

Summation Of Paul's Instructions About Giving

“And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God for the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgiving unto God, seeing that through the proving of you by the ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them and unto all ...” (2 Cor. 9:10-14).

Paul has spent extensive effort with these brethren to make certain they follow through on their promised contribution to needy Jerusalem saints. In his first letter he wrote, urging that on the week's first day they give regularly for the anticipated sending their gift (1 Cor. 16:1-4). In his second letter he tells them how their proposed gift had a very favorable impact on Macedonians, who, although poor, had been stirred by the example of the Corinthians to do more than even Paul had felt they might (2 Cor. 8:3). He has appealed to their sense of self-esteem by urging them to have their gift ready at his arrival lest perchance brethren from Macedonia (who had already followed through with their gift) should come with Paul and find the Corinthians unprepared and they should be put to shame in the matter (2 Cor. 9:1-4).

In chapter 9 he has urged them that they be generous in their gifts; they were not to give grudgingly or of necessity for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:6f). Moreover, he reminded them that God would enable them (just as He had helped the Macedonians) to do as they purposed, for he wrote, “And God able to make all grace abound unto you that ye, having always all sufficient in everything may abound unto every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8) and to further emphasize his point he quoted the scriptures: “As it is written, He had scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor and His righteousness endureth forever” (2 Cor. 9:9; Psa. 112:9). From this verse in Psalms he drew this application: “And he that supplieth seed for the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the fruit of your righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10).

Now Paul addresses the benefits of the Corinthians' gift. First, and obviously so, the gift would fill up the measure of the wants of the saints! Care for brethren is ever needful. The second commandment is “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” and just wishing folks well is an empty, vain gesture if there is no follow-up to it. Wishing folks well will not, by itself, fill a hungry stomach nor clothe a naked back. The Jerusalem saints were in want and the apostles there had earlier urged Paul that he “would remember the poor,” a thing he was eager to do (Gal. 2:10).

But, filling the material needs of the saints was only a partial result of the contribution to the saints; it would also bring many thanksgivings unto God (9:12). They had not been forgotten and this gift, however great or small, would cause heartfelt rejoicing among the needy brethren. One of the most touching passages from Acts is the account of Paul. After being nearly beaten to death by unbelieving Jews, booed and blasphemed

by daring to affirm that God loved the Gentiles equally as He loved the Jews, and whose life was put in peril by plotting of Jews, necessitated his speedy removal from Jerusalem to Caesarea. After being left to languish for two years in prison by a money-hungry magistrate who, although he knew Paul was innocent, left him in prison hoping that Paul's brethren would pay a ransom to get him out. Later, Paul suffered a terrible storm at sea as well as a shipwreck, and then trudged wearily to Rome, not knowing what fate awaited him there. But, word of his approaching Rome was heard by the brethren there and they immediately dispatched two groups of brethren to meet the weary, harassed apostle. And when this apostle saw the brethren he "thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15). A sorrow-laden heart, borne down by many cares, can be greatly cheered and lifted by those who demonstrate they care and appreciate it.

While all of these consequences were yet future, Paul anticipated them and wrote, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15)!

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