

*Living God's Abundance Bible Study – Sharing Abundance*

*7 Daily Devotions based on 2 Corinthians 8:1–2*

*Written by Katherine Tooley*

*Member, Ascension Lutheran Church, Tulsa, OK*

*Day 1*

The Voice: New Testament / Thomas Nelson, c2008; Eccleisa Bible Study.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:1-2

1 “Now; brothers and sisters, let me tell you about the amazing gift of God’s grace that’s happening throughout the churches in Macedonia. 2 Even in the face of severe anguish and hard times, their elation and poverty have overflowed into a wealth of generosity.”

The gift of grace is truly amazing. Christ died for us when we were weak, sinners and ungodly, nowhere near perfection. Having done nothing to earn this grace, it is a true and lasting gift we have only to open our hearts and minds to accept. The believers in Macedonia accepted this grace and welcomed Christ into their lives. The majority of these believers were poor and persecuted, yet they saw their way to be Christ-like in their giving to other believers in Judea and beyond.

Take time to ponder these verses and your own understanding of the gift of grace in your life. How does it affect your generosity of spirit and action?

Psalm 111:9 “...Holy and awesome was his name.”

## *Day 2*

Lutheran Study Bible (NRSV) / Augsburg Fortress, c2009

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 “We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the Churches of Macedonia; 2 for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

The grace of God has been accepted by the people of Macedonia, yet these people are suffering an “ordeal of affliction.” What that affliction was is unknown but may have had to do with religious persecution (Phil. 1:29-30).

God’s grace is manifested though the Macedonians who, even though afflicted and in poverty, generously donate in joy. When you are under an “ordeal of affliction” is it your usual response to cling tightly to what you have or to joyfully share? Joy is a key element, as grudgingly doing anything hardly shows God’s grace!

At the same time as grace was given to us sinners, we are meant to live that grace as each day finds us. Finding joy each day and sharing it is a way to live our gift of grace.

“How do I love thee let me count the ways...”

Try counting your gifts from the Lord, how you have been blessed; and then how you can share those blessing with others.

## *Day 3*

The Women's Study Bible (NKJV) / Thomas Nelson Publ.; 1995

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 "Moreover, brethren, we make know to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 that in a great trial of afflictions the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality."

Paul is teaching the Corinthians about grace and giving through the example of the Macedonians who gave generously out of their poverty and affliction, not from the leftovers of their lives.

"...A Christian's giving should be the overflow of a worshipful heart and a matter of conviction before God." P 1938 WSB

These verses all refer to giving as the sign of a generous heart. Think about how the generosity of the Macedonians could apply to your life. Generosity of spirit is also a part of giving. This on verse 2 from There is a Balm in Gilead: "If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus and say 'He died for all.'"

## Day 4

The Women's Study Bible (NKJV) / Thomas Nelson Publ. ; c1995.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality."

Paul uses the liberality of giving by the Macedonians to show the people of Corinth what faith and grace can do in their lives. The Women's Study Bible notes that the Corinthians had failed in their promise to assist the mother church because of their own perceived neediness. Paul holds up the Macedonians to make his point about what grace is.

"A generous heart is one marked by evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life." P 1938 WSB

There is a short hymn, p. 694 in With One Voice, "You have put on Christ, in him you have been baptized. Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Putting on Christ, accepting the grace of God becomes your way of life as shown by the Macedonians. No matter your status or income, living a Christ-like life will bring you joy and balance.

## Day 5

The Women's Study Bible (NKJV) / Thomas Nelson Publ.; c1995

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 1 "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality."

The riches of the Macedonians are held up by Paul to the Corinthians; their riches are of the heart and spirit. Their great joy in being people of Christ balanced against the affliction of persecution. Their deep poverty allowed them to show the workings of God's grace.

"...emphasis is placed upon the believer's heart and attitude..." p. 1938 WSB

The Macedonians were living in deep poverty and affliction. How much of that affliction was due to being Christian, we don't know. But they took joy in giving liberally, more than anyone would have expected of them given their situation.

Do you live by God's grace? Give joyfully?? Take time to ponder the joy shown by the Macedonians.

## Day 6

The Voice: New Testament / Thomas Nelson, c2008; Ecclesia Bible Society

2 Corinthians 8:1-2

1"Now; brothers and sisters, let me tell you about the amazing gift of God's grace that's happening throughout the churches in Macedonia. 2 Even in the face of severe anguish and hard times, their elation and poverty have overflowed into a wealth of generosity."

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me..."

The situation in Macedonia is dire. The people are suffering severe anguish, hard times and extreme poverty. No one has high expectations of them because of their situation. Yet here Paul holds them up as examples of God's grace and what a gift it is. These poor downtrodden people have generously donated wealth beyond any expectations. And their joy in doing so shows no bounds.

The giving by the Macedonians didn't improve their lot, only their hearts and spirits. Paul memorializes their elation in these verses and holds them up to the Corinthians, and to us, as examples of grace and Christ-like living.

"...go forth and do likewise..."

## Day 7

The Women's Study Bible (NKJV) / Thomas Nelson Publ.; c1995

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 "Moreover, brethren, we make know to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 that in a great trial of afflictions the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality."

The Grace of God was bestowed upon the Macedonians...not to relieve their persecution; not to cancel out their poverty; but to bring them the ability to respond generously and joyfully to the needs of others. It is in their liberal giving that richness of joy is achieved.

"...Giving to others...brings joyful abundant rewards..." p. 1938 WSB

The Grace of God so liberally shown is held up by Paul as an example and goad to the Corinthians and future readers of the letter. How do we receive these words today? Welcome the joy of giving into your hearts.

"...with the Spirit's gift empowers us for the work of ministry" Hymn #756 *Lord You Give the Great Commission, With Once Voice*