

Debtor to Grace

They did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (2 Cor. 8.5)

Robert Robinson was born in 1735. His father died early, and in 1749 he was apprenticed to a London hairdresser.

He was converted under the preaching of George Whitfield at age 17 and trained to become a Methodist minister. He later moved to the Baptist church and pastored in Cambridge, England. He wrote a number of hymns, the best-known being "Come, thou fount of every blessing."



It is said that one day much later, while riding in a coach, Robinson was reproved by a woman passenger for his frivolous behaviour. He was deeply affected by the reproof. The woman went on to quote a verse of "Come thou fount" which had been a great blessing to her. Robinson burst into tears. "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."

The verse may well have been –

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
take my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it from thy courts above!

Striking words! Constrained to be a debtor to grace. Bound to the Lord by grace, as if by a fetter. We look for freedom. We expect that grace will somehow leave us free to do what we want. And that's true. But, when we receive God's grace, "what we want" changes dramatically. God's grace binds us to him in joyful glad response.

Read through 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9. Paul wants his Corinthian readers "to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches" (8.1). He goes on, "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity... They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability... They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (vv. 2-5).

Paul was amazed at the way in which the grace of God was at work in these Christians. They weren't well off, but their generosity went even beyond their ability. Giving was their privilege. But the key was that "they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us..."

Have we been overwhelmed by the grace of God? Are we "debtors to grace"? Do we respond to the Lord with overflowing joy and rich generosity?