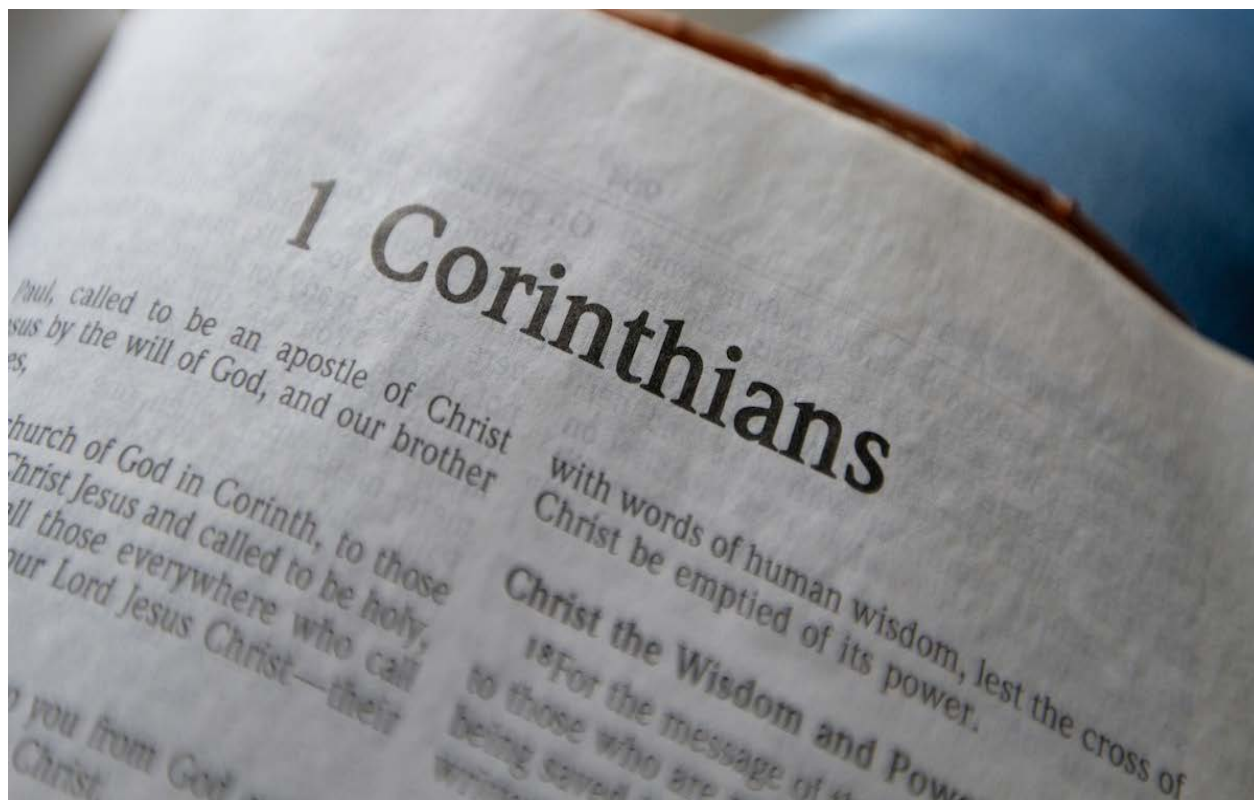


# Grace and Giving

2 Corinthians 8

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 25



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Grace and Giving: 2 Corinthians 8  
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 25  
Copyright 2024 T. M. and Susie Moore  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

Except as indicated, all Scripture are taken from the *New King James Version*. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All quotations: Scott M. Manetsch, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2017). All quotes from John Calvin are from *Calvin's Commentaries*, Rev. John Pringle, tr. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translational Society). All quotations from Matthew Henry are from *Matthew Henry Concise Commentary*, E-text version Copyright 1996, 2002 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All Rights Reserved. All quotes from Earl Radmacher are from *The NKJV Study Bible*, copyright ©1997, 2007 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All psalms for singing are from *The Ailbe Psalter* (West Grove: Waxed Tablet Publications, 2023).

Cover art: Yahoo images

## Introduction to *2 Corinthians 8*

We rightly think of grace as the work God does in bringing us to salvation. And this is true.

