

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.⁹ As it is written:

**“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”**

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. (NIV84)

Theme: God’s Grace Abounds in Us

1. In our giving to others
2. In our giving to Christ.

There are some topics that some people just don’t want to talk about. Our topic today is typically one of them. Many Christians don’t want to talk about money—at least not at Church. Sure, they will talk about money elsewhere—mostly they might complain about not having enough money. They might brag about all the things they spent their money on. Or perhaps they will talk to someone about the best way to invest their money. But for some reason, people get a little uncomfortable when we start talking about money at the Church. Perhaps it is because some claim that the only thing the Church cares about is money. And they are afraid of turning people away from the Church, so they try to avoid the topic all together.

Yet it is necessary to talk about this subject because it is God’s will for us as Christians. And it is a way we can give thanks to God for all he has done for us. So we as Christians will want to learn what God says about our use of our money and strive to obey him. We give because Christ first gave to us. And he not only gives but also through us. Today we see that God’s grace abounds in us when we give to others and when we give back to him.

About a year before he wrote this second letter to the congregation in Corinth, Paul decided to gather up a collection for the poor Christians

in Jerusalem. The Corinthians loved the idea and jumped at the opportunity. They started giving toward this fund. And they promised to give even more. When Paul wrote this letter he was about to return in Jerusalem. And he wanted to take the offering and give it to the poor. So he sent Titus and others to Corinth to pick up the offering they had promised. And through the gospel he encouraged and motivated them to willingly give to

Do we follow the lead of the Corinthians? We may not all the time. We are often hesitant to help out others who are in need. And we have various reasons for that—some may be legit, and others not. There are many people who don’t have anything because they waste it all through drugs and the like. So we may not give to someone because we are afraid they will abuse it. But not everyone is in need because of their own sins. And they suffer because we refuse to help them out as we lump them together with others.

May we don’t give to others simply because it’s not their money. It’s your money, right. You worked hard for it. You earned it, you saved it, you invested wisely. Why should you take your money and simply give it to someone else. They didn’t do anything to deserve it. It is your money and you can do with it as you please. But John tells us in chapter three of his first letter, **If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?** When it comes down to it, we often don’t give to others because we are so concerned about money and other material possessions. We become sucked in to this materialistic world and we act as if worldly possessions are all that matters to us. We become so focused on the things of this world that we forget about is truly important—Christ, and we end up keeping our money for ourselves.

And the thing is, it’s not really your money. God is the one who gave you all your possessions, including all your money. James tells us **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.** Everything we own—our possessions, our money, our gifts, our abilities come from God. He gives them to us for a time. He just let’s us take care of them and enjoy them for

awhile. When we realize that what we have is just a loan from God, we don't have a problem sharing with those in need.

God has certainly let us borrow a lot. Paul is talking about God in verse 10 of our text when he says, **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.** Just as God gives the farmer enough seed to plant his crops, so he supplies us with enough. No one here has starved to death, or gone without clothes, or hasn't had a place to sleep for an extended period of time. God always takes care of his physically. He has even blessed us with so much that we are able to buy things that we don't need to live. We are all able to afford countless items for entertainment, communication, or transportation, and so on. And God promises that he will continue to bless us and enlarge the gifts he gives us.

God richly gives to us so that he can richly give to others. For some people aren't blessed with everything that we have. So God expects us to use the gifts he has given us to give to those in need. And moved by God's grace for us, we can't help but give to others. In verse 9 of our text, Paul quotes from Psalm 112—a psalm about the believer's reaction to God's grace. So Paul is talking the believer when he says, **He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.** In his grace, Christ has made us holy before God. And so we are motivated to give to those in need.

Paul says in verse eight, **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 is the one who works in us to give to others. He leads us to understand that he has given us all we need. The grace that God has shown us, reveals itself in how we deal with others. His grace abounds, it thrives, it overflows through us to others. God works through his grace to motivate us to give. So we give to others, not simply because they are in need. Not because it makes us feel good. But because God's grace lives through us.

