

God Makes All Grace Abound to You!

2 Corinthians 9:8–11 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.

In the name of Him who came not to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many, dear fellow redeemed.

Parents, do you remember your child’s first word? Maybe she said “Mama” or “Daddy.” Remember how thrilled you were and how you coaxed her to say it again and again for anyone who would listen. “She said “Daddy!” You heard it right? It was a proud moment. Soon she was saying all sorts of things. But not everything she said made you proud. Do you remember the first time your daughter grabbed a toy from another child’s grasp and shouted, “Mine!” That word filled you with a sense of shame and some anger as you wondered aloud: “Where did she learn that?”

Truth be told, she got it from you. She got all her sin from you in the form of a sinful nature that has been passed along from parent to child ever since Adam and Eve ruined the whole human race when they rebelled against God in Eden. Yes, we can trace our sin back to its origin, but the question remains: What should we do about it? What do you with a child whose being selfish? I know what my parents did. They ripped from my greedy little hands whatever toy I had claimed as my own and then sent me off to my punishment.

We might expect God to do the same to us. But he doesn’t. Rather than punishing us as our sins deserve, instead of taking everything away from us greedy little sinners, he gives us more than we could ever ask or imagine. As St. Paul says: God Makes All Grace Abound to You! 1) He enriches you in every way; 2) So you can be generous on every occasion.

Somewhere along line we probably learned to stop grabbing things from others while yelling “Mine!” We’ve probably learned to put a lid on many of our childish behaviors. But if we think for a moment that by doing so we’ve learned to put sin behind us, we’re dead wrong. A quick poll of those closest to us may prove enlightening. Would your family and friends say you’re generous with your time, devoting much of it to others? Or would they say you tend to look after Number 1 first and foremost? Would they say that you’re generous with your money, picking up the tab at the restaurant and purchasing nice gifts. Do they know you as someone who makes generous donations to charities? Or do you have the reputation of being a tightwad? As we mentioned, all of us, by reason of our sinful nature, are selfish and self-centered. Fear convinces us that if we don’t take care of ourselves, no one will. If we don’t get and keep plenty of money, we’ll run out and then have to go without all the stuff we need and want. It all blurs together doesn’t it – greed, fear, and worry? These sinful attitudes drive so much of who we are and what we do. These are dangerous sins because they threaten to erode and destroy God’s gift of saving faith.

Faith takes God at his Word. It’s built on his promises. More than that, faith is created by God’s promises. So what does God do when we sinners doubt him? He renews his promises as he does throughout the verse of our text. He inspires the Apostle Paul to remind us that **God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need...** (verse 8). Why doubt and fear? God is always taking care of you! He’s always supplying your

needs. You never have to worry. But if you still find yourself doubting, see verse 10: **Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed...** God is not a miser. He sees to it that the farmer not only has enough seed to produce the food he needs, but from that seed will come even more seed for even more food in the future – an ever-increasing supply! Think about that. God teaches us to pray and so depend on him for our daily bread. But we should never imagine that heaven's store houses run empty every night and must be restocked in time for the next day's shipment. God has a lifetime of blessings in store for each of us and will deliver them right on schedule so that **You will be made rich in every way... (verse 11).**

We take this promise of our gracious God at face value. He will enrich us in every way with blessings for body and soul. Does this mean we will all be billionaires? Hardly. But tell me, who is richer than the person who has and lives by God's promise to provide for every need. A fortune can be lost in seconds. But God's promise never fails.

Do you believe that? Like me, I'm sure you want to believe. But maybe, like me, your eyes are drawn to something that Paul writes in the very first sentence of our text. He points out that "God is able to make all grace abound..." In other words, this is something the Almighty can do. Of course he can, but does he want to? More specifically, does he want to do this for me? Lord knows I haven't given him any reason to. You haven't either. But then again, that's what grace is all about. It's love we can't earn and don't deserve. It's love that God shows, not because of what we do or who we are, but because of who he is. **"God is love"** (1 John 4:16). He proved it by sacrificing his only Son to save this lost world of sinners. By this sacrifice God demonstrates that there isn't anything he won't do for you and me. Paul zeros in on this truth in Romans 8 when he writes: **"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32). You see! God is able and willing to give us everything.