But the grace of God is much vaster and simpler than this. The grace that God extends to His Church, by His indwelling Spirit and according to His Word, is holy spiritual power to do the will of God, thus making His Presence and glory known wherever it flows. This is why, in 2 Corinthians 4.15, Paul could rejoice that “grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”

Grace spreads in countless ways, most of them unspectacular. Especially in all kinds of giving.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 Grace in Giving

*Pray Psalm 86.16, 17.*

Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!  
Give Your strength to Your servant,  
And save the son of Your maidservant.  
Show me a sign for good,  
That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed,  
Because You, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

*Sing Psalm 86.16, 17.*

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Turn to me, LORD; be gracious to me;  
grant me Your strength; save Your servant, LORD!  
Let me a sign of something good see;  
shame all who hate me beneath Your Word.  
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,  
for You help me, sovereign Lord!

*Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 8.1-5.*

*Preparation*

1. How did the grace of God appear in the Macedonian churches?
2. What was the key to this happening?

*Meditation*

Grace spreads as we give of ourselves to others (v. 1). Nothing can keep us from being grace spreaders. As we give ourselves to the Lord and know the joy of His Presence, we will freely give ourselves to others according to His will (v. 5). And by this means, grace spreads unto thanksgiving to the Lord (2 Cor. 4.15).

This is what Paul experienced among the churches in Macedonia. He knew affliction there, and so did they. But this did not prevent them from rejoicing in the Lord, spreading His grace to Paul, and, in our text for today, giving freely and abundantly of their resources to aid the churches in Judea (1 Cor. 16.1-4).

We will not repent of sin, walk the Yes Path with Jesus, know any true and lasting joy, or give ourselves in love to others apart from the grace of God. But by giving ourselves to the Lord—submitting all we are and have to Him for His glory—we know the joy of His Presence and the freedom to give, even beyond what might seem to be our ability, to help meet the needs of others (vv. 2-4).

Grace can move us to many kinds of giving, not just monetary. It takes grace to be a good listener, to spend time encouraging others, help someone with a task, speak kindly unto edification, give a word of testimony, provide a meal, give up some possession, or refuse to pay back evil for evil. When we give, whatever we give, we create an emptiness in our lives which becomes a space where the grace and Presence of the Lord can fill us to overflowing, the result of which is joy.

And this begins with a decision: Give yourself to Jesus and Jesus will empower you to give yourself for others.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

David was stationed in the cave of Adullam, and the Philistines were camped out in Bethlehem. Things were

topsy-turvy in his kingdom, and you might say he was in a “great trial of affliction” (2 Cor. 8.2). Amid his sorrow David said with longing, “Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” (2 Sam. 23.15)

Three of David’s most courageous, battle-hardened mighty men heard his desire, and set out to be grace-spreaders in his time of trouble and hardship. “So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David” (2 Sam. 23.16).

David, overwhelmed by their grace, poured the water out to the LORD, not willing to drink it. But the message of their respect, love, and grace got through loud and clear.

While the religious of Jesus’ day were trying to figure out how best to put Him to death, and “take Him by trickery”, a woman came to Him as He sat having dinner at Simon the leper’s home. She had an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard, which she broke, pouring the contents on His head, as an act of love and grace. Of course, the religious were furious because it was very expensive oil; and because the wicked have a deep aversion to God’s grace being shown at all. But Jesus’ words about her, as He said, have been told as a memorial to her “wherever the gospel is preached.”

Jesus said about her act of grace, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me...She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial” (Mk. 14.1-9).

As Paul said about the churches of Macedonia regarding their grace spreading: “For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing...” (2 Cor. 8.3). Equally as willing as the soldiers and the woman.

“Grace can move us to many kinds of giving...when we give, whatever we give, we create an emptiness in our lives which becomes a space where the grace and Presence of the Lord can fill us to overflowing, the result of which is joy.”

We, too, can be like the three mighty men and the oil-pouring woman, daily giving and spreading grace. But, most assuredly it does begin “with a decision: Give yourself to Jesus and Jesus will empower you to give yourself for others.”

*For reflection*

1. To whom will you give yourself today as a channel of God’s grace?
2. How should you prepare each day to make the most of every opportunity for spreading the grace of God?
3. Who has spread God’s grace to you lately? Give thanks to God for them, and take the time to tell them thanks.

*The grace of God must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good in us, or done by us, at any time. It is great grace and favor from God, if we are made useful to others, and forward to any good work.* Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8.1-6*

*Pray Psalm 86.7-15.*

Pray for grace today, that you might give yourself to the Lord and to others in good works of love.

*Sing Psalm 86.7-15.*

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

When in my trouble, LORD, I call You,

*Grace and Giving: 2 Corinthians 8*

You answer me; there is none like You!  
There are no works like Yours, and all whom  
You have created shall worship You.  
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,  
all shall glory give to You!

