

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —
The Provision of God Under Grace is Bountiful Indeed”***

Review:

- ***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***

- ***Grace Giving Always Glorifies Grace Receiving***

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 or 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:*
- *The Foundational Principles Are A Willing Mind and the Lord’s Provision*

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.*
- *In the Body of Christ His Blessings Always Provide A Needed Balance*

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 that only the Lord can. Accomplish. Otherwise, it is equity in the place of true and godly equality.

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!

- ***Past Faithfulness Should Engender A Present Confidence, Before All***
 - ***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.***

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.***

Our Outline for Today: The Provision of God Under Grace is Bountiful Indeed

- ***The Bountiful Supply of the Corinthians Is Encouraged***
- ***The Bountiful Supply of the Lord Is Emphasized Above All Others***
- ***The Bountiful Supply Upon Us Saints Is the Gracious Gift of Almighty God***

I. The Bountiful Supply of the Corinthians Is Encouraged:

- *Firstly, today, by way of introduction, it seems right to me to turn to the letter to the Philippians:*

[READ] Phil. 1:18-21

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

- *“The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” was the marvelous provision the Lord had instructed Paul (“I know”) about and it was that that he announced to the Philippian believers who were, it seems, entering into a period of severe persecution:*

Phil. 1:27-30

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

- *So Paul here writes of a gracious provision by Almighty God for his people which he himself has received and which has transformed his life while under great trials. The teaching here in the second Corinthian letter also identifies a “bountiful provision”, doesn’t it, which the Lord may provide his people:*

[READ] 2 Cor. 9:1-7

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

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.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.

6 But this *I* say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so *let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful [*Gk. "hilarious"!*] giver.

- *Again Paul reviews the situation he is addressing and exhorts the brethren in Corinth to be bountiful from the heart in their giving for the poor saints in Jerusalem. As laughter comes from deep in the heart and generates a joyful sound heard by those nearby, the apostle here remarks on how the Lord responds to our bountiful sharing of his provision with this one sentence in verse 7. There the apostle summarizes his entire teaching on grace giving with these words: "for God loveth a cheerful giver". The Greek word here may also be translated "hilarious"!*

And in addition, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity ..."

- *It is therefore the divine balance emphasized in verse 6 again that makes all the difference to our lives spiritually speaking. He continues the theme in the next verses:*

II. The Bountiful Supply of the Lord Is Emphasized Above All Others:

[READ] 2 Cor. 9:8-11

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

- *Here as in every dimension of our lives, God's grace is sufficient!*

[READ] 2 Cor. 12:7-10

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

- *But our requests still are appropriate, even for earthly concerns, even though we know as Paul did the purpose of our sufferings. But God does not promise to give us what we have asked for. Consider again the apostle of the Gentiles:*

[READ] Phil. 4:12-13, 19

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

...

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

- *The Philippian's passage is also about what we have seen here in 2 Corinthians, what the working out of God's abundant and free grace in us believers is like. In the end, as the Lord works, much thanksgiving to God is multiplied through his working in us all as we enjoy his bountiful provision, but I must add, and testify accordingly.*

Paul is our example as he testifies so often in his letters.

But will we receive that grace? That is the question.

III. The Bountiful Supply Upon Us Saints Is the Gracious Gift of Almighty God:

- *Paul now finishes the section most blessedly. His words here in verses 12-15 are capstone of this most excellent building God has created through him regarding this “bountiful supply”. Let’s dwell on them for a time now as we close our time in God’s word today:*

[READ] 2 Cor. 9:12-15

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

- *The Lord provides this bountiful supply as needed by his children. It is there and ready but needs to be taken, to be received in order that it might be enjoyed.*
- *There is much in this verses as well, I believe, if we would see it. The pronouns identify the groups referred to. Paul has referred to the gifts and offering he had been and hopefully would collect from these Gentile assemblies for the purpose of benefiting the poor believers in Jerusalem (see 1 Cor. 16:3). But there was a lot more to the story as he explained elsewhere in the Romans:*

Rom. 15:25-27

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.

- *Again, here we have the divine balance being expressed but in a different way than previously. Here I believe there is also a dispensational context. As we know, the saints in Jerusalem at*

Pentecost and afterwards for a time had been blessed in abundance with a foreshadowing of the coming power and glory of the Kingdom. But that required the imposition of a communal sharing of private property and a total reliance on the Lord to meet even all their “carnal” or physical needs. But the failure of the Jewish nation to believe on their now resurrected Lord whom they had crucified led to their setting aside and the raising up of Saul. Along with that there was a change dispensationally for now through this new apostle the Gentiles were to be evangelized independently of the Jews. And along with that the Lord God began to bless the Gentiles worldwide in place of the Pentecostal Jews in the promised land, not only spiritually, but also in physical ways. So the dispensational change resulted in there being many poor saints in Jerusalem. Rom. 15 explains that in the verses quoted.

- ***So but there was a divine purpose in this to benefit the Jews as well, and that would be spiritually, as they became jealous of how God was working in Gentile lands. Those references are in Rom. 10:19; 11:11, and 14 where jealousy is mentioned. For example:***

Rom. 11:11-15

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?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation ***them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.***

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead?

- ***So the divine principle is made clear: Through both spiritual and physical means the Lord God accomplishes his plan of redemption and blessing and uses such dispensational changes as this as significant parts of this plan of the ages. 2 Cor. 9:14 states that in different but helpful language:***

2 Cor. 9:14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

- ***So Paul's motive in this collection was multi-folded indeed as was the purpose of Almighty God. Amen. There was a divine blessing dispensationally as well as Israel's long promised and Kingdom blessings were foreshadowed at Pentecost and for a time after that, but then withdrawn as God changed focus to the Gentiles. So whereas the Gentiles were to be blessed through Israel, now the Jews themselves were to be blessed through the Gentiles, spiritually AND even physically, as we have seen here. Praise God for his "unspeakable" gift and for his "exceeding" grace, but now displayed also before Israel as well as the world.***

Let's close by reading one of our many favorite verses:

[READ] Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

- ***This is a beautiful and encouraging summary of the entire teaching on grace giving. In the end the needs of the saints are met also with an exaltation of the glories of God's abundant grace and his great gift of the grace of Christ operating in us all. Such blessings indeed!***
- ***We have come here today to the Pauline teaching on the essence of God's abundant grace and its desired effects in our living. May we all be willing to receive it.***

Application / Conclusions: