

# The Grace of Giving

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## Christian Graces

In 2 Peter 1:5-7, Peter talks about some very important qualities that we as Christians ought to strive to add to our lives. These qualities have often been referred to as the Christian Graces. It seems strange that that particular term is used since the word 'grace' is not found in this passage. But consider the original Greek word for 'grace' and its meaning. Grace is from the Greek word *charis*/5485, which is found approximately 156 times in the NT. This definition is given by Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon:

1. That which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness
2. Good will, loving-kindness, favor; of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues

As seen, there are 2 aspects to grace:

- That 2<sup>nd</sup> one was God's grace bestowed upon us (one we usually talk about, as we should)
- But the 1<sup>st</sup> part of that definition is also important
- It is apparently referring to something we ourselves may produce or experience
- We ourselves may say or do some things that are gracious, things that afford joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, and loveliness. We can 'grace' other people with good things.

And so how does that fit with these qualities that Peter mentions? If we have these qualities, then we will be the source of graciousness. If we have added to our faith such qualities as moral excellence, self-control, godliness, and brotherly love, then indeed we and those around us will be blessed with joy, pleasure, delight, and loveliness.

Or, as Peter says in v8-11, if we grow in these graces, then we will neither be barren nor useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says that these qualities can keep us from falling; they can help us and others make it to Heaven!

## Abound in This Grace Also

With all that in mind, look at 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Here in this chapter, Paul refers to some of the same qualities that Peter talks about, and he too says that Christians need to abound in them; but Paul adds a further Christian Grace in which those at Corinth needed to abound!

2 Corinthians 8:7

- KJV: "see that ye abound in this grace also."
- What is this grace?
- Read verse 6... (v7: abound; v6: complete, but must ask again, what is this grace?)
- For the answer, we must look to verses 1-5

Paul is talking about the grace of giving. Notice from v7, despite some of their shortcomings, apparently the Corinthian church was abounding in many wonderful qualities:

- faith: great
- speech: excellent
- knowledge: excelled
- diligence: indeed, hard workers
- love: even in love they apparently abounded

But what about the grace of giving?!? Paul says, “See that you abound in this grace also.” You see, the church in Corinth had not yet proved themselves in this area. Paul commended them on all these other things, but giving was something they still needed to work on.

And what about us today? Just like the folks in Corinth, if we are going to be growing in Christ, then we too need to grow and abound in the grace of giving.

### ***Why Should We Give?***

*1. We should give because God has given so much to us.*

2 Corinthians 8:9

Remember the 2 aspects of the word ‘grace’.

- Paul shows in this verse a true connection between the two.
- God’s giving to us is a demonstration of His grace.
- God’s grace should increase our grace!
- Realizing all that God has given to us ought to greatly motivate us to be more giving.
- Have you ever been greatly moved or motivated by someone who gave you something special?
- How did it make you feel? What did it make you want to do?

*2. We should give because we want to be more like Jesus.*

Philippians 2...

- V6-7 Christ laid aside His privileges
- That’s what it said in 2 Cor 8:9...
- Jesus gave up all His rightful riches that were His in Heaven.
- He was willing to become poor so that we could be rich.
- V5 We are to have the same mind and attitude
- V1-4 Care more about others than you do yourself; be willing to give and attend to their needs.

*3. We should give because God wants us to be giving people.*

Numerous verses and passages wherein we as Christians are told that we are to be giving (just a few):

- Luke 6:27-36
- Matthew 25:31-40 (notice: no great list of requirements for entrance; just one real concern)
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- 1 John 3:14-18

### ***Bible Examples of Giving***

What does the Bible say about the manner in which God’s people are to give? First, look at the OT practice of tithing. The word “tithing” comes from the Hebrew word *ma`aser*/06240, meaning “the tenth part.” There are several references in Scripture to the OT practice of tithing:

- Genesis 14:17-20 (Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek; Hebrews 7:3-4 says he was “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.” He was a king and a priest of God; some have said that may have actually been an appearance by the Son of God Himself.)
- Genesis 28:20-22 (Jacob after dream of ladder reaching up to heaven)
- Leviticus 27:30-32 (under Jewish covenant and the Law of Moses)
- In addition to regular tithing, read about many other offerings: commanded not to harvest the corners of fields, but to leave them for the poor; first fruits of field/womb were to be committed to the Lord
- Numbers 18:21-24 (command to give tithe to the Levites in support of their service)

- Deuteronomy 14:22-27 (if too far to bring tithe [animals], could sell and buy substitute at temple)
- Matthew 21:12-13 (example of moneychangers and abuse of practice)
- Malachi 3:7-10 (criticized for not bringing tithe to storehouse)
- Matthew 23:23 (Pharisees very exact in their tithing, but perhaps lacked in proper attitude of love)
- Mark 12:41-44 (widow is example of putting money in treasury box, perhaps in synagogue or temple)
- This was the system of giving as commanded the people of Israel. It appears that it also served as a system of taxes to provide for their needs as a nation (just as our taxes today pay for welfare, military, etc.). Thus, a system of several tithes was enacted to provide for such needs.