For You are great, You wondrous do;  
You are the only and sovereign LORD.  
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,  
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!  
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,  
praise Your Name forever, LORD!

Great is Your mercy, LORD, toward me;  
You have delivered my soul from hell.  
Though dreadful foes and threats arrayed be,  
You will Your grace and Your mercy tell!  
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,  
slow to anger, loving well!

## 2 Grace Enriched

*Pray Psalm 33.1-5*

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!  
For praise from the upright is beautiful.  
Praise the LORD with the harp;  
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.  
Sing to Him a new song;  
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.  
For the word of the LORD *is* right,  
And all His work *is done* in truth.  
He loves righteousness and justice;  
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

*Sing Psalm 33.1-5.*

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the LORD, for praise becomes His righteous ones!  
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.  
His love prevails the whole world through; the LORD loves truth and righteousness.

*Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-9; meditate on verses 6-9.*

*Preparation*

1. How did Paul refer to Titus' mission to the Corinthians?
2. What example did Paul give the Corinthians?

*Meditation*

Here Paul summarizes the operation of grace, as embodied in our Lord Jesus Christ, and shows us why grace is so much to be desired in the churches of the Lord.

Grace is self-denying, for it focuses on the need of others and seeks their enrichment, that is, that they might be brought near to God and reign with Him. By his going to the Corinthians, Titus sought to enrich them in the grace of God, and Paul "urged" him to do so (v. 6). He hoped that Titus' work among them might result in their abounding in the grace of giving as well as in returning to the Yes Path with Jesus (v. 7).

Paul sought to develop the Corinthians' love for others (v. 8). He set the example of Jesus before them. Jesus ruled with the Father, in all the joy, might, beauty, and pleasure such a position entails; yet He laid aside all those great riches and became poor (v. 9). That is, He came among us, identified with us, saw our need, and gave Himself to meet our need, that we in Him might be exalted to the right hand of the Father, seated with Jesus in glory, ruling in His Kingdom, and growing in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

Where people imitate Jesus, they will deny themselves, seek the wellbeing and prosperity of their neighbors, and give of themselves and their time, treasure, and talent so that others might be exalted into the Presence of Jesus, and there know fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

Thus the grace God shows us we show to others, and grace is greatly enriched all around for Jesus' sake.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*  
“See that you abound in this grace also” (2 Cor. 8.7).

Having the mind of Christ is this “also” grace. As Paul wrote, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2.4-8).

Most fairy tales and novels dwell on the theme of “rags to riches” as the quintessential ending to the story being told. Some, no doubt, digress, but most that we enjoy employ this genre. Jesus, however, did the opposite. Do we ever stop to think about the grandeur He left to take our sins upon Himself? I mean really think about it? He had to agree to forego indoor plumbing and hot and cold running water to be hated, abused, and gruesomely killed. He had to leave the Presence of His Father, and angels who did His every bidding, to be spurned and taken advantage of. For thirty-three long years. To become grace and love personified. For His enemies. (Rom. 5.8). “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people” (Ps. 22.6).

That is the mind that should be in us (1 Cor. 2.16). That is how we, too, can abound in grace. When we set our mind on the things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3.2). The Kingdom reality is thus: “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3.3). Therefore, this can be our mindset if we so choose.

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (1 Pet. 1.3, 4).

Dwelling upon the incredible love and grace of Jesus Christ, and considering what He gave up to come and save us, encourages us to a life of extreme grace-spreading, setting our minds to “abound in this grace also.”

*Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown  
When Thou camest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room  
For Thy holy nativity:  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!  
There is room in my heart for Thee.*  
(E.E.S. Elliott, 1864)

*For reflection*

1. We have the mind of Christ. How do you experience that?
2. How does having the mind of Christ help us as grace-spreaders in the world?
3. What can you do to be more consistent in thinking with the mind of Christ?

*To all these good things the apostle desires them to add this grace also, to abound in charity to the poor. The best arguments for Christian duties, are drawn from the grace and love of Christ. Though he was rich, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, yet he not only became man for us, but became poor also. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8.7-9*



*Grace and Giving: 2 Corinthians 8*

*Pray Psalm 33.13-22.*

Pray that God will prepare the hearts of the people you see today to know and receive His grace from you.  
Pray that He will use you to enrich others with His grace by all your words and deeds.

*Sing Psalm 33.13-22.*

(Truro: *Sbout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.  
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love:  
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!  
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

### 3 Fulfill Your Commitments

*Pray Psalm 106.1-3.*

Praise the LORD!

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!

For His mercy *endures* forever.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?

Who can declare all His praise?

