

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Have you ever dreamed of what you'd do if suddenly you struck it rich? At some time or another, I think most people have thought about this. What if today suddenly \$50 million after tax dollars became your personal possession. What would you do with it? Can you imagine the facility we could build here with just 10% of that amount? Wouldn't that be awesome? Maybe you'd buy your family and relatives many things that they've had to do without. Maybe you'd even buy a car or house for your parents, or your children. You could really do A LOT with \$50 million, couldn't you? With that kind of money, you would be able to be way more generous than you are now, right?

Now stop right there. And think about that question a little harder. If you had more money, could you really be *more generous* than you are right now? There's no doubt you could give much more money to your church and those in need. But that's not what I said. Would having more money enable you to be more generous? Friend, the answer may surprise you. The answer is: no.

Generosity is simply readiness and liberality in giving. Generosity has nothing to do with amount given. Let's expand on this thought. There are two main truths I'd like you take home today. First is this: you can stop waiting to "strike it rich." Because you already have. And second, let's ask God to give each one of us today a generous heart that gives to others readily and liberally.

Listen again to our text in 2 Corinthians 9:8-11. Before we read it, though, let me give you a little background. The Christian church can really trace her origins back to Jerusalem. It was the main city in Palestine, even if it was under Roman rule. As you know, Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead in Jerusalem. Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit and the conversion of 3,000 in one day, took place in Jerusalem. Only when persecution began in Jerusalem did the Christian faith begin to spread rapidly throughout the ancient world.

Churches were springing up all over the place throughout the ancient Roman empire. But the church in Jerusalem still suffered. The people there lived in abject poverty. One reason for that poverty was a famine, talked about in Acts 11. Another reason for the poverty was a continuing, relentless persecution. The apostle Paul's heart ached for the believers in Jerusalem. He desperately wanted to help them. But he couldn't do it alone. So he asked the churches throughout the Roman Empire to collect an offering – a gift he could then take to the poor believers in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 we hear the apostle Paul appealing to the church in Corinth to give generously to help out their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem.

Listen now, to what Paul says in chapter 9, beginning at verse 7:

2 Corinthians 9:7-11 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 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. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Why do you suppose we are sometimes not generous with others? I think most of it stems from two mistakes in our thinking. 1) We think: all that I have is mine. I worked for it. I earned it. Or it was a gift given to me. IT'S MINE! Now, I love God so I do give a portion of what is MINE back to God, but don't expect me to give away what is mine. What's yours is yours and what's mine is mine!

What's wrong with this sort of thinking? Well, aside from sounding like a three year old, the truth is nothing is really ours. God tells us, "The earth is mine and everything in it." Everything belongs to God! Is your money on this earth? Then it's God's! Is your car? Your house? Your clothes? Your retirement account... on this earth? Then it belongs to the Lord.

According to our sinful nature, we like to think we have all authority over our stuff. Because it's mine. But it's not. It's God. Everything is his. So when we give an offering, we shouldn't think this way: "Here's \$1,000 dollars from my paycheck. \$100 belongs to God. \$900 belongs to me." That's wrong. All \$1,000 belongs to God! Now I'm not saying give the whole some to church, because God has told you that you should use it for other purposes as well. But it's still his.

So that first mistake in our thinking is forgetting that everything we have actually belongs to God. The second mistake is like it, and that is we forget where everything comes from and what it is to be used for. We get very near sighted and too tightly focused. I work, I get paid. I then pay my bills. I work, I get paid. I pay my bills. My money comes from my employer, and occasionally gifts and very rarely from an inheritance. And what is it for? It's for meeting my obligations and expenses and sometimes having a little fun.

Wrong. We're not looking at the big picture. We're looking at immediate income and immediate expenses without backing up and seeing the whole picture. God is the giver of all that we have. God gives us our ability to work. He gave the conditions in this world that our work is needed. God is the one supplying us with all that we receive.

