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# Grace That Keeps On Giving

## 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

### Introduction

1. Many of you have perhaps at some point in your life heard this statement: "The gift that keeps on giving."
2. It is a tag line which has been used down through the years to entice people to purchase a certain product as a gift for someone.
  - a. In the early 1920's, Victor Radio introduced a commercial which spoke of Victor radios as "the gift that keeps on giving . . . a royal gift . . . at a very low price!"
  - b. During the 1928 Christmas season, Hotpoint ran ads which said, "Give Mother what she really wants this season, this all-white Hotpoint electric range. A gift that keeps on giving!"
  - c. In 1948, it was a Du Mont Sherwood Model television featuring AM/FM radio.
  - d. In the 1963 Christmas season, RCA Victor ran a magazine ad to promote color televisions.
  - e. In 1977, Kodak used it for their Trimline Instamatic 18 Camera.
  - f. In 2016, Godiva chocolates changed it to say, "The Box That Keeps On Giving."
3. Tonight, I would like for us to look at chapter eight of Paul's second letter to the Christians in Corinth and consider a "grace that keeps on giving."
4. In these verses, Paul is encouraging the saints in Corinth to give a one-time special gift to the church in Jerusalem on behalf of the poor.
5. Here, he speaks to the Corinthians and to us as well about God's grace as it relates to giving and about the motivation behind such giving.
6. The word "grace" occurs eight times here in chapters 8-9 — five of those are in

the first nine verses of chapter 8.

7. The word translated in our English Bibles as “grace, favor, or gracious work” is *charis* and means “to show kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness.” (Louw-Nida)

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### I. The Example of the Macedonians

“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.” (2 Corinthians 8:1–2, NASB95)

#### A. THE CONDITION OF THESE CHURCHES

1. They were extremely poor.
  - a. The churches of which Paul speaks are primarily the congregations at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.
  - b. The word which Paul uses to speak of “their deep (extreme) poverty” is the word *bathos*.
  - c. Many of us have heard of a “bathysphere” which is a steel diving sphere used for deep-sea observation.
  - d. As we might say here in the south, they were “dirt poor.”
2. They suffered under “a great ordeal of affliction”.
  - a. Other English translations render this phrase as . . .
    - 1) “a great trial of affliction” (NKJV)
    - 2) “a severe test of affliction” (ESV)
    - 3) “the most severe trial” (NIV84)
  - b. They were under immense pressure because of their devotion to Christ.

**Slide 3****B. THE NATURE OF THEIR GENEROSITY**

“For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,” (2 Corinthians 8:3–4, NASB95)

1. In spite of “the great ordeal of affliction” they were under, they had “an abundance of joy.”
2. In spite of their “deep poverty” there was an overflowing “of liberality.”
3. These poor Christians gave, not only “according to their ability,” but “beyond their ability” (v. 3).
4. They gave not because someone was pressuring them to do so, but “of their own accord” — willingly, voluntarily — because they wanted to.
5. They even begged Paul for the opportunity to participate.

“begging us with much urging for the favor [grace] of participation in the support of the saints,” (2 Corinthians 8:3–4, NASB95)

- a. Paul describes the collection as a “grace.”
- b. The love and kindness of giving are found within the gift which they gave.
  - ❑ The grace of God given to the Macedonian churches produced the grace of giving in those who were the recipients.
6. Their focus was not on the small amount they could give, but their joy because of what God had done for them.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NASB95)

“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,” (1 Thessalonians 1:6, NASB95)

7. Paul adds another statement here which we must not miss — “and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5).
8. In giving of themselves to the Lord, they were only affirming that which Christ had already done for them.
9. *Grace is first rooted in our response to God.*
  - a. When we know that our lives no longer belong to us, but to God, we also realize that our possessions no longer belong to us either.
  - b. We will never truly relinquish our possessions to God unless we have first given ourselves to Him.

**Slide 4****C. THE CORINTHIANS NEED TO COMPLETE THIS GRACIOUS WORK**

“So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance [speech] and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.” (2 Corinthians 8:6–7, NASB95)

1. The Christians in Corinth were blessed with many gifts — “faith,” “speech,” “knowledge,” “earnestness,” “love”.
2. However, they still needed to abound in the “gracious work” of giving.
3. You and I cannot grow to spiritual maturity until we have committed everything to the Lord — that includes our money.
4. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy who was continuing to work with the church in Ephesus, he wrote, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17, NASB95)

**Slide 5****II. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

**A. "THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR" (V. 9B)**

“who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6–8, NASB95)

1. Jesus was by very nature God (Hebrews 1:3).

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”

2. However, He did not try to hold on to this equality with God.
3. Instead, He emptied Himself and came to this earth in the form of a bond-servant (*lit.* slave).
4. He humbled Himself to the point of death — the death of the cross.
5. Why? For our salvation.

**Slide 6****B. "SO THAT YOU THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME RICH" (V. 9C)**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,” (Ephesians 1:3, NASB95)

1. In Christ, God chose to save us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
2. He adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself (Ephesians 1:5).
3. God freely bestowed His grace on us in Christ (Ephesians 1:6).
4. In Christ we have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7)
5. In Him we have obtained an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11).
6. In Christ you and I have been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is

given as a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:13,14).

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### III. Paul’s Instructions On Giving

#### A. PROPORTIONATE

“But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.” (2 Corinthians 8:11–12, NASB95)

1. God’s focus is upon our hearts.
2. He desires willing hearts that are eager and ready to give.
3. Our giving however is “according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12).
4. This is proportionate giving.

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#### B. RECIPROCAL

“For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality— at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; as it is written, “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.”” (2 Corinthians 8:13–15, NASB95)

1. In the early days of the church in Jerusalem, Luke provides us with an insight to the supply of those in need (Acts 2:44-45).

“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.” (Acts 2:44–45, NASB95)

2. In Acts 4:34, we see this continuing.

“For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales” (Acts 4:34, NASB95)

3. In the present, the Christians in Corinth were able to give to the saints' needs in Jerusalem.
4. Paul knew there might come a day when the Christians in Jerusalem would need to supply the Corinthians need.
5. To make his point, Paul referenced the gathering of manna in the wilderness by the Israelites (Exodus 16:18).

“He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack.” (1 Corinthians 8:15; cf. Exodus 16:18)

6. When God gave food to the Israelites in the wilderness, He did so equally according to their needs.
7. Grace will respond in the same way.

## **Conclusion**

1. As God's people, we are all encouraged to give joyfully according to what we have.
2. Let us show kindness to one another, even as our Lord has shown kindness toward us.
3. This is the grace that keeps on giving!
4. Is it present in your life?