

Good morning! Today is the fifth and final in our series on the grace of God and how it operates in our lives. We have seen that God's grace saves us; it justifies us, making it "just as if we'd never sinned"; it sanctifies us, transforming us so that we can do the good works that God has prepared for us to do. It initiates and continually brings God's Presence into our lives, giving us the power to live in ways that please Him. Yesterday, we read that the *charis* or grace of God empowers us with supernatural "spiritual gifts", such as prophecy, teaching, exhortation, and so on. This morning we will look at one final application of the grace of God---possibly one you may not have considered. Let's read it together:

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

2 Cor. 8:6-9

In this passage, Paul uses the word "grace" to describe the incredible stewardship of the Macedonian congregations. Paul says, *"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints."* These congregations were severely impoverished, yet they had a grace-induced supernatural desire and ability to give freely toward "relief of the saints" despite their own desperate poverty. This is a supernatural and gracious ministry of giving; grace enabled these impoverished Macedonians to joyfully overflow with generosity---even though they had no resources--- and participate in this collection. They didn't just participate---they begged *"earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints."* Paul calls this an *"act of grace"*. I have occasionally seen this gift at work. It often seems to be a person who lives on a fixed income, and yet that person always seems able and eager to give toward those in need. They are not giving out of their own resources---they are giving out of the bottomless well of God's grace. This is a great gift which edifies the one who gives as much as the one who receives--- and God likes it! Maybe you know a person with such a gift; maybe you *are* that person. As we come to the end of the series, let me encourage you to thank God continually for His grace at work in your life. God's amazing grace...we can't live a single day without it!