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Giving by Grace

2 Corinthians 8:1-9; Luke 6:36-38

“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.” (2 Cor. 8:1)

“...and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them.” (Acts 4:33-34)

Giving is essential in Christianity, as seen in Acts 4:32-35, where generosity fostered strong connections and ensured that no one was in need. The Bible highlights that our management of resources reflects our beliefs about God. While some give out of pity or obligation or to seek favor, the fundamental question remains: **What motivates our giving?**

Paul's letters to the Corinthians highlight key principles of giving—purposefulness, regularity, and cheerfulness. Believers are encouraged to give from their abundance or through sacrifice, **expressing gratitude**, affirming faith, and supporting others. Our generosity reflects an understanding of God's grace and glory, recognizing God as the creator and provider of all we have.

In chapters 8 and 9 of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentions "**charis,**" or "**grace,**" ten times, emphasizing the New Testament's focus on "grace giving." **But what does it mean to give because of grace?** An analysis of the Greek term for grace in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 reveals key aspects of grace-based giving.

The concept of giving is deeply influenced by God's grace in the hearts of believers. Two key chapters on this subject highlight God's grace at their beginning and end. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that God's grace is the foundation for the generosity of the Macedonian churches, stating, “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia” (2 Corinthians 8:1), illustrating the link between divine grace and the spirit of giving.

In chapter 9 of his letter, Paul highlights that the anticipated **generosity from the Corinthians arises from God's transformative grace in their lives.** He notes, “While they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you” (2 Cor. 9:14). This grace reflects God's work in the hearts of the Macedonian believers, enabling them to give generously. Thus, grace is not only an unmerited favor but also the active influence of His Spirit, demonstrating that favor. Charles Hodge noted in 2 Corinthians 8:1 that the Corinthians' generosity resulted from God's grace, not their character. **Their sacrificial giving demonstrated grace-giving in action,** empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Giving by Grace highlights that supporting others is a privilege. In 2 Corinthians 8:4, the Apostle Paul describes how the Macedonian believers eagerly sought to help the struggling church in Jerusalem, even begging to participate. The term 'favor' translates from the Greek word for grace, encouraging a view of contributions as generous acts rather than obligations. This mindset fosters joyful and willing support for those in need.

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, the apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of fundraising by calling it "this grace" (2 Cor. 8:6–7, 19). **This highlights that genuine giving, especially for God's work, should be seen as acts of grace.** Viewing these collections as "gracious work" encourages personal involvement and support from the faithful, fostering a spirit of generosity and community investment.

The concept of giving by grace is rooted in Christ's example of becoming poor for undeserving sinners. This is captured in the verse, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Here, grace highlights a personal quality of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul highlighted that **reflecting on Christ's grace, which led Him to sacrifice for others, can inspire individuals to adopt self-sacrifice. This principle encourages generosity and selflessness, motivated by Christ's example.**

The act of giving, driven by grace, reflects God's generous provision for faithful givers.

According to 2 Corinthians 9:8, God supplies all grace to ensure people have enough resources to do good deeds. This implies that while God rewards sacrificial giving, such rewards are undeserved and rooted in His grace.

This narrative illustrates the profound nature of God's grace in life. It underscores that salvation is a gift of grace, fostering personal transformation into the likeness of His Son. Amid life's challenges, God sustains individuals through His grace and calls them to unique roles within the Body of Christ, equipping them with necessary spiritual gifts. As they serve, their efforts are accepted by God through grace, leading to generous rewards.

In conclusion, giving through grace inspires a spirit of generosity, transforms giving into a treasured privilege, and invites profound blessings from God. Always remember that God delights in a grateful heart (Luke 17:17-18) and a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) when we give by grace!

Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia. (2 Cor. 8:1)

Giving holds a vital place in Christianity. Right from the start of the Christian community in Acts 4, we see that their generosity deepened their connections, creating an environment where no one among them faced any need. The Bible emphasizes the importance of giving, showing that how we manage our resources reflects our beliefs about God. Some people give out of pity, others do it begrudgingly, while some seek to win favor. Still, the central question persists: What motivates our giving?

Paul's letters to the Corinthians offer valuable insights regarding the principles of giving, emphasizing the importance of a purposeful, regular, and cheerful approach. Believers are encouraged to give, whether it is from abundant resources or through acts of genuine sacrifice, **as a way to express their gratitude**, affirm their faith, support fellow believers, and draw others closer to God. Recognizing that God is the creator and provider of all we have, **our acts of generosity reflect our understanding of God's grace and glory**.