We today as Christians are not under that OT law which gave them specific instructions on exactly how they were to give (see Deuteronomy 5:1-3; that covenant of law was given specifically to the nation of Israel). So let us look to the writings of the NT to see some examples of giving among the early Christians...

Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37

These Christians in the early church did a remarkable thing; no one told them they had to share and give in the manner that they did. But many of them had surely heard Jesus teach about love and giving, and they had just been filled with the Holy Spirit who would help them to be more like Jesus and to walk and live as He would in a loving and giving manner.

And here was a need right there in front of them. Thousands of people had come to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost and had become Christians; suddenly their lives were dramatically altered. Many could not go back to their old way of life. Many were now cut off from their families. Many could not return to their idolatrous ways of work. There was no law that said they had to do exactly what they did, but the law of love already instilled in their hearts compelled these early Christians to give. Those who had... gave to those who did not have! (One could not command by law and get this kind of giving.)

Acts 6:1-4

Notice the apostles realized they could not effectively do the spiritual work they were called to do if they left that work to tend to some of the daily physical needs of the people around them (just as elders cannot tend to their responsibilities...). Also notice, however, that they did realize that the work of taking care of those who had needs was of great importance (thus the demand for and the creation of deacons).

It's interesting! The care of the church in Jerusalem for those in need, and their subsequent generosity to those in need, was so great that it took 7 men full of faith and the Holy Spirit to administer this great program for those who were in need. Do you think those Christians in Jerusalem had a good reputation? Surely they came to be known as people who truly cared about people in need, who cared enough to give.

Acts 11:27-30

- Remember how those in Jerusalem had been so generous? They and all the area around them were now suddenly in need themselves
- They had been so generous in giving that they apparently had no great surplus; now famine...
- There is a great principle of God in effect here: If you yourself are generous in meeting the needs of others, then God will see to it that your needs are met!
- And thus we see these Christians in Antioch stepping up and giving so that the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea would have their needs met
- And Barnabas and Saul/Paul are given the responsibility to take this gift to those in need

Romans 15:24-27

- This is probably years later, and Paul is still travelling about collecting money for poor in Jerusalem
- The famine may still be lingering, or perhaps the Christians in Jerusalem are suffering more because of persecution that was perhaps more prominent there than elsewhere at that time

- Keep in mind that many of the Christians in Jerusalem would be Jews who had converted, and Hebrews 10:34 states that the Jewish Christians in particular were subject to the seizure of their property as a result of their faith in Christ.
- He mentions that others are giving to help the saints there
- He speaks of his desire to see them soon, and likely is hoping that his mention of this will instill in them also the desire to give to those who need their help

Where was Paul when he wrote this letter to the church at Rome? He was likely in Corinth, and it was probably a year or so before that that he had written to the Corinthian church about their participation in this collection for Jerusalem...

Note: Paul apparently actually wrote at least 4 letters to Corinth:

- He wrote one letter before our letter called 1 Corinthians (as mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9).
- Then wrote our 1 Corinthians, but that letter did not solve all the problems there.
- Then he then made a trip to Corinth with the hope of settling the divisive controversy (as mentioned in 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2).
- He returned to Ephesus and wrote a stern letter (as mentioned in 2 Cor 2:3-4, 9; 7:8, 12) that we apparently don't have (although some think it may be contained in 2 Cor 10-13, perhaps inadvertently becoming attached to the end of the original letter).
- The stern letter was likely delivered by Titus (2 Cor 7:6-8) who eventually meets up with Paul and tells him that things are better; that led to the writing of the 4<sup>th</sup> letter, our 2 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

- Paul is referring to that specific collection for the Jerusalem saints who were in need.
- Paul mentions that he's been collecting from other places as well; he gave the same instructions to the Christians in Galatia on how they could add their gift
- Paul thus instructs Corinth: (KJV) "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store;" (NASB) "Let each one of you put aside and save."
- Paul would one day arrive and would then collect their gift and send or take it to Jerusalem.

