

CHAPTER NINE

Analysis

- A. Paul continued to explain the mission of the brethren who were to help the Corinthians in their minister to the saints (1-5).
1. His knowledge of their readiness and zeal (1-2).
 - a) Because he knew of this, writing to them was not necessary.
 - b) He had boasted of their readiness to the Macedonians to stir up their zeal.
 2. Further reasons for sending the brethren (3-5).
 - a) He had sent them lest his boasting about their preparedness become an empty thing (3).
 - b) In the event that some of the Macedonians should come with him and find them unprepared he—not to mention the Corinthians—would be ashamed (4).
 - c) He had urged them to go so that the gift they had promised might be bounteous and not forced (5).
- B. He explained the issues involved in generous giving (6-15).
1. The principle of sowing and reaping in relation to giving (6-7).
 - a) The one who sows sparingly reaps sparingly, but the one who sows generously reaps abundantly (6).
 - b) In the light of this, each one is to give as he determines in his heart (7).
 - (1) He is to make the decision in his own heart.
 - (2) He is to do it, not as one who painfully wishes that he didn't have to, but as one who remembers that God loves a cheerful giver.
 2. The ability to give (8-10).
 - a) As He makes all grace abound, so he makes the generous giver able to abound in every good work (8).
 - b) This is according to Psa. 112:9 (9).
 - c) As He supplies seed to sow to produce bread He will supply and multiply the seed for sowing and increase the fruits of righteousness (10).
 3. The results of generous giving (11-14).
 - a) Thanksgiving to God (11-12).
 - (1) From Paul.

- (2) From those whose wants were met. The ministry of this service met their needs and caused them to thank God.
- b) Praise to God as they saw the obedience and liberality of those who gave to help them (13).
- c) Longing on the part of those who had been helped for those who by God's grace had shared with them (14).
4. The closing word: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." The full account of the gift could not be put in words (15).

Ministering To The Saints

Scripture

9:1-5. For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. 3 But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: 4 lest by any means if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. 5 I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

Comments

superfluous for me to write to you.—Paul had spent considerable space in this letter giving direction concerning the offerings for the saints and commending Titus and his associates for the part they were to have in assisting the Corinthians in preparing their offering. Indeed it was superfluous to go on writing to them about the matter, for he knew that they were eager to do their part. He had been boasting to the people of Macedonia saying, "Achaia has been ready for a year." Just how many months had gone by since they had begun to make preparation is not clear, but the Corinthians knew exactly. The zeal of Achaia had aroused many of the Macedonians to action. *But I have sent the brethren.*—While it was not necessary to go on writing to them about their offering, it was necessary to say some

additional words about the mission of Titus and his associates. He was sending them to make sure that his boasting about their preparedness had not been in vain. He did not want the Macedonians, some of whom had volunteered to go with him to Corinth, to find the Corinthians unprepared. This would embarrass him, to say nothing about what it would do to them.

as a matter of bounty and not of extortion.—The word translated "bounty" is commonly, within proper context, translated "blessing." It meant words that were well spoken about praise that was well deserved; it meant blessings that benefitted those who received them. Out of this concept comes the thought of bountiful giving that brings benefit to others. Paul had clearly indicated that this was the type of gift that Macedonia was preparing and he did not hesitate to suggest that Achaia's gift should be of the same kind. He did not want a poor showing on their part to demonstrate an attitude of greediness that would keep them from parting from their material wealth.

Stingy, miserly people do not give in such a manner as to suggest that their giving is a blessing to either themselves or to others.

Generous Giving

Scripture

9:6-15. But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: 9 as it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness abideth for ever.

10 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: 11 ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God; 13 seeing that through the proving of you by this 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; 14 while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

Comments

He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.—Now Paul enlarges upon what he had said about bounty and extortion with the illustration of sowing and reaping. Sowing sparingly explains his remark about extortion, for the one who holds back the seed instead of putting plenty on the ground is like the miserly person who would hold back his wealth rather than look to blessing that comes both to him and those whom he might help through generous giving. On the other hand, the one who anticipates a bountiful harvest by scattering an abundance of seed is like the generous giver who will be blessed in his giving as well as benefitting those to whom he gives. It was Paul who reminded the elders of the church at Ephesus about the words of the Lord Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). James denounced the miserly rich and warned them about the miseries that were about to come upon them. He said, "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasures in the last days" (James 5:1-3).

Let each man do according as he has purposed in his heart.—Because giving has a double blessing, first to the giver and then to the one who receives each one was to decide in his own heart what he would do before making the gift. Guidelines had already been given by the apostle by which the decision was to be made. He added still others at this point.

not grudgingly, nor of necessity.—It was not to be done out of sorrow in parting with his coveted wealth; it was not to be of necessity, that is, not being forced to give rather than suffering the embarrassment of not joining with the generous people who were making up the liberal offering for those who were in want.

Since giving is to benefit the giver, the leaders of the churches should avoid methods of forcing people to give as if God were poverty stricken and had to have their help. These are they who give grudgingly and painfully and constantly complain that the church is "always after money."

for God loveth a cheerful giver.—God has demonstrated that He

has bountifully given for the benefit of all mankind. He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Paul asks, "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8: 31-32). All this, God gladly gives in bountiful measure; He loves the cheerful giver.

Pressure methods used to force people to give who really do not want to give are wrong from every point of view: (1) God doesn't have to have the money. The case of Ananias and Sapphira proved it. (2) The benefit to the giver is nullified. (3) The principle of spontaneous, generous giving as a blessing to the giver is violated.

God is able.—This seems to be Paul's answer to the one who says "I can't." Although he had recognized the principle that if a man has the right attitude, what he does is acceptable to God according to what he has and not according to what he has not. The supply of the seed for sowing and the multiplying of that seed in the harvest is all from God. Man cannot produce seed that will grow and multiply. With this principle clearly stated, Paul indicated that God graciously makes it possible for one to give for the benefit of others and to multiply the blessing. Paul quoted from Psalm 112:9 which tells of the righteous man who is not afraid to trust God as he gives to the poor.

God promised Noah that "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22).

And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food.—Those who trust in the Lord, rely on His promise, and sow generously will go on reaping the abundant harvest. This is not to say that there will be no famines, but that the principle of planting and harvesting is guaranteed by the Lord. Distribution of the harvest of the land may depend on the generosity of those who love the Lord. Hence the gospel that transforms the hearts of men is the key to the world food problem. Jesus said, "But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

worketh through us thanksgiving to God.—Among the benefits of generous giving are not only those to the giver and the receiver, but the motivation of men to thank God for His blessings and for those who generously share with others.

seeing that the proving of you by this ministration.—This ministry on behalf of the saints gave the Gentile Christians an opportunity

to prove that they were glorifying God and being obedient to their commitment to the gospel of Christ.

your confession unto the gospel of Christ.—Those who accept the privileges of the gospel of Christ openly acknowledge their indebtedness to others. See Rom. 1:14-15. They had received the blessings of Christ's gospel and were obligated to make these blessings known to other and to share their material things with all the family of God.

long after you.—Those who received the material blessing prayed for those who gave. Their hearts were stirred with deep longing for the welfare and even the presence of those who had been moved by the grace of God to help them.

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.—Paul closed the subject of giving with thanks to God for His gift which no words could adequately describe. The context indicates that that gift had produced in the hearts of the saints in Judea prayers to God for the Gentile Christians and a deep longing for fellowship with those whom they now accepted as fellow-heirs of the inheritance of the saints.

This marvelous gift, of course, comes out of the gift of His Son through whom fellowship among God's people was made possible.

Commentators have long been divided on these two points. Strict adherence to the context indicates that the gift is the result of the grace of God in the hearts of those who longed for the fellowship of their fellow-Christians. But in no way does this ignore the gift of God's love in the Person of His Son.

Summary

Paul began the discussion of the offerings for the saints in Judea with a word of praise for the Macedonian churches. Now he shows the Corinthians that he had boasted of their readiness to the Macedonians. The example of Ahaia had stirred up the zeal of the Macedonians.

In this chapter, Paul continues to explain the mission of the brethren who had been sent to help the Corinthians in their effort to relieve the suffering of the saints. Although he knew of their readiness and zeal, he thought it necessary to write to them to explain still another reason for sending the brethren to help them. He wanted to make sure that his boasting would not turn out to his embarrassment, not to mention their shame if the brethren should come from Macedonia and find them unprepared. The brethren would help

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them prepare a generous gift, but would not force anyone to give beyond his ability.

Paul explained the principle of generous giving by referring to sowing and reaping. The one who sows sparingly reaps a poor harvest; the one who sows generously reaps an abundant harvest. Thus he drew attention to the results of giving which provide strong motivation for giving generously. Forced giving may help the needy, but it robs the giver of the blessing that should come to him. Let each one make up his own mind and so let him give out of love, for God loves a cheerful giver.

But how could they give? Macedonia was burdened with deep poverty. The Corinthians may have been but little better off. Paul's answer was: God is able! He is able to supply the seed for sowing and bring about the increase at harvest time. He is able to do the same in the spiritual realm, making it possible for his people to share with those less fortunate in material things.

The bountiful harvest resulting from generous giving was the thanksgiving to God in the hearts of those whose needs had been met. But there was another remarkable feature to that harvest: the longing in the hearts of the saints with Jewish background for the welfare of their brethren in Christ with Gentile background. God's unmerited favor in permitting Macedonia and Achaia to share had resulted in this abundant harvest.

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable grace." The full account of this abundant harvest could not be put into words.

Questions

1. In what way is the thought of this chapter related to the preceding one?
2. Why did he say that it was superfluous to write to them?
3. What had he told Macedonia about Achaia?
4. What had the zeal of Achaia done for the Macedonians?
5. What was the additional reason for sending Titus and his associates?
6. What embarrassment to the Corinthians was he anticipating?
7. How can one word be translated "bounty" in one context and "blessing" in another? What does the word denote?
8. What did Paul mean when he said that the offering was not to be a matter of extortion?

CHAPTER NINE

9. How does the example of sowing and reaping explain the principle of generous giving?
10. What did the Lord Jesus say about the blessing involved in giving?
11. What did James say about those who misuse riches?
12. Who is to determine the amount to be given?
13. In what way are some people forced to give?
14. Why does God love the cheerful giver?
15. How did He demonstrate His willingness to freely give us all things?
16. What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was wrong?
17. How was it possible for poverty-stricken Macedonia to give for the relief of the sains in Judea?
18. How did God multiply the harvest of their giving?
19. How had their giving glorified God?
20. How had it shown their obedience to their commitment to the gospel?
21. How are those who accept the privileges of the gospel under obligations to others?
22. What is unusual about the fact that the saints of Judea longed for their brethren among the Gentile congregations?
23. What is God's unspeakable gift to which Paul refers?
24. Why was he unable to put into words a full account of this gift?

For Discussion

1. In what way do pressure methods force some to give who would rather not do so.
2. How has God made it possible to give to the needy?