In chapters 8 and 9 of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses the Greek term "charis," which translates to "unmerited favor" or "grace," a total of ten times. This highlights the New Testament's emphasis on "grace giving." But what does it truly mean to give in a manner that embodies grace? An in-depth analysis of the various uses of the Greek term for grace, particularly within the contexts of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, uncovers six essential characteristics of grace-based giving.

The concept of giving is profoundly influenced by the grace that stems from God's generous creation within the hearts of believers. Notably, two key chapters on this subject commence and conclude with mentions of God's grace. The Apostle Paul begins by emphasizing **that God's grace serves as the foundation for the generosity exhibited by the Macedonian churches**. He states, "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 8:1). This highlights the connection between divine grace and the spirit of giving among believers.

In chapter 9 of his letter, **Paul emphasizes that the generosity he anticipates from the Corinthians stems from God's transformative grace at work in their lives**. He states, "While they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you" (2 Cor. 9:14). This notion of grace reflects the significant work God has done in the hearts of the Macedonian believers, enabling them to both desire and have the ability to give generously. Therefore, grace should be understood not only as God's unmerited favor leading to blessings but also as the active influence of His Spirit, which serves as a concrete manifestation of that favor.

Charles Hodge commented on 2 Corinthians 8:1, stating that "the liberality and extraordinary generosity of the Corinthians was due to the operation of the grace of God." When a believer relies on God's gracious work in their heart to enable them to give sacrificially and generously, it exemplifies grace-giving in action.

Giving by Grace emphasizes the idea that supporting others is a privilege rather than a burden. In 2 Corinthians 8:4, the Apostle Paul notes that the Macedonian believers eagerly sought to support the less fortunate church in Jerusalem, describing them as 'begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participating in the support of the saints.' The term 'favor' here is derived from the Greek word for grace. **This perspective encourages individuals to view their contributions as a generous act of grace**, fostering a spirit of sacrificial giving rather than viewing financial support as an obligation. Such an approach allows people to willingly and joyfully meet the needs of others.

In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, the apostle Paul highlights the significance of fundraising efforts by referring to them as “this grace,” a term that the New American Standard Bible (1995) translates into “this gracious work” (2 Cor. 8:6–7, 19). This concept emphasizes that genuine acts of giving, particularly those aimed at funding God’s work, should be viewed as acts of grace. Recognizing these collections as “gracious work” indicates that such initiatives are worthwhile and warrant personal involvement and support from the faithful. Understanding this perspective can enhance the appeal of contributing toward such ministries, fostering a spirit of generosity and community investment.

The concept of giving by grace draws its foundation from the example of Christ's gracious nature, particularly illustrated by His choice to become poor for the benefit of undeserving sinners. This idea is encapsulated in the verse, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). In this context, grace refers to a personal quality inherent in Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul emphasized that reflecting on the gracious nature of Christ, which motivated Him to sacrifice His own wealth for the sake of others, can inspire individuals to adopt a similar mindset of self-sacrifice. This principle of grace-giving encourages people to consider the needs of others and to contribute generously and selflessly, motivated by the example of Christ's own self-giving actions.

The concept of giving through grace encompasses the influence of teaching and encouragement from others. In the context of the Corinthians, this support came significantly from Paul’s exhortation and encouragement. While there is no direct record of it, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul may have also played a similar role in the lives of the Macedonians.

The positive response of the Corinthians is highlighted by Paul's statement in Romans 15:26, which notes that “Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.” It is important to note that Achaia was the province that included Corinth. This indicates a broader communal effort to support those in need. (Bridges 1991, 167)

The act of giving, motivated by grace, is associated with God's generous provision of abundant resources for those who give faithfully. According to 2 Corinthians 9:8, God is capable of providing all grace to individuals, ensuring they have sufficient resources in every aspect of life, thus enabling them to perform an abundance of good deeds. This concept suggests that even

when God rewards sacrificial giving by meeting or surpassing financial needs, such rewards are ultimately undeserved and stem from God's grace.

This narrative highlights the profound nature of God's grace in various aspects of life. It emphasizes that salvation is a gift of grace, which also enables personal transformation towards the likeness of His Son. Throughout life's challenges, God sustains and strengthens individuals by His grace. Additionally, He calls each person to fulfill a unique role within the Body of Christ, imparting spiritual gifts necessary for that purpose. As individuals serve, their efforts are made acceptable to God through grace, leading to generous rewards in return.

In conclusion, giving through grace encourages generosity, shifts the perception of giving to that of privilege, and is associated with significant rewards from God.

The concept of giving through grace involves the influence of teaching and encouragement from others, notably Paul's support for the Corinthians. While there's no direct evidence, he likely also inspired the Macedonians. Paul highlights the Corinthians' positive response in Romans 15:26, noting that "Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem," indicating a communal effort to help those in need.