Question: Did they immediately set out to diligently do what Paul said here to do?

- Go back to 2 Corinthians 8:7 (where we began this lesson)
- "See that you abound in this gracious work also." There seems to be some concern by Paul...
- He spends all of chapter 8 and 9 reminding them of the need of the Jerusalem saints and their need to participate in this opportunity to give
- It was a year before (thereabouts) that he had written 1 Corinthians, then he went to Corinth to try to help fix some things, and it's evident that he left without a gift at that time, and now he's writing again to them about the need to give
- Surely they started out with good intentions, but Paul appears to be concerned that there might be some reluctance in them
- Things have likely improved in the congregation, but it wasn't too long before this that the church was divisiveness towards each other, they sued each other; they were selfish and wouldn't share when they ate together
- Maybe Paul knows or suspects that there remained some lingering selfishness that was standing in the way of their truly giving as they should

What is Paul's strategy to motivate them to give?

1. 8:9 Reminds them of how giving God has been to them (also 9:15).
2. 8:10-11 "You said you were going to do this, so you need to follow through with it."
3. 8:12-15 Reminds them that purpose is not make Jerusalem saints rich and them poor, but simply to bring about some equality so that those who have so little will not lack altogether (Acts 2:44; 4:32).

4. 8:16-23 Assures them that their gift and the gifts of others are in good hands; Titus had worked with Paul in this effort, and together they had made sure that the details of the gatherings were made public
5. 8:24-9:5 Puts them on the spot by saying that he has been boasting about their liberality
6. 9:6-11 Those who give liberally will themselves be blessed liberally.
7. 9:12-14 Others will thank and praise God for their gift to them.

All these things Paul said to motivate them; but notice one thing that Paul did not do:

- Look at v8 (v7 had said...)
- Referring back to what was originally mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4
- Paul had not actually commanded that they had to participate in this particular contribution.
- Again, there is no doubt but that we as Christians are commanded to be giving people.
- But there is no specific law (as there was in the OT) as to precisely how and in what manner we have to give.

There had been no law demanding that every Christian...

- ... in Jerusalem share their property equally with other Christians as we saw in Acts 2;
- ... sell their land and houses and give the money to the apostles as we saw in Acts 4;
- ... in Macedonia had to give to the collection Paul was taking for the poor in Jerusalem (remember in 2 Corinthians 8:4 that they begged to be included);
- ... in Corinth had to give to this particular cause.

They should have; there was certainly a need. But despite what we've often heard said, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 was not an absolute command laid upon all Christians for all time. It was Paul's instructions for those who were intending to give to the poor in Jerusalem on how they were to save their money so that it would be ready when Paul came to get it.

Paul's plea with them to give in 2 Corinthians 8-9 is not based upon a command of law. He said, "I'm not commanding you to do this; you don't have to participate in this special contribution for Jerusalem. But... you said you were going to do it, and they really need it, and now it's time to prove the sincerity of the love that ought to be in you."

Let me be clear:

- Yes we have to give, but it's not because of what Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
- It's because of all the many, many other passages that teach that we as Christians are to be giving people. (God's law of love instilled in the heart will produce much more generous giving...)

### ***"Lay by Him in Store"***

1 Corinthians 16:2 KJV says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store."

- The phrase "by him" is rarely discussed in regards to this passage.
- It is from the Greek term *par eauto*/1438, which literally means, "by himself". Thayer's Lexicon says it means in this verse, "by him i.e., at his home." (as opposed to with a group)
- In fact, this same Greek phrase is rendered thusly in John 20:10: "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." Also Luke 24:12 in NASB, "he went away to his home..."
- Furthermore, the phrase "in store" is from the Greek word *thesaurizo*/2344. Thayer says it means "to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up: to accumulate riches,"
- We have traditionally interpreted this passage to refer to a weekly contribution to a church treasury
- And the phrase, "no collections made when I come" would seem to indicate a common treasury
- But there are a lot of scholars who say that the Greek language indicates that Paul was talking about something they were to be doing personally at home, not together in an assembly, that Paul meant that each individual should already have their collection ready at home to bring to him when he arrived.
- In 2 Corinthians 9:5, Paul would send people to "arrange" the gift; from Greek *prokatartizo*/2675, meaning "to mend, complete" as found in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "perfectly joined together" (KJV).

- Question is asked, why was the first day of the week designated if no church treasury was intended?
- Perhaps the first of the week was the best time for the people to set some money aside because later in the week it would be spent (many paid on Friday have no money left on Monday).

