

# HILARIOUS GENEROSITY

## The Charming Joy of Grace Giving

2 Corinthians 9:6–15



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

The journey toward grace is the ultimate *trip to bountiful*. The outcome, no matter what it may be, is always characterized by bountiful abundance. When grace fuels us to forgive someone who has offended us, we abundantly release every hint of any offense. When grace is cultivated in our relationship with a friend, an abundance of bountiful freedom marks our friendship. The same abundance occurs when God reaches down to us. Though our sins are many, they are never greater than the bountiful abundance of His grace. The apostle Paul put it this way: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20 NASB)—or, as Donald Grey Barnhouse once paraphrased it, “Where sin reached a high-water mark, grace completely flooded the world.”<sup>1</sup> The same bountiful abundance occurs when grace is the motivating factor prompting our giving. Rather than giving grudgingly, we give cheerfully. Instead of giving under compulsion, we give spontaneously, privately determining the amount God leads us to give. In doing so, we claim by faith that whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. In other words, living by faith includes giving by grace.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. Applying Grace to Living

The movement of grace into our lives impacts each of us as Christians through a threefold motion: *grace stoops*; *grace replaces*; and *grace guides*.

First, *grace stoops to where we are to lift us up to where we ought to be*. God, in Christ, declares us to be righteous, in spite of our dreadfully unrighteous state. The opening of John's gospel declares, “The Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing [grace] and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son” (John 1:14).

Second, *grace replaces the harsh demands of the Law and offers mercy in its place*. Grace is seen most clearly in the work of Christ in accomplishing salvation for His people (Romans 8:23).

Third, *grace guides us in responding to God and to others*. Grace implores us to move in humility and graciousness both toward God and toward others.



## Quotable

*When we live our lives by grace, we look beyond what is and see what could be.*

*We do that when we give as well.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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### DOORWAY TO HISTORY

#### *Spotlight on Generous Giving: The Macedonians*

When the apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth on the topic of generous giving, he shined a spotlight on the gracious Christians from the churches in Macedonia.

Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. (2 Corinthians 8:1–2)

Paul founded the churches in Macedonia on his second missionary journey. Believers in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea would have been included in this group of hardworking, generous believers. Though nestled in a prosperous area overlooking the sparkling Mediterranean Sea, these believers, according to Paul, were “being tested by many troubles” and were “very poor” (8:2). Remarkably, in spite of their poverty, the church in Macedonia erupted in a flood of “rich generosity.”

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul tapped into the spirit of competition by invoking Macedonia—Corinth’s longstanding political and socioeconomical rival to the north. The Greeks and the Macedonians had a “lengthy political rivalry” dating back to long before the time when Philip of Macedon forged a fragile union between the two regions in 338 BC.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Paul made the point that the Macedonian Christians’ level of generosity and joyful giving surpassed that of Corinthian believers—though the Corinthians were significantly more well off financially (9:7)!

## 2. Applying Grace to Giving (2 Corinthians 9:6–15)

An attitude of willingness and cheerfulness in regard to giving flows from the work of grace in our lives. Joyfulness and generosity should be marks of Christian giving, and they produce an outward flow of . . .

- Bountiful sowing (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- Cheerful giving (9:7)
- Liberal providing (9:8–11)
- Joyful responding (9:12–14)

## 3. Applying Grace to Accepting

God—only by His grace—has accepted us because of Christ’s saving work on the cross. Therefore, we must then allow the Holy Spirit to complete a work in us that makes us genuinely more accepting of others and to give more generously and willingly to His work. Paul exclaimed: “Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).



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### LET'S LIVE IT

From this passage in 2 Corinthians 9, we discover that when grace is applied to our giving, people's lives will be transformed for eternity.

First, *grace compels us to see people the way God sees people: as helpless sinners in need of His mercy.* Living in a sin-sick culture is not easy for any follower of Christ. And yet, we must not allow anger or misunderstanding or even religious prejudice to cloud our vision of their real need: the need for forgiveness and grace. Grace compels us to see people as God sees them and offer to them His love and mercy, not judgment and scorn.

Second, *willingly and generously giving of ourselves and our resources provides hope for people who may otherwise never hear the gospel.* Even with all the remarkable technological advances helping to make the message of Christ more accessible across the world, bringing that message to the nations of the earth requires enormous resources and armies of talented and willing laborers. As Christians learn to embrace and respond generously and willingly to giving of their resources, time, and abilities, more people will hear the lifesaving message of His grace.

**Name some people to whom you can offer grace and mercy today.**

**What did God do when He looked down and saw all of us in our need? He gave . . . generously, willingly, and sacrificially.**

**His unending grace flowed toward us in Christ, and we were redeemed by His blood (Ephesians 1:7 NASB).**

**For that we thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!**

#### ENDNOTE

1. Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Grace, in Romans: Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 122.
2. Linda L. Belleville, "The Macedonian Believers Model Generosity (8:1–5)," in *2 Corinthians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/Macedonian-Believers-Model>, (accessed Dec. 15, 2015).



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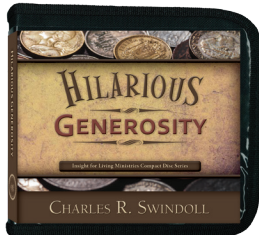
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