

Grace Produces Generosity



Grace (Part 14)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to explore together the riches of our theme Grace. In my previous talks this week I've been sharing with you how grace operates in our lives. I said, first of all, that grace is a presence, it's something that's with us. It's not just a theological concept or even a legal transaction somewhere up in heaven's court. But it's something that's projected from God right into our lives. The grace of God is with us. Paul said he labored very effectively for the Lord. Then he corrected himself. He said, "It wasn't really I who labored, but the grace of God which was with me." So we need to think about grace in terms of something invisible, intangible that is with us. It changes the atmosphere around us. It's like a shield, an invisible shield that encompasses us. It's also like a cloud of blessing that overshadows us.

And then I said that grace teaches. That's something that many Christians haven't really grasped. Grace teaches us. Not like law. Law teaches from without with commandments that we're unable to obey. But grace comes within and begins to change us. As we change and respond to grace, then grace begins to teach us how we ought to live as believers.

And thirdly I said yesterday that grace produces thankfulness. In fact, in the original language they are basically the same word. A person in the grace of God will always be a thankful person. And a person who is unthankful is, at that moment at least, out of the grace of God.

And then I ended by saying that grace to our speech is like salt to our food. We sprinkle it on our lips and it makes us flavorful, attractive. Other people want what we're talking about.

Today I'm going to share with you another beautiful manifestation of God's grace, generosity. Again we turn to Jesus as the pattern, because you remember that when Jesus comes into our lives the grace of God comes with Him. And it's grace for grace. For every grace in Jesus, there's a corresponding grace that's manifested in us through Jesus being in us. And this grace of generosity finds its perfect expression in Jesus.

I'm going to turn for some examples now to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. This chapter 8 of 2 Corinthians deals with an offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem and in Israel which was being taken up among the churches in the Gentile world through the instrumentality of the ministry of Paul. And Paul is writing to these believers in Corinth and telling them the principle of the offering, and the more general principles of giving for God generally. And so he focuses on the nature and the grace of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 8:9:

> "For 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." (NIV)

Notice, it's grace. What did grace cause Jesus to do? It caused Him to lay aside His infinite wealth and become poor on our behalf. But the motive was that through His poverty, we might become rich. So grace makes you a giver. A person who doesn't enjoy giving really hasn't got much of the grace of God. And Paul goes on to speak about how this attitude that enjoys giving will be produced by the grace of God in us as believers. In the same chapter, 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, he says this:

> "And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability."

Let's look at those words. First of all we need to see that the generosity of the Macedonian believers was an expression of grace. Paul speaks about the "grace that God gave those churches" which was expressed in the way they gave. And then we need to note that they didn't give out of abundance. It says that they were under sever trial themselves. And their condition was one of extreme poverty. Yet out of all that the grace of God welled up through them in rich generosity. You see, grace never is limited to what we thing we can do. When you've thought it all out and worked out what you think you might be able to give, you haven't touched the grace of God. Because the grace of God goes a lot further than that.

Paul says this exactly. He says, "I testify that they gave as much as they were able. That's their own ability. And even beyond their ability." That's where grace began. Grace always begins when we've reached the limit of our own ability.

And then Paul applies this principle and this example of the Macedonian churches to the church of Corinth. And he says in verses 6 and 7 of that chapter:

> "So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. [What was the act of grace? The giving of this offering for the needy believers in Jerusalem. So giving is an act of grace. It's a practical expression of grace in our lives. And Paul exhorts them…] But just as you excel in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us, see that you also excel in this grace of giving." (NIV)

Paul says the grace of God is already manifested in many areas of your life. It's manifested in your faith. It's manifested in your speech. We've spoken about that. It's manifested in knowledge, in earnestness, in love. But he says don't let this aspect of the grace of God be missing. See that you excel also in this grace of giving. And then in the next chapter, 2 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul goes on to show us that the grace of God will provide both the motivation and the means for giving. There's a beautiful verse there, 2 Corinthians 9:8-9:

> "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, [notice it's 'grace'] so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. [Notice grace makes total provision for all our needs. And it's grace. But it's not just that we may have enough for ourselves, it's that we may overflow to good to give. And then he quotes a verse from Psalm 112 in the Old Testament as an example of this principle of how grace operates in giving. He quotes Psalm 112 which is speaking about the righteous man and it says…] As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.'"