Consider these quotes from two commentaries... First, many are interested in the early Greek fathers, and their interpretation of various passages. These are the words of John Chrysostom (about 375 A.D.) in his *Forty-third Homily on First Corinthians*:

He said not, "let him bring it into the church," lest they might feel ashamed because of the smallness of the sum; but having by gradual additions swelled his contribution, let him then produce it, when I am come, but for the present lay it up, saith he, at home, and make thine house a church, thy little box a treasury. Become a guardian of sacred wealth, a self-ordained steward of the poor. Thy benevolent mind assigns thee to this priesthood.

An opposing view is expressed by Charles Hodge, in his *Commentary on First Corinthians*; he says:

Every one was to lay by himself, i.e., most modern commentators say at home, *par eauto*. Compare *pros eauto* in Luke 24:12; see also John 20:10. The direction then is that every one would lay aside at home whatever he was able to give, thus treasuring up his contributions. To this interpretation it may be objected that the whole expression is thus obscure and awkward. 'Let every one at home place, treasuring up what he has to give.' The words do not mean to lay by at home, but to lay by himself, i.e., let him take to himself what he means to give. What he was to do with it, or where he was to deposit it, is not expressed. The word *thesaurizo* means putting into the treasury or hoarding up, and is perfectly consistent with the assumption that the place of deposit was some common treasury and not every man's house. If Paul directed this money to be laid up *at home*, why was the first day of the week selected? It is evident that the first day must have offered some special facility for doing what is here enjoined. The only reason that can be assigned for requiring the thing to be done on the first day of the week, is, that on that day the Christians were accustomed to meet, and what each one laid aside from his daily gains could be treasured up, i.e., put into the common treasury of the church.

Regardless of whether Paul intended for them to save at home or put it into a common treasury, the general meaning of 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 is that, if they were going to give to the poor in Jerusalem, those in Corinth were to have their gift ready for Paul when he came.

### ***How Should We Give Today?***

While we as Christians are not under a legalistic law that gives us specific details on our giving, again, we are indeed commanded to be giving people, and thus we ought to look for opportunities to give.

#### *1. We should give to the work of the church.*

- Even though it is not really a specific command, it is our custom to follow a procedure that is perhaps similar to the example of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
- Most congregations take up an offering every week, and they have committed to certain needs and works that are intended to be a blessing to the church members and to people of the community and all around the world.
- And, just as those in Corinth were urged to follow through with what they had promised to do, so also we need to give what we have promised to give.
- 2 Corinthians 9:7a "Let each one give as he has purposed in his heart." (planned giving is good)

#### *2. Not only should we give to the church, but we should also give to other needs and good works.*

- If we are to be more like those early Christians, then we will also look for opportunities to give on a more individual and personal basis.
- They did not just put money in a collection plate and think they had fulfilled their duty to be giving people; when they saw people in need, they gave.

- We also fulfill our obligation to be giving when we give to a family who is in need, or when we support a worthy cause, etc.
- 2 Timothy 1:16-18 Onesiphorus went looking for Paul to see if he was in need. We too need to look for those in need so that we might be a blessing to them.
- Some have suggested that it might be better to always give to the church treasury so that, when money is given out of that treasury, the glory might go to the church from which it came. Perhaps so, but in addition to our giving to the church treasury, we also need to give personally to any and every need we see so that the glory might go to Christ (2 Corinthians 9:13).
- Also consider Mark 7:9-13. Surely we're not like that, but neither should we always excuse ourselves from giving personally to good works and to those in need because we've already given to the church
- If we gave more in the manner as did the early Christians (not to a church treasury, but personally to those in need), then we might not have as much money in the church treasury to spend on nice buildings and paid preachers, but we'd probably look a whole lot more like the 1<sup>st</sup> century church!

3. *We should give without looking for praise or credit.*

Matthew 6:1-4

In his commentary, Matthew Henry said:

What was the *practice of the hypocrites* about this duty? They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glory; not in compassion to the poor, but purely for ostentation, that they might be extolled as good men, and so might gain an interest in the esteem of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave.

Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms *in the synagogues, and in the streets*, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. [quote continued on next page]

Not that it is unlawful to give alms *when men see us*; we may do it; but not *that men may see us*; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms to their own houses, *sounded a trumpet*, under pretence of calling the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.”

Mark 12:41-44 Remember those that gave large amounts, presumably to be noticed; the widow who gave her two small coins surely received no praise or credit from others.

