

2 Corinthians 8:1 ~ "See that ye abound in this grace also"

This portion of Paul's letter was written to the church @ Corinth, that they might learn from the good examples and testimonies of the churches of Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

This was not the first time Paul used "another congregation" to teach the church @ Corinth. In the scriptures we find both good and bad examples in churches in that time, that we might learn what we should and SHOULD NOT BE as a church in our time.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul admonished the church by the "bad example and sins" of the OT children of Israel, AFTER they were delivered/rescued by God through Moses from the cruelty of Pharaoh, and from their long slavery and bondage in Egypt.

In all of God's deliverances and blessings to them, they were unthankful, they murmured and complained against God and the servants of God!

Instead of worshiping and praising God for all His goodness and kindness to them, instead they provoked God and dishonored Him by making idols and bowing down to them! They despised God's goodness to them, and because of all their sins and rebellion against God, many of them were destroyed of the destroyer in the wilderness. The church @ Corinth was already sinning like the OT children of Israel! Paul was teaching them to NOT follow their BAD EXAMPLE! 1 Corinthians 10:5-6,11.

But now, in our text, Paul taught the church at Corinth from the GOOD TESTIMONY and EXAMPLE of the churches of Macedonia.

And that they should FOLLOW/EMULATE the example of these good and faithful churches @ Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

He wanted them to learn from the grace of God bestowed upon them, but especially from what God's grace brought forth in them.

EVERY ONE OF US, should desire (as a church) that God's grace toward us might produce "God magnifying" works IN US and THROUGH US, as God's grace did in the churches of Macedonia!

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8, 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, Philippians 4:10-19

These churches, these brethren were in a time of sore affliction, their faith was being tested and tried, and they were also in a time of deep poverty.

But all these things which seemed to be against them DID NOT STOP them from doing their part to help their brethren and to minister to other churches that were in need. 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

What could they do, they were in the middle of their own trials, and on top of that, they had little to nothing to offer or send?

They did what they could do, because it was in their hearts to do what they could do, and to even do more than they could!

Their faith in Christ was evident by their works! They knew that their earthly troubles were only earthly; INDEED, they did have big troubles of their own, and they were in a time of deep poverty, but they also believed that they had a "Big God" whom they trusted, and

they had willing hearts to serve Him, and to do what they could do for the needy brethren.

Their earthly trials did not stifle their faith nor did their troubles stop them from living by faith!

God's grace in them came forth from them; but it was NOT in a time of peace and calm, and NOT when they were in a time of plenty and of great abundance, but when they were under sore afflictions, great trials, and deep poverty. *2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Romans 5:3, James 1:2-4*

When you're in difficult times in your life, under sore trials and afflictions, and yes, when there's very little in the bank account... do you still trust God? Or do you put your Christianity and your faith on hold until things get a little better.

Let me just say that this is not a complaint sermon, and I am not preaching that you need to give more. God is simply teaching us how to give, and the type of giving that delights His heart!

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Paul wanted the Corinthians to see (2) things from the churches of Macedonia, their joy when their faith was being tried, and their willingness to give, even in their times of deep poverty.

God's Word teaches us that earthly poverty ought not to drive us to be faithless... the churches of Macedonia continued to trust God in their afflictions and deep poverty, and it caused them to ACT UNNATURALLY...

Even amid their deep poverty, they were generous and liberal in their giving for the sake of the gospel and Kingdom of Christ! And they didn't give from their abundance, but from their want. And they were doing this NOT because they were told to do it, but because trusted Christ, and they wanted to it for Him! *2 Corinthians 8:3-4, Mark 12:41-44*

They gave according to their ability, and beyond their ability. They deprived themselves to minister to the needy saints. JG: Their hearts were larger than their purses!

We just read about the widow, who gave all her living, do you think the Lord blessed that widow woman? She certainly caught the eye of the Lord Jesus! *He called His disciples and said, LOOK AT THIS POOR WOMAN!*

Do you remember when God told the Prophet Elijah to go hide by the Brook Cherith when there was a famine in the land. God told him, *"You will drink from the brook, and, I have commanded the ravens to feed you."* But then in (V7): *"And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up"*

God provided a brook for Elijah to drink from, and then God dried up the brook! Do you think God intended it to be so? YES! There are times in all our lives when "the brook is going to dry up".

Does God know when our brooks dry up? YES! *1 Kings 17:8-9:*

A widow woman, who BTW, had ONLY enough flour to make one little biscuit to feed her and her son. After that, she thought that she and her son would die of hunger.

But here comes Elijah, the man of God, who tells her, trust God and feed me first with that last little bit of flour and oil, and TRUST that God will continue to sustain you and your son (AND ME) for many days with the same little bit of flour and oil. God is teaching us, PUT ME FIRST, even in your times of poverty, and I will sustain you with more than enough!

This starving widow trusted Elijah and Elijah's God with her and her dying son's last little bit of food. But how was that little bit of flour and oil going to do any good? SHE TRUSTED GOD with her little portion, and God did not forsake her.

Remember that Jesus, with just 5 loaves and 2 small fishes fed 5,000! In the Gospel of John, one of His apostles said, what good will (5) loaves of bread and (2) small fish do among so many?

The poor widow woman in Mark 12 trusted God with all her living. What good would her few little pennies do? Her heart in giving her few little pennies got the attention of Christ! And though it is not written, I know God did not leave her hungry, God blessed that poor widow woman.

Psalm 37:25-26: "I have been young, and now am old; YET have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and His seed is blessed"

The churches of Macedonia, who were in a great trial of affliction and in deep poverty, pleaded with Paul and insisted that he would receive what they had given to minister to the needy saints. Their generosity did not come from their abundance, but from their deep poverty.

2 Corinthians 8:4-6

It's not how much you give beloved of God, it's the heart with which you give it! 2 Corinthians 8:12, 9:7

2 Corinthians 8:7: "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also"

You have grown and mature spiritually in many ways, SEE that you abound and mature in THIS GRACE ALSO!