the harness of God's truth around you...protected by the helmet of salvation and breastplate of righteousness, then we can be CONFIDENT in God for life!
- N. Yet, when we begin to climb, we need help. Those around us need help. Maybe we need to provide the equipment. Maybe we need to help them put it on. Maybe we need to show them how to climb. Or we need to be the one to stand on the ground and help them so if they slip, they won't fall.
- O. A very important job while climbing is the person on the ground teaching, equipping, and then **belaying**. Belaying is the process of keeping tension on the rope and acting as a counter-balance to the person climbing. If the person on the wall slips or can't go on, the person belaying provides for that very real need...helping them make it safely back to the wall or to the ground to try again.
- P. We CAN be confident when there are identified needs around us. The key that we'll talk about today is having a sense of abundance and not scarcity. We can be assured that God is covering us, so that we can provide for others.
- Q. Let's dive into our Bibles. 2 Corinthians 8, starting in verse 1...

2. Scripture

A. READ 2 Cor. 8:1-7

- i. The 'generous undertaking' that Paul was talking about was **giving money to the Christians in Jerusalem**, who are in the midst of a famine...who couldn't find food and basic necessities...who were also being persecuted for their faith.

- ii. Because Paul was in contact with lots of other churches in cities that were NOT experiencing this kind of hardship, he appealed to them to collect money to help.
- iii. He specifically lifted up the church in Macedonia, located in the northeastern part of Greece. The Macedonians made a commitment to collect and send money to Jerusalem. And not only did they follow through, apparently, but they were begging Paul to allow them to do more...to give more...to have “the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints.” (verse 4)
- iv. It’s astonishing, really, because here’s the deal: the Macedonians were poor compared to all the other churches and cities. They had very little to give. And YET they also had abundant JOY, Paul wrote in verse 2.
- v. And when there’s abundant JOY in Jesus Christ, the mission and giving of whatever you have to meet the needs of others becomes a **blessing** and not an exercise in scarcity mentality...or the idea that we just simply won’t have enough if we give or serve.
- vi. They may have been poor, but they had a **wealth of generosity**, Paul said. They were confident that God would continue to provide for them...and they were confident that their monetary gifts would provide for the needs of the Jerusalem church.
- vii. Then, in verse 7, Paul turned the spotlight on the Corinthians. The Corinthians who were NOT poor. The Corinthians who did NOT have needs like famine and poverty. The Corinthians, who Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:8, “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich!”
- viii. See, Corinth was a wealthy merchant city...with regional trade and goods and services from all over the world.
- ix. “Now,” Paul wrote in verse 7, “as you excel in EVERYTHING...so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.” Which, of course, we now know is collecting money to send to Jerusalem...because they were one body...in Christ!
- x. Basically, the Corinthians were confident in faith, confident in speech, confident in knowledge, confident in eagerness to serve Christ, confident in love...so now, Paul challenged, CONFIDENTLY GIVE - out of abundance - to others.
- xi. The Macedonians gave out of poverty and lack, because they had JOY. You Corinthians can give even MORE because you have all that stuff, AND you have money.
- xii. Let’s look at verse 8...

B. READ 2 Cor. 8:8-15

- i. My brother is 19 months older than I am. If you're a younger sibling, you know this drill. My brother was and is a gifted musician. I, on the other hand, was and am basically a musical hack with a desire to be a rock star.
- ii. That being said, when it came to music, I would often get compared to my brother, who won lots of awards and high music festival ratings, etc. Not often, but once in a while I'd hear, "Why can't you be more like your brother." Maybe you have had some of that in YOUR life too.
- iii. It's not easy to hear that comparison, sometimes, but it did motivate me to strive to take more time to learn to play music.
- iv. Paul was using this same comparison tactic on the Corinthians. My sense is that the Corinthians had some pride issues. By Paul taking the time to talk about the Macedonians and then say, "Hey, Corinthians, you're SO gifted. You're SO special. You can certainly do more than the Macedonians, even though they gave 'til it hurt! Surely YOU will give even MORE because you are so wealthy!"
- v. Now, I'm not saying that kind of blatant gushing is always effective, but you have to remember that Paul was not too keen on the Corinthians when he wrote this. He was trying to whip them into shape. I think he was tired of beating around the money tree and just got to the point.
- vi. The point was: You are rich. You need to give.
- vii. Why? Because not only were they rich, BUT he even appealed to the fact that Jesus was GOD - Jesus had everything because He MADE everything - but still gave it ALL up for their sake...for their salvation.
- viii. Philippians 2 reminds us that even though equality with God was something Jesus had, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave...and died on the cross.
- ix. I mean, they couldn't argue with Paul's logic! They were rich but Jesus was richer. Jesus gave it all, so they should give A LOT!
- x. And Paul makes the point also that Jesus gave it ALL unto death...and so the Corinthians needed to follow through on THEIR commitments.
- xi. The final argument was that they would never be in need if they confidently gave to meet the needs of others. It happened in Macedonia and in every other place where the church was operating out of generosity...no matter HOW MUCH they gave.
- xii. If you give in proportion to what you HAVE to meet the needs of others, then God will meet EVERY one of YOUR NEEDS and will fill you with JOY in the blessing of giving.

