

Pentecost 10 - August 9, 2009

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

Dear people to whom God is able to make all grace abound

God includes quite a promise in these verses. He says, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous." He adds, "and generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

Is St. Paul talking about church offerings here? Yes. Is he speaking only about monetary offerings? No. Does he include monetary offerings? Yes.

But the chief point the Apostle of Jesus Christ is making in these verses is really how generous God is to us. Already in the previous chapter the Apostle had written these precious works of God. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."

God Generously Gives Us His Seed of Grace!

Yes, it is true, in all of the previous chapter and in all of this chapter too, the Apostle Paul was encouraging the Christians of Corinth to contribute as generously as they could, and to do so joyfully, to benefit some fellow Christians in Jerusalem who were going through hard times.

The Christians in Macedonia, quite poor themselves, had insisted on contributing to this effort. Paul was sure that the Corinthian Christians would want to do so, too. Why was St. Paul certain about that?

Well, because God had generously given the Corinthian Christians His seed of grace. And you know what happens when good seed is planted. Plants come up and, with God's blessing, a harvest eventually happens.

Certainly God's grace is good seed and certainly God blesses His seed of grace.

God is generous with His seed. He gives lots of grace to plant so that there will be much fruit to harvest. God has always been this way. In Malachi God let it be known that He had scattered abroad His gifts to the poor. In the Psalms, hundreds of years before Malachi, God explained that righteousness would be the harvest, the fruit, the result of God giving the seed of His grace to people.

Please note something! There were Christians in Jerusalem who were having hard economic times. Christians in Macedonia contributed to help others, though many of them were poor themselves. And God scattered abroad His gifts to the poor. Clearly,

then, when God promises to make His people rich, that does not mean materially rich. He will make some of them that way. He did do that for Abraham and David, for example. Even Peter, James, and John had been financially well off with their very successful fishing business. Peter, for example, had a home in Bethsaida and one in Capernaum.

But God absolutely will always offer every one of His believers' riches in grace.

Listen to this promise to the Corinthians, "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times – even during hard economic times – having all you need (note – 'need', not 'want'), you will abound in every good work."

Good works are the fruit, the harvest. From where do good works come? Not from human determination to do better. Not from self-confidence. Not from the latest motivational "how to" book. A good work, a work that God counts as good, that is, comes from God's grace.

Remember, grace is a gift from God. Grace is God's favor and love for us undeserving sinners, all because of Jesus. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." You know it from God's Word. You know it by faith in Jesus.

And from where did this faith in Jesus come? Again, from God's gracious but powerful working in and through His Gospel.

God always want to give lots of His grace to people. He does that because, of course, God wants to rescue them from their sin and from the consequences, the earned wage of sin, namely, death! In doing that, our Lord also wants to make us His new people who are eager to do good works, as is written at Titus 2:14.

Good works always aim to bless other people, our neighbors. We go by Jesus' definition of a neighbor. A neighbor is anyone who needs our love, our help, our service. That is, of course, everyone! It included those financially hurting Christians in Jerusalem in those days.

And thing of all those people, near and far, who do not know the grace of God connected to Jesus, our Savior. Talk about need!

We have God's grace. We have it abundantly. What can we do for people? We can tell them about Jesus. We can pray for people. We can support mission work. We can help this congregation do its work. We can do 1000 other things for others.

When God's grace produces the big harvest of good works in our lives, people will benefit. God's blessing will reach them through us. Paul knew that the Christians in Jerusalem would thank God when the received help from all those other Christians. Probably they even thanked those other believers.

But getting thanked is NOT the main thing. Let God's grace to us, let Jesus, let forgiveness, let eternal life be our reason for doing what we do, not the hope of getting thanked ourselves. When we do get thanked, let us quietly transfer those thanks to God who enabled us to do the right thing in the first place. God's grace to us made it possible and we thank God for that.

“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. Amen.