You notice that our righteousness is established, it's made permanent and unshakable as we give. This man pictured in Psalm 112 had scattered abroad his gifts to the poor. He'd given lavishly, generously in grace. And the assurance was, "his righteousness endures forever." Remember that. The grace of giving establishes our righteousness.

Jesus Himself establishes a principle in relationship to grace that we need to see. In Matthew chapter 10 verses 7 and 8 as He sends out the apostles for the first time with the message

of the gospel. He says this:

> "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." (NIV)

Now He's talking about the ability that He's given to them to minister - to drive out demons to heal the sick. He says, "It didn't cost you anything. You didn't have to pay for it. You received it out of the grace of God as a free gift. Minister it the same way you receive it. Freely you have received, freely give." That applies in every area. Whatever we receive freely from God, we have to give as freely as we have received. We cannot minister God's grace in a different way to that in which we received it.

Again Jesus says in Luke 6:38:

> "Give, and it will be given to you. a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (NIV)

Again, giving is the key to receiving. With the measure we give with, it will be measured back to us. And we'll get back more than we gave. But it will be in proportion to the way that we gave. You see, there are two seas in the Holy Land, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. They're approximately the same size, they're both fed from the same river. But there's a great difference. The Sea of Galilee is fresh, beautiful, it's full of life. The Dead Sea is just as its name implies, it's totally dead. What's the difference? They both receive from the same river, but the Sea of Galilee gives out, the Dead Sea gives nothing out. It receives but doesn't give. The key to life is receiving and giving. The way to death is receiving but not giving.

Let me close with two verses from Proverbs 11:24-25:

> "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (NIV)

So let me offer this counsel to you as you face this New Year. Practice giving. Make a resolution to be generous. Don't be stingy. Don't hold on and say, "I may not get anymore." The measure you give with will be the measure that you receive with. So make up your mind as you face the New Year the grace of giving is going to be in operation in your life.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time sharing another aspect of God's amazing grace.

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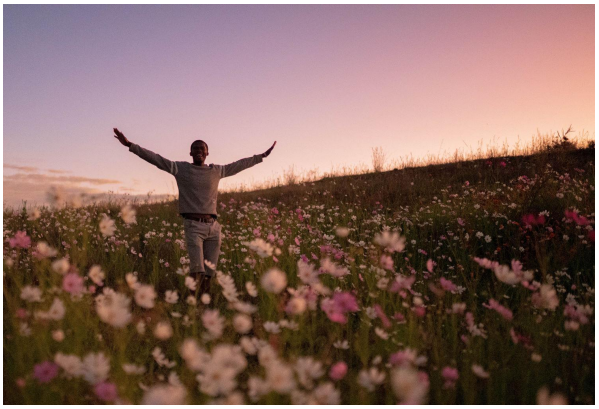
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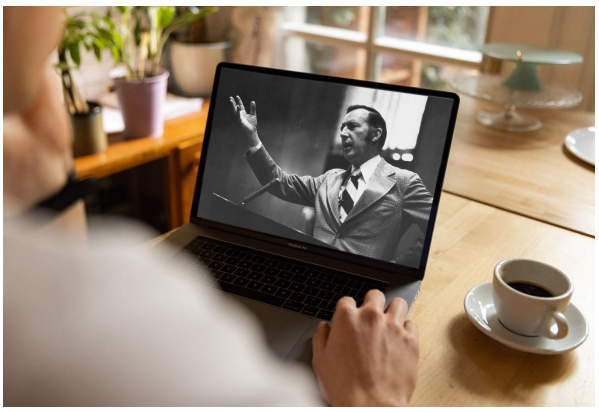
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