

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —  
From Grace to Grace Should Always Be Our Theme!***

**Review:**

- ***Godly Sorrow Brings Benefits to Believers and Glory to God***
- ***The Sorrow of the World Can Never Bring Life But Only Death***
- ***Godly Sorrow Brings True Comfort As the Mark of His Working In Us***
  
- ***Godly Sorrow Brings Benefits to Believers and Glory to God***
  - ***As we have seen as we have studied this letter, the situation in Corinth was a difficult one. One man had been engaged in sinful behavior of such a gross sort that even the unbelievers in Corinth would not easily speak of it. And yet for some in the Corinthian church it had become acceptable behavior and was even honored by some. This caused the apostle to write his first letter to remedy this most disappointing of situations. In time, some did repent and change their ways including the sinner of note. But there was apparently an overreaction on the part of some prompting the apostle to write another letter which has been subsequently lost. That is the background of this letter which we call the second letter to the Corinthians, a letter written a while later after Paul's trusted co-minister Titus had arrived bearing such good news from Corinth.***
  - ***Then here in verse 10 he emphasizes their godly sorrow and contrasts that with ungodly or worldly sorrow. He make such a strong comment about it, doesn't he?***

***2 Cor. 7:8-11***

***8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.***

***9 Now I rejoyce, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.***

***10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.***

***11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.***

- ***The Sorrow of the World Can Never Bring Life But Only Death***
  - ***He writes here also that there are no regrets for that deliverance since it was the fruit of the working of Almighty God. But the other kind of sorrow could never lead to those blessings, he writes here as well, for that kind of sorrow in the world of unbelief can lead only to constant conflict and disappointment as all unsaved learn eventually. It even leads to eternal death! So the stark contrast is well described here by the apostle, between faithful living and unfaithful “existing”, possible for believers but only manifested when they live like unbelievers.***
- ***Godly Sorrow Brings True Comfort As the Mark of His Working In Us***
  - ***“we were comforted in your comfort”: All the various dimensions of God’s work in Corinth as reported by Titus to Paul are listed here in short form. “Yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all”: Perhaps that was the greatest of all to Paul as he writes here with the words “Yea, and exceedingly the more ...”. In the Greek this is a very strong phrase as our translation indicates!***
  - ***“For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.”***

***These last words say it all: Even of the Corinthians, perhaps the most difficult assembly of them all, the apostle was confident of what their end would be. Why? Ultimately, I am convinced that his confidence overall is for the same reasons he had stated so well in a number of other places earlier in this letter. For example:***

***2 Cor. 5:19-21***

***19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.***

***20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.***

**21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

**Introduction: From Grace to Grace Should Always Be Our Theme!**

***As is so wonderfully written in the letter to Titus, grace is always to be our theme and to be “adorned” in our lives as we reflect his abundant grace. Amen and amen.***

***[READ ] Titus 2:11-15***

**11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,  
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;  
13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;  
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.  
15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.**

***In only 9 verses, grace is mentioned three times. Magnificent! In Titus 2 where we have just read, this grace is GRACE, justifying grace, grace that is based on the completed work of Christ in bearing all of our sin, in paying the full penalty of our sin-debt, in then gloriously raising from the dead and ascending into heaven’s glory again. As a result, we are justified, declared righteous entirely due to Christ’s completed work. For our sin was placed on him and his righteous is imputed to our accounts. We are even seated with him at the right hand of the Father, as he sees it. Indeed, we are “in Christ Jesus”. This is justifying grace.***

***But then there is “empowering grace” as I will choose to call it today. And that is the primary focus of the remaining chapters of this letter and all of our chapter 8 today.***

**Our Outline Today: From Grace to Grace Should Always Be Our Theme!**

- ***The Macedonians Were Beneficiaries of a Special Endowment of Grace***
- ***The Work of Grace in the Macedonians Yielded the Expected Fruit***
- ***The Details of God’s Workings Under Grace Should Always Be Our Focus***
- ***The Testimony of Our Lord Jesus Should Always Be Our Testimony As Well***

**I. The Macedonians Were Beneficiaries of a Special Endowment of Grace:**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:1-2**

**1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;**

**2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.**

- ***Grace is mentioned here for the first of three times in this chapter! This is grace in the second of two senses in which the word is used in scripture. Note that grace in this context, meaning a bestowal of a gift from God, an endowment of empowering grace, not the characteristic of God toward sinners which we often intend when we use this word. In this usage, grace is highlighted in its essence in verse 2: “in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”***
- ***Paul is here referring back again to his previous (or current) ministry in Macedonia. For a great offering had been collected from the saints in the churches there. Paul announces that to the Corinthians presenting the believers in Macedonia to them as their example.***

**II. The Work of Grace in the Macedonians Yielded the Expected Fruit:**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:3-5**