3. Application

- A. When belaying, the person on the ground needs to have the same equipment as the person on the wall - harness, carabiner, rope, shoes...
- B. The belayer is the anchor point for the person climbing. Not only does the belayer act as a safety net for the person on the rope, but the belayer can actually place tension on the rope to lighten the load of the person on the wall.
- C. The belayer needs to be someone who is as heavy as the person on the wall... and steady on their feet...and strong enough to stand their ground if the person on the wall slips or wears out.
- D. The metaphor is pretty clear. We are called to participate with others in a process of meeting needs for other people by giving ourselves, confidently, in God's call to generosity.
- E. Said other way, God has blessed you and God desires that you give to His work with abundant joy. And God's resources never run out!
- F. Using Paul's logic, you have money and time given by God, but Jesus has more. Jesus gave all he had for you, and so you are asked to give generously.
- G. It took a while for Stacy and me to understand the call to generous giving.
 - i. We gave a little when we first got married.
 - ii. We gave a little more when we got a raise or got extra from somewhere.
 - iii. But it wasn't until we took a course in financial freedom and started leading a church that we started to feel the Holy Spirit's conviction about giving.
 - iv. We made the jump to 10% of our net income. We were doing well. Then we started giving more than that.
 - v. When we went through the CenterPoint campaign in 2017, you may remember our testimony about increasing our giving to 10% of our gross income, including all the things the church lovingly provides for us - health insurance, housing, utilities...my whole compensation package.
 - vi. Now we find ourselves giving out of the sheer joy of giving...and looking for ways to give more when we can.
 - vii. And today, we're more convinced than ever before that if we confidently give to the church with an abundance mentality, then God will meet EVERY needs we have...and we can meet the needs of others.
- H. SO, as you hear these words and consider Paul's logic and call on your own life, remember these three things:
 - i. #1 - **There are others who are generous alongside you.**
 - a. If Stacy and I were the only ones to give to the church, then I'd be out of a job, the lights would go dark, and we couldn't love on our community.

- b. But we're not alone. We're sometimes the belayers. We're sometimes climbing. We do that together with all of you.
 - c. All of us together are being called to be faithful in our giving. This isn't just because we have ministry to resource and a bills to pay. This is because together we are focused on Jesus.
 - d. And when I think of all the faithful and generous people in this church, it humbles me and fires me up!
 - e. Don't compare yourself to someone else. Simply know that together we can meet our needs, and in our abundance, to overflow to meet the needs of the community and the world in the name of JESUS.
 - f. Doing this together gives us CONFIDENCE!
- ii. #2 - **Jesus gave it all, so your main motivation should be gratitude.**
- a. Legalistic expectations aren't great motivators to giving 1% let alone striving for 10% or more.
 - b. Paul's argument is solid - Jesus died for you and has assured you of everlasting life by grace through faith in his saving power!
 - c. There's no price we can pay that buys that incredible gift. Whatever it is that you have is worth SO much less than your salvation.
 - d. The belayer on the ground is helping you climb...be thankful for partners who help you live the life Jesus has called you to live.
 - e. So, give it for the sake of OTHERS finding that incredible freedom in Jesus. Give it to help someone in need. Give it to lift up a ministry for God's glory!
 - f. Give it, confidently, out of gratitude for Jesus.
- iii. Finally, #3 - **Make a commitment and follow through.**
- a. You don't want the belayer on the ground to leave and get a cup of coffee in the middle of your climb. Or fall asleep. Or give up.
 - b. Paul knew that the Corinthians COULD do it, but his encouragement was for them to finish the commitment...faithful until the end.
 - c. If you've settled in your mind, and as couples or families, that you will listen to the Holy Spirit and grow in your giving, then follow through. Help others do the same.
 - d. If it helps, get a giving partner and share what you plan to give. Give that person permission to ask you about it.
 - e. You all can easily figure out what Stacy and I give to the church. Hold me accountable to that. I'm giving you full permission to ask us.

- f. Ultimately, this is between you and God - and He's a bigger accountability partner than any of us anyway - but remember that we're in this together.
- g. Setting your goals for giving and then meeting your commitments in generous giving builds confidence.
- h. And I'll tell you that when you have met those goals and keep giving, God's abundance will become more and more clear in your life.

4. Conclusion

- A. If you've spent time asking God to show you what the needs are for the church and the kingdom, and you're responding, keep climbing, faithful one.
- B. If you're not sure where to start, then spend some time praying and asking God to show you where the needs are and how you can meet those needs.
- C. The journey of generous giving to meet needs around us will always lead you to a deeper understanding of who God is and how generous HE is to us.
- D. We don't go at this alone...we're in it together.
- E. Jesus is our example and our guide...He is worth more than anything.
- F. This will take intentional commitment to follow through and get to a place where God is calling you to be.
- G. It's all for the Kingdom...and for the opportunity to invite others into everlasting life through Jesus.
- H. To GOD be the glory!
- I. Let's pray...