Blessed *are* those who keep justice,

*And* he who does righteousness at all times!

*Sing Psalm 106.1-3.*

(Trust in Jesus: *'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*)

Praise the LORD! Give thanks and praise Him!

He is good, His love endures!

More His works than can be spoken;

let His praise be ever sure!

*Refrain v. 48*

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!

Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

*Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-12; meditate on verses 10-12.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Paul want the Corinthians to do?
2. What would be necessary for this to happen?

*Meditation*

The Corinthians had decided to contribute to the relief of the saints in Judea, but, by the time of Paul's writing 2 Corinthians, they had not yet fulfilled their commitment. It had been a year since they decided to contribute; now it was time to complete the task (vv. 10, 11).

It's not a good idea to make commitments to the Lord and then not carry them out. Paul said it would be to the Corinthians' advantage to finish what they had started by getting their gift ready (v. 10). It didn't have to be an exorbitant gift, merely what they were able to give from what the Lord had provided for them (v. 12). He didn't say what that "advantage" would be, but we can imagine the sense of satisfaction and even joy they would have experienced in finishing this project. More important, they would have reinforced their commitment as a community to serve the Lord together.

They needed "a willing mind" to move forward on this. Not that they should ask, "Are we still willing?" but that they should remember their commitment, pray, and take immediate steps to get their gift ready.

Here is a lesson for life: We must not merely start well in our walk with the Lord, with all kinds of good intentions and heady resolutions. The goal is to walk faithfully, work diligently, and make sure that we finish well in everything we do throughout the entire course of our lives. The advantage to our doing so will be in the "Well done" we hear from our Savior when we see Him face to face.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

The following statement is not meant to offend anyone, but merely to point out that this passage flies in the

face of churches' and ministries' use of spiritual extortion in "faith promise" giving. Sorry.

Paul clearly stated, "For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one *has*, and not according to what one *does not have*" (2 Cor. 8.12). God also works on this same premise: we are to tithe back to Him what does not belong to us, out of what we have in our possession. "Will a man rob God?" (Mal. 3.8) Ten percent of what we have belongs to God. Not ten percent of what we think we might have if we play our cards right.

We recently participated in a neighborhood garage sale. We made \$77. So, seven dollars and seventy cents belonged to God. Simple enough. We could have pledged a hundred dollars to God in anticipation of a boon return on our second-hand goods; but truly, as you see, that would have put us in a deficit position. God doesn't want us to promise over-the-top giving. He just wants us to do what He has told us to do.

And to do what we have said we would do.

"Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!

For the LORD preserves the faithful..." (Ps. 31.23).

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much..." (Lk. 16.10).

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2.10).

King Saul, in disobedience to God, did something he perceived as a good idea. The prophet Samuel had to ask him, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?" Saul answered with a bit of, "Well I did this, and I did that, and look at what a great king I am." To which Samuel answered:

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?"

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." (1 Sam. 15.19, 22).

Paul would never have urged the Corinthians to do something they were incapable of doing. He would not have allowed them to set themselves up for failure. He wanted them to succeed, to empty themselves of things they already had, so God could refill them with Himself. He wanted them to grow in their faith; and he wanted them to find satisfaction in their possible and completed work (2 Cor. 8.11).

God wants the same for us. He also never requires anything from us that we cannot do with His help. "We must not merely start well in our walk with the Lord...The goal is to walk faithfully, work diligently, and make sure that we finish well in everything we do throughout the entire course of our lives."

It is solid obedience based on the truth of Jesus Christ, and according to the truth of what we can give today—physically, spiritually, financially—with great joy and rejoicing, doing what we have agreed to do. Nothing more, nothing less. "The advantage to our doing so will be in the "Well done" we hear from our Savior when we see Him face to face."

*For reflection*

1. In what aspects of your walk with and work for the Lord do you need to have a more "willing mind"?
2. What will it mean for you to give "what you have" in serving the Lord today?
3. Whom will you encourage today to give their best in serving the Lord?

*Good purposes are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit; but they are lost, and signify nothing without good deeds. Good beginnings are well; but we lose the benefit, unless there is perseverance.* Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8.10-12*

*Grace and Giving: 2 Corinthians 8*

*Pray Psalm 106.44-48.*

Give thanks and praise to God, Who always remembers His covenant and carries out His Word. Renew your commitment to Him for this day.

*Sing Psalm 106.44-48.*

(Trust in Jesus: *'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*)

Look upon us, LORD, with favor,  
see us in our sore distress!

Hear our cries, with love surround us;  
turn again to heal and bless!

