



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“TWO OVERWORKED WORDS”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: II Corinthians 8:1-7
Date: November 4, 1973

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on November 4, 1973.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (II Corinthians 8:1-7).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The bulletin for that week noted that it was Stewardship Sunday. The hymns were “The Church’s One Foundation,” “Best Be the Tie That Binds,” and “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

The Christian Life Seminars that week were: Five Ways to Develop Creative Imagination, A Personal Walk Through the New Testament, Freedom of Speech: A View of the First Amendment, Teen/Adult Coffee House, Teen/Adult Role Play, and Builders Class.

Other notes from the bulletin include:

- Canned goods were being collected two weeks later.
- Residents of the Presbyterian Homes were lonely and in need of friends.
- St. Clair Memorial Hospital was in need of crutches for accident victims.
- Y-Pals was a program of the YMCA that brought men together to spend time with fatherless boys.

“First they gave themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.”

I. Paul’s Appeal to Corinth

A. Jerusalem faced critical need.

1. The land had known serious famine.
2. The Christians had undergone very serious persecution.
 - a) *Martyrs included Stephen, James, the brother of Jesus.*
 - b) *Many imprisoned.*
 - c) *Others boycotted or unemployed.*

B. Macedonia

1. While Paul was traveling in Northern Greece, the word of serious need came.
2. An arid land, the Macedonians asked Paul if they might contribute.

C. Corinth

1. Paul is en route to Corinth, commercial center for Greece – on isthmus of Corinth.
2. He is asking that they take up funds before his arrival.
3. This was not easy; there had been serious problems within the congregation – moral laxity, division into competing loyalties.
4. Paul saw the offering, not only as a means of aiding the Jerusalem believers, but as a means of calling the Corinthians to a new unity in Christ.

D. “First they gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

1. Peggy Mulholland, after reading the Spire, says “Two words you overwork are “Commitment” and “Involvement.”
2. If there are two words that sum up what faith is all about it is “commitment” and “involvement.”
 - a) *Our first responsibility is to invite others to the knowledge of the grace of God as we have discovered it in Jesus Christ and to respond to that grace in giving life in turn to Him.*
 - b) *The second responsibility is to share together in the expression of that acceptance in serving one another.*
3. Paul sums it up in his discussion of the Phillipians, “First they gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

II. Commitment

A. “The greatest problem in the United Presbyterian Church is the shallowness of her commitment to Jesus Christ.” Willard Heckel

B. We live in a day of great commitments.

1. Che Guevara, who led his rebel band into Latin America and there died.
2. Mao led his people on the tragic trek into the interior -- and is revered.
3. Ho Chi Minh spent a life time in leadership against the French, the Japanese
4. Communism is losing its virulence in Russia – it is 55 years since the revolution.

C. We see the fury of the commitment of the Israeli and the Arab.

D. As a nation, we can so easily slip into the idolatry.

1. Carlyle, “Things are in the saddle and are riding mankind.”
2. The urge to collect is a consuming one.
 - a) *We are driven by the need to have a little larger house, a little bigger car, a little more posh vacation.*
 - b) *“The Buick – something to believe in.”*

- E. Our pledge – a declaration of freedom from the tyranny of things.
- F. Evangelism – both within and outside the church is our first mission.

III. Involvement

- A. We cannot talk about evangelism without talking about involvement.
 - 1. The Macedonians could not remain uninvolved when they heard the plight of orphans and widows.
 - 2. Paul was not seeking funds for his own use.
- B. We cannot profess our faith in Christ without acting it out.
 - 1. Jesus spoke of salt that has lost its taste – that is good for nothing but to fill potholes.
 - 2. Christians who are not infectious.
 - 3. Our community must be different because we are here – if not, then the bulldozer should move in.
- C. The world should be different because we have a community of faith.
- D. Our stewardship program gives visibility to a much broader involvement of our congregation in the life of the world about us.
- E. The joy of sharing with an involved congregation.
 - 1. I see the witness of our young people and would embrace them.

IV. Conclusion

The words are overworked – not even in the Bible! We need new words to express these most basic.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: II Corinthians 8:1-7

II Corinthians 8:1 and 2 say: ¹ Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; ² how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

- Where have you seen the grace of God in your life? Where have you been given an abundance of joy? Where have you felt that you faced deep poverty in some aspect of your life?

II Corinthians 8:3 through 5 say: ³ For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, ⁴ beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: ⁵ and this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

- How do you detect the will of God in your life? How do you act upon his will for you?

II Corinthians 8:6 and 7 say: ⁶ Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also. ⁷ But as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

- How do you abound in faith? In utterance? In knowledge? In earnestness?
- How do you abound in your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A.1. Do you think we view famine differently in our time when we can see photos of starving children? What do you think Paul needed to say in those days to get people to respond to help feed the hungry?

I.A.2. Do you see Christians being persecuted today? What can an individual Christian do to address that issue?

I.C.3. What problems do you think congregations face today? What would Paul say to them to help them face such problems?

I.D.1. Are there words you think are overused in today's church vocabulary? What would they be? What should be talked about instead?

I.D.2. Do you think commitment and involvement are still key words in summing up what faith is about? Are there other words you would add to them?

II. How do you show your commitment?

III. How do you demonstrate your involvement?

III.B. What else can you be doing to act out your faith?

III.C. What have you done that has made a difference in the world because of your faith?

IV. What words should we use as our personal call to live our faith?