

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —  
The Glory of Grace Receiving is Grace Giving”***

**Review: “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***
  
- ***The Macedonians Were Beneficiaries of a Special Endowment of Grace***

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

***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.***

- *Praise God for the working of God's grace in the Macedonians, for they are such a wonderful example for all believers. And now for the circumstances of how the Lord would work this all out, now, the apostle was hoping, also in Corinth:*
- *The Details of God's Workings Under Grace Should Always Be Our Focus*

**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.

- *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 saw when we were here some weeks ago, in Romans chapter 15 the details of what was in Paul's mind and heart are revealed:*

**Rom. 15:15-16**

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. And in the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 16, he had prepared them 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.***
- ***The Testimony of Our Lord Jesus Should Always Be Our Testimony As Well***
  - ***“... 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.

- ***This brings us to our section in this so precious letter for our study today in chapter 8:***

**Our Outline Today:**

- ***Grace Giving Always Glorifies Grace Receiving***
- ***The Foundational Principles Are A Willing Mind and the Lord’s Provision***
- ***In the Body of Christ His Blessings Always Provide A Needed Balance***
- ***The Working of God in Us Is Both to Will and to Do His Good Pleasure***
- ***Past Faithfulness Should Engender A Present Confidence, Before All***

**I. Grace Giving Always Glorifies Grace Receiving:**

**[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.**

- *Two senses of the word “grace” are, as I explained recently here, and found in this chapter. This is the second of the two but it is founded on the first — always. The first is as stated in verse 9: We have received those riches through his great poverty as revealed in the incarnation and then at Calvary. The Cross has made all the difference for us for now and for all eternity.*
  - *He had possessed it all as the son of God from eternity past at the Father’s right hand in heavenly splendor. 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? 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, even Saul of Tarsus, to the highest level of all, that of himself in heaven’s glory at the right hand of God himself. Amen and amen!*
- *But the focus in verses 1-8 is on our response. To be precise, and precision is essential, the response is all about what is the right response considering the foundation, his work of love for us sinners. It is not just any response we want or we think is “good enough” that counts. Only the right response is what Paul is writing about here. The whole chapter is about that, the right response is so very important with our Lord God.*
- *The apostle now explains this so there is no confusion. There are two foundational principles here that he identifies so well for us:*

## **II. The Foundational Principles Are A Willing Mind and the Lord's Provision:**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:10-12**

**10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.**

**11 Now therefore perform the doing of *it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.**

**12 For IF there be first a willing mind, *it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.***

- *Note that the principle is clear, first the willingness of the heart, then the performance follows. Without this there is a failure of the heart that is fatal to spirituality.*
- *These are truly foundational principles and these verse go so contrary to human ideals, don't they, and so contrary to what is so often being preached, especially at the yearly fund raising conferences and special funding events where the participants are so often exhorted to make promises that cannot be kept. But the apostle here is exhorting the believers to be focused always on quality much more than quantity. "... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart", 1 Sam. 16:7.*
- *Verse 12 states the two-fold principle so clearly, reemphasizing the principle in different language. This goes entirely contrary to the so-called "faith-promise" approach to fund raising.*
- *But one could reply, "didn't the Corinthians make a faith promise that this whole section of the letter is about?" Maybe not actually, but if they did, verse 12 would correct that misunderstanding. Giving is to be out of what we have (as the Lord has provided in fact, and not "out of what we do not have". This should never be a matter of "make-believe". The latter approach only leads to worldly means to accomplish human goals independently of the will, purpose, and work of Almighty God.*

## **III. In the Body of Christ His Blessings Always Provide A Needed Balance:**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:13-15**

**13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:**

**14 But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may* be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:**

**15 As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.**

- *These verses may seem difficult since it might appear to us that the apostle is teaching pure communism here. But no, for the illustration given to help with our understanding is of Israel in the wilderness. Many picked up too much perhaps but it did not last more than a day usually. Others picked up less, even little. But it was apparently multiplied so that they had enough nevertheless. The Lord God in his working balanced it perfectly. It is the way he balances it that is being emphasized here by these examples.*

*The Macedonians were “joined together” with the Corinthians and there was a divine balancing: The Macedonians had little materially but much spiritually. The Corinthians, I am thinking, had much materially (Paul says so in several places in these letters) but were lacking spiritually. But the Lord God was providing the balance. This is a profound balancing indeed. And in the Body of Christ that is exactly what we have as the apostle writes in Ephesians and Colossians, for example:*

**Col. 2:18-19**

**18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,**

**19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.**

- *Some examples from our history and experience were for us transformative. Has anyone you have ever known been poor as church mice in this world but rich indeed in what they have shared with you? The Body of Christ is indeed a living organism where the Lord works to ensure the “equality” he has prescribed. Praise the Lord for his inexhaustible and always sufficient grace!*

#### **IV. The Working of God in Us Is Both to Will and to Do His Good Pleasure:**

**[READ ] Phil. 2:12-13 [A theme verse for life]**

**12** Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

**13** For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

- *It is all, therefore, about the working of almighty God in us believers. These are strong statements, aren't they. Are we in "fear and trembling" considering the apostle's words here. Were the Corinthians. Receiving such a letter as this would surely have changed some minds for the best, that God's will might be accomplished in them. And now again Paul mentions Titus, first, as we have seen, at the beginning of this chapter, and then here starting in verse 16:*

**2 Cor. 8:1-6**

**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.

**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.

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

...

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:16-21**

**16** But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

**17** For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

**18** And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;

**19** And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

**21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

- *Paul chooses examples that are near and dear to him. Titus is chosen. He is singled out because of the work of God in him and his response. This is grace giving out of grace receiving! This is the work of God! Amen.*
- *In the realm of human affairs there are many challenges and those with pure motives are often judged to be otherwise (and probably the reverse as well). You can't judge a book by its cover, actions speak louder than words, etc.*
- *There are many exhortations regarding the way our words and actions should be "without blame", surely before God, but also before men, but more importantly before God himself, of course.*

*But attaining to the goal that verse 20 presents is not always possible due to the work of the enemy. But the goal is admirable. The management of gifts and offerings is a challenge indeed.*

- *Now we reach the conclusion of this section in this marvelous letter.*

#### **V. Past Faithfulness Should Engender A Present Confidence, Before All:**

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 8:22-24**

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

- *There is such an array of such encouraging words here: "oftentimes proved diligent", "much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you", "Titus, my partner and fellowhelper", "the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ", and "the proof of your love". The apostle writes with words*



***that are of the Holy Spirit conveying so well his confidence in Titus and the brethren and in the Corinthians.***

- ***It is striking that though so much is at stake here, Paul's level of confidence is far above what might be expected in such a circumstance as this. In that he is an inspiration to the Corinthians and also for us. Clearly his trust was in the Lord and in his work, therefore.***

**Application / Conclusions:**

- ***What stands out here that we should take note of?***
  - ***Paul's confidence in the Corinthians.***
  - ***The depth of the teaching.***
  - ***The priority of the godly testimonies of the saints and their power.***
- ***Questions (for another time):***
  - ***What about faith promises?***
  - ***What about giving outside the bounds of the believing community?***