Poem called “I Wonder” by Ruth Harms Calkin

You know, Lord, how I serve You / With great emotional fervor / In the limelight.  
 You know how eagerly I speak for You / At a women's club.  
 You know how I effervesce when I promote / A fellowship group.  
 You know my genuine enthusiasm / At a Bible study.

But how would I react, I wonder / If You pointed to a basin of water  
 And asked me to wash the calloused feet / Of a bent and wrinkled old woman  
 Day after day / Month after month  
 In a room where nobody saw / And nobody knew.



4. *We should give as generously as possible.*

- 2 Corinthians 9:6ff
- We should give enough that God would consider it to be liberal!
- And how much is liberal? That's for each one of us to decide... after long and intense prayer to God, and after long and intense searching deep within the heart

Give as you would if an angel awaited your gift at the door.

Give as you would if tomorrow found your giving here all o'er.

Give as you would to the Master if you met His loving look.

Give as you would of your substance if His hand the offering took.

### ***The Joy of Giving***

Acts 20: 33-35 (near end of Paul's 3rd missionary journey, called for elders from Ephesus to meet him)

- Sometimes preachers use words like duty, obedience, love, stewardship in an effort to inspire greater giving; sometimes they talk about the evils of the love of money, and they list all the good works that need to be done
- All that is fine, but Paul gave a different reason to give: he went back to the example and the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
- Some of the happiest people in the world are parents and grandparents who love to give to their kids and grandkids
- Happy people are not those who have a great deal, but rather happy people are those who give a great deal!

Remember where else we see Jesus using the word "blessed?" Back in the beatitudes in His sermon on the mount, recorded in Matthew chapter 5. Remember what the word "blessed" really means? It's from the Greek word *makarios*/3107, meaning "blessed, happy!"

2 Corinthians 9:7 "God loves a cheerful giver." The word cheerful is from Greek word *hilaros*/2431, from which we get the word hilarious. That's when you're just beside yourself with joy and happiness! Our Lord wants us to learn that we will be a lot happier when we give than when we receive!

Mark 10:17-22 Jesus said: You've got to start giving, but the rich young ruler was more concerned with having!

Luke 12:16-21 The rich farmer thought he would be happy because he had a great deal of wealth, but Jesus knew better. Jesus knew the only way for him (and anyone) to be truly happy was to start giving.

Luke 12:15 (Jesus gives the reason for telling this parable)

Happiness comes, true joy comes when one is freed from his slavery to things, when one realizes that joy is not found in having or receiving, but it is found in giving!

### ***Give and It Will Be Given to You***

Luke 6:38 One who gives generously is not going to run out!

Matthew 6:25-34 God promises to take care of us; we are of great value to Him!

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 God will not let you run out!

The Bible promises us over and over again that when we learn to be more giving, our Lord will truly be giving to us. He promises us that we will be richly blessed!

- Remember these words of Romans 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"
- Solomon in Proverbs 11:25, (KJV) "The liberal soul shall be made fat..." (NASB) "The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered."
- Proverbs 22:9, "He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor."



Malachi 3:10 (God says to Israel), "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." The KJV renders that last part, "...that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

We've got to learn to trust God with our investment to Him and to others.

- Giving is indeed the very heart of Christianity!
- Giving is what Christianity is all about!
- And abundant giving is the key to abundant living!
- As we strive to grow in Christ, may God help us to abound in this grace also.

### ***Where is Your Heart?***

Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

There was once a man who found himself in the position of doing a biography of a man who had since passed away. He set out trying to learn all that he could about the man, but even after talking to all sorts of people, he still felt that he hadn't quite grasped the man's true character. But then one day he found the man's old check stubs; there he found what he was really looking for, because there he found the things that really meant the most to that man.

Maybe from time to time we need to do the same thing...

- Get out checkbook register sometime and look at where your treasure is
- Look at those things that are apparently so very important to you
- Is it your car, your house?
- Is it perhaps some hobby or recreation?
- Is it some kind of entertainment?
- Probably a lot of us would find that a great deal of our treasure is going to Wal-Mart

Seriously, these things are not wrong in and of themselves, but we might find that a lot of our money is going for things that really aren't that important compared with spiritual things. How much of our money is going to God? To the work of God? And to other good works? Are we truly laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven?

Have you really given your heart to God? Someday every one of us will stand before God on the Day of Judgement. And some of us may have a hard time explaining how we spent so much on ourselves and so little on God and others. May God help all of us to grow in the grace of giving.