That's because God's love always has a purpose. He loves us to ransom us from sin and hell so that we can be his forever. That's what he's done in Christ! His saving love has changed our status from that of condemned sinners to rescued saints. This is how God knows and sees us. At the same time, God's love works a change inside of us. His love for us is constantly reshaping the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. In fact, you might say that through the sacrament of Baptism, God has performed a heart transplant in us. This is how God himself describes his saving work: **"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."** (Ezekiel 11:19).

This new heart of ours beats with the love of Christ. Like children who learn from and imitate their parents, we learn from and imitate Jesus. This is how we show that we are happy and grateful to belong him. Think of the man we heard about in our gospel reading. As soon as Zacchaeus came to trust Jesus as his Savior from sin, he promised: **"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."** (Luke 19:8). Just like Jesus, Zacchaeus wanted to live and love with a purpose. So do we! Rather than living for ourselves, we believers now want to live for God and so be a blessing to him and others.

The goal is not to make a name for ourselves, but rather to magnify the Name of our Savior God. Again, think of Zacchaeus. His generosity was sure to capture the attention of everyone around him. This once greedy man who had thought only of himself, was now devoting his life to caring for the needs of others. People were bound to ask, "What happened to him?" There was only one answer: "Jesus happened to Zacchaeus." By God's grace, Jesus happened to you and me too. By meeting all our needs in Christ, physical and spiritual, God frees us to spend our lives caring for others. We want to, and we can, because God makes us willing and able. As Paul points out, God makes his grace abound to you, so you can **"...abound in every good work"** (verse 8). He supplies seed to the sower to **"...enlarge the harvest of your righteousness"** (verse 10). Here righteousness refers to the good, the righteous works that flow from the faith God works in you

and me. In fact, in verse 9, Paul speaks to this very point as he quotes from Psalm 112. At first glance, you might think the passage is talking about God. But it actually refers to the Christian, to you when it says: **“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”**

When we live our lives to the glory of God, our kindness and generosity can make an eternal difference in the lives of the people we know and meet. They can learn of God’s love for them in Christ through our Christ-like love. This isn’t accidental. This is intentional. In fact, the word that Paul uses for “generosity” has as its root meaning the idea of “single mindedness.” In other words, the generous nature of Christian giving hasn’t so much to do with the size or amount of the gift, as it does the motive behind it. The Christian doesn’t have an ulterior motive. He’s not giving to get something in return, whether that’s a pat on the back or a favor down the road. The Christian gives so that God alone may be praised as Paul says, **“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.”** (2 Corinthians 9:11). Paul would make sure to tell everyone who would listen that the Christians’ generosity was the work of God’s grace in Jesus and nothing else.

As grateful followers of the Savior, we want the same thing to be true of us and our generosity. We want to be generous with our time, our talents, and our treasures. God gives us all these things and more so that we can be a blessing to our family, our friends, our congregation, and our community. But even as I listen to what Scripture has to say about all of this, I can’t help feeling like a hypocrite. For I must confess that I often misuse God’s gifts for my own selfish purposes rather than for the purpose of holding up Christ as the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And yet not even all my shame has the power to change me. Only one thing can do that for me and you – God’s abounding grace – grace that proclaims us forgiven again today. For rather than disown and damn us, God makes us a promise. He swears by himself that he counts the generous nature of Jesus as our very own. It’s amazing is it not? By faith we lay claim both to Christ’s self-sacrificing love and to the sin payment his love has made for all on Calvary’s cross.

Because of God’s forgiveness in Christ, we have a clean slate today. We will again tomorrow. In this truth we find not an excuse to fail and sin, but gratefulness and power to become more and more like Jesus, curbing every impulse to claim everything “Mine!” and instead, making the most of every opportunity to show everyone that we and all we have belong to him who gave himself for us. Amen.