Of course, we not only give our money to those in need, we also give back to Christ.

The Corinthians wanted to share their wealth with others so that they could share the love of Christ. It didn't matter to them how much they had or didn't have. For them, they were rich through faith in Christ. They understood that material blessings aren't as important as spiritual blessings. So they gave up some material wealth to show the love of Christ to others

When we give to others we are showing them the love of Christ. And that might open up a path to better share the gospel with them. But that is not the only way we are able to spread the gospel through our gifts. Our offerings support the work of the Church. They go to share the gospel. So that we can hear Christ-centered sermons, study the Bible in Bible class, teach our children through Sunday School, VBS, BASIC and the like. Our offerings go to spread the gospel through the community so others may hear about the Lord. They support the work of the synod, which prepares young men and women for the gospel ministry. Through our offerings we send missionaries through out the world to share the love of Christ to those who do not know him.

And yet, we may hesitate to give back to Christ through our offerings. Oh, for the most part we give—when things are going well anyway. But what about the times when things aren't going so well? From where do you cut first, from your offerings, or from yourself? It seems when times are tough we may not be cutting our cable, getting rid of our cell phone, or stop eating out as much. Instead, Christ and his house suffer. Or perhaps you give a set amount each week. But how much is that amount? Do you spend more on fast food each day than you give in your offerings for the week? We have the tendency to put ourselves and our wants first. And when we are all taken care of, then we support the work of the gospel. Christ, it seems, may be getting the leftovers at times.

Perhaps you give a lot each week. But your not exactly happy about giving that much. But you feel forced into it, somehow. Perhaps you give only because it's expected of you. That God or someone else will look down on you if you don't. Or maybe you don't want to look bad to the other person sitting in the pew with you. You may give a lot on the outside, but it is only outward giving, your heart is not in it—and God is not pleased with you at all. We don't give much, or we may give a lot and not be happy about it because we care too much about material possessions. We think that what we have in this world is

more important than the life to come. We get so focused on the things of this world that we lose sight of Christ.

He gave up everything for you. He gave up the riches of heaven to live in this sin-filled world as a helpless human being. He lived a perfect life that you could not. And he let himself suffer and die on the cross so that he could take away the guilt of all our sins on the cross. He was forsaken by his Father and suffered through the pain and agony of hell so we wouldn't have to. Then he rose from the dead so that we too can rise from the dead. And through faith in him, we will join him in heaven forever. Christ gave everything up, including his life, so that we could have it all, including eternal life. This is what Paul says in chapter eight of 2 Corinthians. **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.**

And that is all the motivation we need. Because God has been so gracious in giving to us, we want to give back to him. When we give back to Christ we are praising and thanking him. We are showing how much we love him and appreciate all the gifts he gives us—both physical and spiritual. We ask ourselves—how can I show love and thanks to my God through my offerings? If we could, we all would answer that we would give all of it back to Christ.

So we willingly give back to him. We give to him first. And we give to him our best. And after we have thanked God for everything that he has done, then we give to others and finally ourselves. So when we sit down and figure out our budget, we first take a portion of our income and set aside for Christ. For the material doesn't matter when it comes to the spiritual.

And we do this willingly and cheerfully. Christ suffered and died for us! And know his grace abounds in us as we give back to him. As Paul tells us the verse before our text, **Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** God doesn't command that we give a certain amount. And he doesn't force us into giving to him. Rather we take a look at our lives, we look at the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life that Christ won for us, and we willingly and cheerfully give back to him. And we give to Christ to show our love

for him. We show him how much his life and death means for us. We give because he gave us a priceless gift of salvation.

As Christians, there is no reason to be afraid of talking about money. For through our gifts we give thanks to Christ for everything he has given and done for us. When we think about the rich blessings that he gives us we can't help but generously give back to him. For his grace abounds in us. Amen.