*Refrain v. 48*

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!  
Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Save us, LORD, from every nation;  
gather us from all our ways.

And we to Your Name will offer  
glorious thanks and endless praise!

*Refrain*

## 4 An Equality

*Pray Psalm 132.8-10.*

Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,  
You and the ark of Your strength.  
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,  
And let Your saints shout for joy.  
For Your servant David's sake,  
Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.

*Sing Psalm 132.8-10.*

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

Arise, O LORD, come to Your resting place;  
Your holy Presence meet with us in might.  
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace,  
and we will shout to Your divine delight!  
For David's sake, turn not away Your face,  
but look upon us in Your holy light.

*Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-15; meditate on verses 13-15.*

*Preparation*

1. What was Paul trying to accomplish?
2. What Old Testament story did he cite?

*Meditation*

What did Paul mean by “an equality”? Obviously, he did *not* mean that one group of churches should be depleted, weakened, or burdened so that another group of churches could enjoy the life of Riley (v. 13). Paul's idea of “an equality” relates to the workings of God's grace in, through, and among His churches, both as individual churches and as a worldwide fellowship and body.

He explained this idea more pointedly to the churches in Rome: “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things” (Rom. 15.26, 27). The Gospel came to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia—Thessalonica and Corinth—by the efforts of the churches in Jerusalem and Judea (and Antioch). They supported the work of Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus so that the Corinthians could be “partakers of their spiritual things”. In return, the Corinthians should “minister to them in material things” during this time of famine and want.

So the “equality” Paul wrote about has nothing to do with equal shares of anything other than the multifarious, polychromatic, need-meeting, and joy-inducing grace of God. Grace flowed from Judea to Corinth; now it must flow back to Judea from Corinth. From the one, grace to meet spiritual needs; from the other, grace to meet physical needs.

There is no shortage of grace to go around, Paul insisted, citing the episode of the manna in the wilderness. We who have *known* God's grace are the earthen vessels through whom His grace must *flow to others*, according to the opportunities and situations with which we are presented. What was true for the Judean and Corinthian believers is true for us as well. Let the grace of God flow freely and be spread lavishly among and from us, and there will never be a shortage of this wonderful and all-transforming gift.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD,  
and He will pay back what he has given” (Prov. 19.17).

“...he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he” (Prov. 14.21).

“He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,  
but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy” (Prov. 14.31).

“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and  
there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.

The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself” (Prov. 11.24, 25).

As in the story Paul referred to, God’s economy always works.  
But God’s people must participate obediently for this to be so.

The children of Israel were very busy wandering in the desert because of their disobedience. Therefore, they could not stay in one place long enough to cultivate food or livestock for food. So, God in His great grace and mercy stepped in to provide for their daily needs. But there were strict guidelines to be adhered to, in order for them to abound.

Six days the men were to hustle out in the early morning and collect one omer of manna for each person living within his tent. Nothing more, nothing less. And then on the sixth day they were to collect for two days—two omers each—so they did not have to work on the Sabbath day of rest. (Even in their time of wandering, repentance, and renewal God was teaching, leading, and guiding them to follow His laws and learn His ways).

When they did it God’s way, everyone had enough to eat, every day, even on the day of rest. Thus, Paul’s statement: “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack” (Ex. 16.18).

The worldwide church functions in the same way. Or should. Those who have enough are to share with those who lack. And then when those who were abundant have a need, another part of the Body will fill it. These needs are not always financial in nature, although often they are. Churches suffer persecution, they suffer from sin, they suffer from attacks of the enemy, they suffer losses, they suffer from sadness, they suffer from a lack of leadership, and they suffer in a variety of other ways. Observant churches, through the power and nudging of the Holy Spirit, should have their hearts fine-tuned to spot these needs and then step in to help. “But whoever has this world’s good, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in Him?... Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him” (1 Jn. 3.17-19).

What an amazing witness this love is, to the watching world, of the churches’ equality loving (2 Cor. 8.14) for one another (1 Jn. 4.7). With never a “shortage of grace to go around”!

*For reflection*

1. How do you see this principle of “an equality” at work in your own church?
2. Do you think such a principle should exist in your Personal Mission Field? Explain.
3. How was the manna of the Old Testament like the grace of God we know today?

*The saints, with their hope in the world to come, have more than those who appear to be rich in this world. But both will be made equal, because those who give of their wealth to help the saints now will be helped by them at some future time, when they are in need.* Ambrosiaster (fl. 366-384), *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*

*Grace and Giving: 2 Corinthians 8*

*Pray Psalm 132.13-18.*

Thank God for choosing you, making you part of His eternal family, and giving you a church where you can worship, grow, and serve. Seek His help in your walk with and work for Him today.