This point is made clear in our text. **God is able to make all grace abound to you.** "Grace" is God's undeserved kindness toward you. Typically, when we talk about grace, we talk about the greatest way God showed undeserved kindness to us. To us rebellious, disobedient people, God sent a Savior from rebellion and disobedience, the Lord Jesus Christ. And while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The righteous for the unrighteous. So that we could have our guilt removed, be holy in God's sight and enjoy eternity with him. That's grace, isn't it? It's God's undeserved favor, kindness and love for us sinners.

But while that is the most important aspect of God's grace, that's certainly not all inclusive! God's grace is also evident in the morning sunrise. What undeserved kindness! Why did he cause the sun to shine on me another day? Grace. His grace is evident in the harvest. And in the shelter you enjoy every night. And in the food on your plate multiple times each day. Why do we have anything? GRACE. You have a paycheck and a car and shelter and clothing, because of God's underserved kindness for us sinners. Where does our stuff come from? It comes from God! **"God is able to make all grace abound to you."** Overflowing generosity from God... that's what we experience everyday. All that we have both physical and spiritual is from God's grace abounding to us.

And where is our money going? What do we use it for? We have to narrow a view if we answer, "We use it for food and shelter and gas and the like." Our text says: **And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**" God's purpose in giving you stuff is ultimately this: that you

might abound, that is, overflow, in every good work. Under what circumstances does God want you to overflow with good works? In every thing... every circumstance! When would he like to see those good works? At ALL times! Might you be lacking in something so your unable to do those good works? Impossible! "Having all that you need!" And all this so you can do some good works and not others. No. "you will abound in every good work."

God has blessed you beyond measure... spiritually speaking you have full removal of your guilt. Your sin debt was paid in full by the Lord Jesus Christ. You are God's own child. You have an eternal inheritance that belongs to you. God's throne room is open to you 24 – 7, and you are welcome in at any moment to talk to the king of the universe. God has held nothing back. Why? So that you might super abound and overflow in good works.

And God has blessed you beyond measure physically also. Life, health, your possessions, your family, your church, your nation. You've got it good. God has not held back his physical possessions either. Why? So that you might super abound and overflow in good works. **"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. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."**

And now we see the end goal in all this. The narrow view: I work. I get paid. I spend. The godly view. God entrusts to me. I use it wisely to his honor and glory. The end result is thanksgiving to God and praise to his holy name. All that I am all that I have, all that I do is not from me or to me or for me. It is from him and to him and for him.

When we keep God in the picture and his grace to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, our life takes on new meaning. God pours out blessing on us, and we are not reservoirs that simply collect and hoard those blessings, We are channels that direct the blessings we receive such that we can be a blessing to others. When we receive from God, we don't ask, "How can I use this for me?" We ask, "How can I use this for God? How can I use this so others will be moved to give thanksgiving and praise to the only true God... the God who loved me and saved me and gave his Son for me?" Our possessions are God's stuff entrusted to us for a limited time to be used for a specific purpose: To give honor and glory to the one to whom they really belong.

And here's the truly amazing thing about all this. God has been generous with you and as you are generous to others, you can't become more generous to God. It can never happen that you will say, "I was too generous, and now I have to be less generous because I've run out of resources. Can't give what I don't have." Because God promises that his grace and his generosity will always meet your needs so you can be generous with others so that God can be thanked and praised! As Paul said, **"You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion."**

Friends, you have struck it rich. I really mean that. We have been drenched in a down pour of God's grace. The banks are overflowing with his gifts and goodness. Let us be generous even as God was generous with us. From God, to God for God. It's all about him, not about us. Let's go to God in prayer:

"Lord, we depend on you for everything in life - body and soul. We acknowledge that you are the giver of all things, and all belongs to you. Lord, help us keep a godly perspective as we live our daily lives. Help us be good managers of what you have entrusted to our care. Abounding in your grace, in all things at all times, having all that we need, help us to overflow in every good work, to the glory and honor of your saving name. Amen."