**3 For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they* were willing of themselves;**

**4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.**

**5 And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.**

- ***More details of how grace worked in the Macedonian assemblies is now provided to illustrate Paul’s teaching here:***
  - ***“For to their power ...and beyond their power ...”: They made the choice themselves, but more than that, the Lord was there all along and he helped them in more ways than they may have knew at the time.***
  - ***“they were willing of themselves praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift: This is their willingness. But the***

***Lord's work in them made the ultimate difference as it always does:***

- ***“first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”: We could add, “by the will and empowering of God”.***
- ***These are such blessed words. Do they encourage us? Praise God for the working of God's grace in us. How truly wonderful and totally transforming it is. Amen.***

***And now for the circumstances of how the Lord would work this all out, now in Corinth:***

### **III. The Details of God's Workings Under Grace Should Always Be Our Focus:**

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:6-7***

***6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.***

***7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.***

- ***In the same ways that God multiplies his comfort as we have already seen here in this letter of comfort multiplied, God multiplies his grace. And the two always will go together of course.***
- ***Practically speaking, this is the central exhortation of this letter. On top of all the other “graces” given to the Corinthians which were special for this situation, all to make the Jews jealous (see Romans 11), God now, he writes, would also provide additional “grace”, especially the one he now focuses on, the grace gift of altruism in offerings for those in need elsewhere, especially among the believers in great need, and now particularly for the poor saints in Jerusalem as we will now read in Romans chapters 11 and 15:***

***Rom. 11:7-12***

***7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded***

***8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.***

***9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:***

10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

***Rom. 15:13-16***

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

- *Paul therefore exhorts these believers to excel in providing an offering for the saints in Jerusalem. This focus will extend for several chapters amazingly. Why? In the opening verses of the first letter to this same assembly Paul wrote:*

***[READ ] 1 Cor. 16:1-7***

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

- ***So Paul had prepared the Corinthians in this letter for his planned visit and for the delivery of the requested offerings. He was so confident of their willingness and ability in this matter of gifts and offerings that he wrote here in our second letter in chapter 9:***

**2 Cor. 9:2** For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many **[in Macedonia]**.

- ***So the Corinthians had promised to send an offering and Paul had boasted about that to the Macedonians who then with great zeal had collected an offering without delay. So now the shoe is on the other foot so to speak. Would the Corinthians now do the same? That is the question.***

#### **IV. The Testimony of Our Lord Jesus Should Always Be Our Testimony As Well:**

- ***Now for the most powerful and important verses here in this chapter, verses 8 & 9:***

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:8-9**

**8** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

**9** For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

- ***“I speak not by commandment”:* **Paul is not asserting his absolute authority to demand this of them therefore. No, his motivation is entirely different.****
- ***“but by occasion of the forwardness [or zeal] of others”:* **His motivation rather was in reference to the Macedonians as written in the scriptures we already have read. They responded to what the apostle had told them about the Corinthian intention to provide a significant gift. So they had now become the example for the Corinthians! This was he writes a matter of the utmost importance, a matter of the authenticity of their testimony. Would they keep their word, their promises?****
- ***“... and to prove the sincerity [or authenticity] of your love”:* **He hereby offers them the opportunity now to prove to any and all their love for the poor [Jewish] saints in Jerusalem. Why were those saints so****

***poor? Because the preview of the coming Kingdom that they had enjoyed after Christ's death and resurrection was quickly passing. So the Lord God was not providing them any longer with the same care. That blessing had passed now to the Gentile believers in Corinth, for example, as he writes elsewhere, to make the Jews jealous:***

***Rom. 15:24-28***

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*.

**25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.**

**26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.**

**27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.**

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

- ***Now, as we close today's study, we go back to those words set before us today in 2 Cor. 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ": I am sure you do remember the teaching on the grace of Christ, as revealed for example in Phil. 2:5-8:***

***[READ ] Phil. 2:4-8***

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also **in Christ Jesus:**

**6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:**

**7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:**

**8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**

- ***But now back to our scripture for today in chapter 8:***
  - ***"... that, though he was rich": He had possessed it all as the son or God from eternity past at the Father's right hand in heavenly splendor.***

- “... for your sakes he became poor”: ***He willingly, for the great love he had for sinners, gave up his rightful heavenly glory for our earthly poverty. The contrast here is too great for us finite beings to comprehend, isn’t it?***
- “... that ye through his poverty might be rich.”: ***And we have been made rich indeed. The Corinthians were poor in this world (even if they were rich in a worldly sense) but were infinitely rich heavenly speaking!***

***He beckons them to apply this as an analogy to themselves as the next section makes so clear.***

- ***Christ had lowered himself, humbled himself, to the level of the lowest of sinful humanity, that he might elevate even such as that to the highest level of all, that of himself in heaven’s glory at the right hand of God himself. Amen and amen!***

**Application / Conclusions:**

- ***But what about us? Will we apply this teaching to ourselves as Paul had asked the Corinthians? Will we?***