*Sing Psalm 132.13-18.*

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

God dwells among us, and He will forever,  
to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.  
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior—  
Beloved, eternal light and resting place.  
His foes are banished from His Presence ever,  
but we shall reign with Him before His face.

## 5 Glory in Giving

*Pray Psalm 122.1-4.*

I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”  
Our feet have been standing  
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!  
Jerusalem is built  
As a city that is compact together,  
Where the tribes go up,  
The tribes of the LORD,  
To the Testimony of Israel,  
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

*Sing Psalm 122.1-4.*

(Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

I was glad when they said to me, “To the LORD’s house let us go!”  
Holy City, let our feet be firmly planted in your soil.  
Jesus builds His Church forever, where His people sing His praise!  
As Your Word decrees forever, we will thank You all our days.

*Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-21; meditate on verses 16-21.*

*Preparation*

1. Who was coming to the Corinthians?
2. What would glorify God?

*Meditation*

It was important to Paul that the Corinthians participate in the relief of the brethren in Judea, as they had promised. Paul seems to have exhorted Titus to go to Corinth, but that exhortation was unnecessary; Titus was most eager to return (vv. 16, 17). The Corinthians had refreshed his soul during his previous visit, and he was happy to return and bring this work to a completion. Another brother—Luke? Barnabas?—well known to the churches would be coming with Titus to aid in the project. These were both honorable men (vv. 18, 19), so the Corinthians need not worry that their “lavish gift” (v. 20) might be compromised.

Paul mentioned that the administration of this gift would “be to the glory of the Lord Himself” (v. 19). Think of all that went into getting this gift ready: the initial challenge, follow-up communications, coordinating the giving among the churches in Corinth, counting and packaging the money, getting the offering ready for Titus and the others to bear away. That doesn’t sound like very “high and holy” work. Mostly tedious, we might think. But Paul insisted that this would glorify and honor God (his “by us”, v. 19, is all-inclusive, I think). All that we do as acts of obedience are done by the grace of God at work within us (Phil. 1.13). Thus, even something so “mundane” as collecting, tallying, and delivering monetary gifts can be a way of demonstrating the oneness of Christ’s Body, the orderliness of His ways, the generosity of His grace, His care for all His people, and the power of grace over self-indulgence. God is glorified in our giving, and we should give Him praise and thanks for everything that goes into the work of administering our gifts.

The way the gifts were prepared, the men who would deliver them, and the gratitude with which they would be received would all be done decently and in order, so that the honor of God would be visible to Him and the world (v. 21)



*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.*

I love what Paul wanted to “avoid” at all costs: “that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us” (2 Cor. 8.20).

“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6.3, 4). Of course, this gift was open knowledge to those observing it; but Paul wanted the gift to “be to the glory of the Lord Himself” (2 Cor. 8.19) and not to anyone else. So don’t blame me for it!

Peter spoke to this same issue when he and John had gone up to the temple together to pray. On the way, they encountered a lame man who was asking for money. Peter nor John had anything to give him monetarily, but what they did have was life changing. “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3.6). And he did!

But in the follow-up explanation, to take the blame and focus off themselves, they said that it was Jesus Who had done this great work through them: “And in His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3.16). So, don’t blame us. Jesus did it! Praise Him, not us.

As an aside, there is an occasion written of in Scripture that tells what happened to Herod, when he blamed himself for God’s goodness. “Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12.23). Much better to blame God for His goodness, than to blame oneself.

“I AM the LORD, that is My Name;  
and My glory I will not give to another,  
nor My praise to carved images” (Is. 42.8).

There is glory in giving; just be sure to blame God for it (Jms. 1.17).

*For reflection*

1. What daily details in your life have the potential for bringing honor and glory to God?
2. Do you ever see God glorified in the “everyday” ways of people you know? Examples? Have you told them so?
3. Whom will you encourage today to give God honor and glory for all the “everyday” ways they serve Him?

*Seeing that the Corinthians are making progress in good works, Titus has become particularly concerned about their attitude and has even volunteered to go to visit them.* Ambrosiaster (fl. 366-384), *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles*

*Pray Psalm 122.5-9.*

Pray for your church, that it may fulfill its calling to spread the grace of God throughout your community, and that you may know the peace of God and the unity of His love.

*Sing Psalm 122.5-9.*

(Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

On the throne of David, Jesus sits to judge the nations all.

As our holy peace increases we are safe who on You call.

