

Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered,
Thanks for what Thou dost deny.
Thanks for storms that I have weathered,
Thanks for all Thou dost supply.

Thanks for pain; thanks for pleasure,
Thanks for comfort in despair,
Thanks for _____ that none can measure,
Thanks for love beyond compare.

Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” “Bless You, Father!” **2 Corinthians 8:9:** “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” “Bless You, our Lord Jesus Christ!”

And that’s the application of the passage: God graciously gave. We gratefully received His grace. And now we are to be God-like-givers-of-grace ourselves. It reverses for us now. Now we understand the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

On this last Sunday of 2020, may this **Christmas Grace** be yours: may you become a Christlike Macedonian Disciple, who “first gave themselves to the Lord...by the will of God.”

“The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ”

2 Corinthians 8:9

“The grace of God has been given...” (8:1-8).

This Sunday after Christmas, if there is peace in your heart, it is because God gave it to you in His Son. In this great passage on grace giving, it is necessary to understand that first “the grace of God had been given to the churches of Macedonia.” Therefore, because they had received grace from God they graciously gave to others; it was their joy to give; even in their extreme poverty, they begged to give; and they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to the support of the saints.

One of the things we learn in this passage is that it is within the person and personality of God and those created in His image to give and receive. With God it’s give and then receive because God doesn’t have needs. But with us it’s _____ and then give because we do have needs. However, as we grow in our redemption and progressively become transformed into the image and likeness of God’s Son, then that reverses itself: we give first, and then receive! We become Godlike, known as givers rather than getters!

What God gave us, what we had to have from Him because we are so needy, only continues to grow brighter now and then in eternity because the experience of grace, if you could chart it, is upward, progressive, and never ending. Christmas is a great reminder for us: **God is an extraordinary Giver of Grace.**

All that’s said in the first eight verses was to encourage the Corinthians to become extreme gracious givers—to come of age, to grow up, to be focused on giving based on what they had already received. Also, all that is said in those verses is a _____ for **verse 9.**

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

Moving from the back of that statement to the front, breaking it down word-by-word: “Christ” is His messianic title; “Messiah” in the Hebrew, meaning “the Anointed One of God.” In the OT, God’s anointed always referred to God’s king. “Jesus” is His personal name and means “_____,” “God saves!” “Lord” is a title that refers to His supreme

Lordship; He is “the Supreme, Sovereign Ruler,” and coupled with Messiah, He is the Sovereign _____,” the Divine heir to the throne, the Almighty Son of God! “Our” speaks of you and me in Christ; it is a personal possessive pronoun, and it means that if we know this One’s saving grace, this One is “_____ Lord Jesus Christ!”

“The grace” means that “we do not in any way deserve to have the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives at all; let alone to have Him as our (it’s personal) Messiah, Savior and Lord!” “Know” means “to _____, to have a rather full knowledge and intimate understanding. In other words, “Here is very familiar territory.” “You” means “_____.” It was originally written for the Corinthians, but God had in mind you as well. And “for” takes us back to the first eight verses.

Then the apostle outlines for us that grace which we know so well and yet which still blows us away every time we seriously consider it.

Christmas Grace:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

“That though He was _____...”

Christmas really begins here, before Christ’s coming with His preexistence with the Trinity, with Him being immeasurably rich in that precondition of fully experienced Deity. Philippians 2:6 says that “although [Christ] existed in the form of God...” Now, 2 Corinthians 8:9 says “though He was rich...” who literally had everything...

“Yet for your sake He became _____...”

The second stage of Christmas Grace is the unspeakable renunciation of Divine wealth to become a baby in a feedbox! From the splendor of heaven and divine glory to the squalor of earth as a human being! And don’t ever miss it or forget it, “...for your sake He became poor!”

It begs the question, how willing are we to let go of our privileges and prerogatives and perks for His sake? How willing are we to hold loosely our possessions, all that belongs to us? One of the reasons why God came was to become man-like so we could become God-like, but it’s hard for us to become less man-like and more God-like.

Philippians 2:6-7: “Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped [or held on to], but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” In other words, “He became impoverished!” What a violent and profane transition this must have been for our Lord Jesus Christ, God becoming man... He emptied Himself of Himself..., and yet we are not willing to empty ourselves of ourselves for His sake?!

“So that *you* through His poverty *might* become _____...”

Do you remember how poor you were when you were outside of Christ? Hellishness of life and the destiny of hell, isn’t that what all of us were saved from? But God’s grace broke through and took hold of you and snatched you out of the pit of human despair and the cesspool of spiritual poverty and out of the fires of hell itself!

And what did it take to rescue you from such poverty to make you eternally rich? His _____! We were in such wretched shape that God had to do something that radical to save us. He became what we were, so that we could become what He was: rich, immeasurably, incomprehensibly, beyond compare! And suddenly all of life becomes all wrapped up in the name above all names, “our Lord Jesus Christ!”

For He is the reason we have been born, the hope for when we die, and the center for everything in between. And suddenly our hearts fill with great gratitude...if we reach the level of mature knowledge.

This is Christmas Grace!

Thanks to God, of Swedish origin

Thanks to God for my Redeemer,
Thanks for all Thou dost provide,
Thanks for times now but a memory,
Thanks for Jesus by my side.

Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime,
Thanks for dark and dreary fall.
Thanks for tears by now a forgotten,
Thanks for peace within my soul.