Grant us peace, LORD, by Your favor; for Your people’s sake we pray.

For the Church’s sake, O Savior, we will seek Your good today.

## 6 The Glory of Christ

*Pray Psalm 48.1-3.*

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised  
In the city of our God,  
*In* His holy mountain.  
Beautiful in elevation,  
The joy of the whole earth,  
*Is* Mount Zion on the sides of the north,  
The city of the great King.  
God *is* in her palaces;  
He is known as her refuge.

*Sing Psalm 48.1-3.*

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah!*)

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the LORD!  
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!  
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!  
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

*Read 2 Corinthians 8.1-24; meditate on verses 22-24.*

*Prepare*

1. What was Titus' role with Paul?
2. How did Paul refer to the churches?

*Meditation*

Greatly encouraged by Titus' report of the changes that were taking place in Corinth, Paul decided to strike while the iron was hot and send three brothers to carry his second epistle and organize the promised gift to the churches in Judea.

We don't know who the two "apostles of the churches" were, either the one mentioned in verse 18 or the other mentioned here (v. 22). But they were solid citizens in the Kingdom of God who had proved themselves faithful and diligent "in many things". Titus was Paul's "partner and fellow worker" and the other two brothers were "apostles ("messengers", NKJV) of the churches", that is, men picked and sent out by the churches to further the work of Christ. Paul instructed the Corinthians to justify his boasting about them and prove their love by receiving this team and cooperating in its work.

The phrase, "the glory of Christ", seems to me deliberately vague. Were these men "the glory of Christ" or were the churches "the glory of Christ"? Calvin lumps the two together, commenting "all that excel in piety and holiness are the glory of Christ, because they have nothing but by Christ's gift." I think that makes sense.

But what is the "glory of Christ"? Is it not His Presence, the manifestation of His beauty, goodness, truth, love, and power? God intends to glorify Jesus through His Church, as each member is transformed from glory to glory into the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-18) and as each church grows up "in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Eph. 4.11-16).

But where is this happening in our day?? Where is the Presence of Jesus clearly and consistently being revealed by believers and their churches? Where is the fragrance of Christ, the grace of the Gospel, and the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit of the Kingdom of God shining, expanding, and turning our

world rightside-up for Jesus?

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Proof text is a Scriptural passage adduced as proof for a theological doctrine, belief, or principle; so says Merriam-Webster.com. And Paul is pleading with the Corinthians to be just that. “Be the proof text for what I have said about you. Show Titus and the other messengers your ‘Jesus behavior’; don’t just tell them about it.” “Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf” (2 Cor. 8.24).

Much has been written about good writing. Here are two memorable quotes from two excellent writers: “Don’t use adjectives which merely tell us how you want us to feel about the things you are describing. I mean, instead of telling us a thing was ‘terrible’, describe it so that we’ll be terrified. Don’t say it was ‘delightful’; make us say ‘delightful’ when we’ve read the description.” (C. S. Lewis)  
“Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.” (Anton Chekhov)

The Scriptures show us many ways to be a proof text in our own Personal Mission Field:

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.

Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. 1.16, 17),

“Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore” (Ps. 37.27).

“He has shown you...what is good...to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6.8).

“...a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Ps. 111.10).

“Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath” (Zech. 8.16, 17).

And the loudest, showiest proof text of all? Keeping God’s Law (Ex. 20.1-17; Matt. 22.37-40).

Wouldn’t it be great if our behavior caused someone to say, “Delightful, I see that glint of Jesus’ light reflected in their life, as if shining on broken glass!?”

Showing the Presence of Christ—as text proof—clearly and consistently.  
Where? In everything we do.

*For reflection*

1. What “proof text” will be read from your life today?
2. What can you do each day to prepare yourself to “proof text” Jesus to your world?
3. Who has been a “proof text” of Jesus to you lately? Have you thanked them?

*Paul is urging the Corinthians to demonstrate their love by the way they treat those he is sending to them. If they received them with honor, they would be demonstrating to all the other churches how far they had progressed and that the good things which were said about them were true. He is therefore encouraging their resolve, for someone who is well thought of usually shows improvement. Ambrosiaster (f. 366-384), *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles**

*Pray Psalm 48.4-14.*

Pray for revival in your church, the churches in your community, and churches all around the world. Pray that Jesus will again show His glory to the world through His Church.

*Sing Psalm 48.4-14.*

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.  
See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the LORD is near.  
For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!  
God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!  
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.  
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;  
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.  
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on every mighty tower.  
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;  
God will guide her evermore!

## 7 Proof Positive

*Pray Psalm 128.1, 2.*

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,  
Who walks in His ways.  
When you eat the labor of your hands,  
You *shall be* happy, and it *shall be* well with you.

*Sing Psalm 128.1, 2.*

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blessed are they who fear YOU, LORD, who walk within Your ways!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!  
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

*Review 2 Corinthians 8.1-24; meditate on verse 24.*

*Preparation*

1. What were the Corinthians to show?
2. What would that prove?

*Meditation*

Paul's epistles to the Corinthians are important for many reasons, not the least of which is how they teach us to think about grace. We rightly think about grace as being a mighty work of God whereby lost sinners are converted to Him:

*Grace, grace, God's grace  
grace that can pardon and cleanse within;  
grace, grace, God's grace,  
grace that is greater than all our sin.*

Certainly this is true, as far as it goes. But the grace of God is much vaster and simpler than this. The grace that God extends to His Church, by His indwelling Spirit and according to His Word, is holy spiritual power to do the will of God, thus making His Presence and glory known wherever it flows. This is why, in 2 Corinthians 4.15, Paul could rejoice that "grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God." Grace spreads in countless ways, most of them unspectacular.

Unspectacular, but plainly out of this world. It took the grace of God for the Corinthians to receive Paul's difficult first letter, accept his instructions, and get busy getting back on the Yes Path with Jesus. It took grace for them to receive Titus when he came to follow-up Paul's letter. So gracious were they toward him that his soul was greatly refreshed. By the grace of God Titus reported their progress to Paul, and he was so encouraged and so refreshed in his own soul that he wrote a second epistle to encourage and urge them on. It would take grace for the Corinthians to push ahead in their faith by fulfilling their commitment to help the churches in Judea. And only by the grace of God would they gladly accept Titus and the two others who came bearing Paul's letter and were appointed to receive their gift.

Grace can abound in the small stuff of our lives, and the more it does, the more it creates a fragrance of life and hope. People will notice this constant aroma of grace, especially as they are touched by it, and some will ask a reason for the hope they see us (1 Pet. 3.15). Grace is proof positive, not only of our faith, but of the rule of King Jesus, advancing His Kingdom of grace on earth as it is in heaven.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Showering has a twofold bonus: we are clean; and our essence is an olfactory blessing to others.

Grace well-shown creates the same win/win. Everyone is blessed.

But as with everything else in the Christian walk, it demands hard work, and utmost faith in the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, that we “may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven...” (Ezra 6.10). “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12.1, 2). Do it, prove it.

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5.1, 2).

“Surely” if I am a grace-spreader and love-prover like Jesus, “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Ps. 23.6). Surely Lord, let that be true of me.

“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2.15). Either way there is an aroma that follows us.

“Grace can abound in the small stuff of our lives, and the more it does, the more it creates a fragrance of life and hope.”

What we do remains, and it is pleasant, or it is not. Our choice. But we know for certain that the same powerful Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will dwell in us and enable us to be grace-spreaders if we ask Him to do so (Rom. 8.11, Lk. 11.13). He, too, would like to be pleased by our essence.

John wrote of a blessing God chooses to bestow on His children: “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”’ “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (Rev. 14.13). Grace-works, we pray.

Exuding, till the end, a pleasing, proof positive, aroma to God and others.

*For reflection*

1. What are some things that can keep you from being a grace-spreader in your Personal Mission Field?
2. When others spread the grace of God to you, do you acknowledge this by thanking them and Him?
3. What opportunities will you have today for proving the love of Jesus to the world? Are you prepared?

*Paul is urging the Corinthians to demonstrate their love by the way they treat those he is sending to them. If they received them with honor, they would be demonstrating to all the other churches how far they had progressed and that the good things which were said about them were true. He is therefore encouraging their resolve, for someone who is well thought of usually shows improvement. Ambrosiaster (fl. 366-384), *Commentary on Paul's Epistles**

*Pray Psalm 128.3-6.*

Pray that the grace of God will abound to you, through you, throughout your church, overflowing into your community, and issuing in thanks and praise to Him.

*Sing Psalm 128.3-6.*

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;

their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!

Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O LORD, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp'rous make our ways;

thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon us all our days!

Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!

Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon all us all our days!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. How many ways is the grace of God evident in this chapter?
2. What does it mean to be “refreshed” in your soul? Who refreshes your soul? Whose soul do you refresh?
3. What do we learn from this chapter about keeping commitments?
4. What example of how grace works did the Lord Jesus set for us?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

*For prayer:*



## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

Thank you.