

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

Nationality and ethnicity are very powerful forces in human affairs. Because we live in a fallen world, however, patriotism often degenerates and nations and people groups become insecure, suspicious and aggressive. Is there a force that can transcend such ethnic barriers and hostilities? The apostle Paul was confident that there is; love for the Lord Jesus and consequently, love for the brethren.

Summary

In 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, Paul outlines two practical principles that are to govern Christian giving.

1. Honored Promises vv. 1-5

As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he faced the possibility of embarrassment. A year ago, the believers in Corinth had responded with 'zeal' for Paul's proposed collection for the poor Christians in Judea. The Macedonian churches had also risen to the challenge (**2 Cor 8:1-5**). In the meantime, things had stalled in Corinth. Imagine the reaction of those Macedonian believers when they arrived in Corinth, supposing all along that their own efforts had been an attempt to catch up with the generosity of a church which was first of the mark only to find that the Corinthian believers were not 'ready (**2 Cor 9:3**), but instead were 'unprepared' (**2 Cor 9:4**). Such an outcome would not be good for all concerned.

There is a warning here for believers today. Unfulfilled promises can leave a terrible legacy of betrayed hopes. This is true in many other areas besides that of financial support for needy causes. In all walks of life, we would do well to heed the words of Kohelet: **Eccles. 5:4-5**.

2. Cheerful Givers vv. 6-14

As far as Paul was concerned, to give is to invest (**2 Cor 9:6**). Believers today are to learn to think in this way (**Eccles 11:1**). Invest something in the kingdom of God: time, money, talents, or whatever and because God is no man's debtor you may be amazed at what the Lord does in the future. Another mistake is to think that giving begins in the check book or the wallet. Paul insists that giving ought to begin as 'Each one ... has decided in his heart' (**2 Cor 9:7**). Others direct their giving in order to manipulate a particular outcome, tying a church's hands with a gift. Christians should give, however, 'not reluctantly or under compulsion', but in an uncomplicated and whole-hearted fashion.

This is because 'God loves a cheerful giver'. Why does God appreciate generosity? It is because He, Himself, is not a grudging or manipulative giver, but the most generous of givers (**2 Cor 9:15**). Generosity is one of the marks of holiness. By it we show that we are true image bearers of the generous God of heaven

What is prosperity for? God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work (**2 Cor 9:8, cf. vv. 10, 11**).

Paul urged his friends to see that the value of giving goes beyond the good it does for those who are in need; there will be thanksgiving to God (**2 Cor 9:11-12**).

This will create a reciprocal obligation. Those you have benefited will 'long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you (**2 Cor 9:14**).

Imagine Jews longing for Gentiles! Centuries of antagonism overturned because of spontaneous generosity on the one side matched by gratitude on the other.

3. Thankful Conclusion vs. 15

In his conclusion, Paul strikes a note of deep gratitude.

Who should be thanked? No doubt Paul wanted to thank the Corinthians in advance because he was confident that they would respond to his appeal, and no doubt the Jewish believers in Judea would respond with warm gratitude when help came from their brothers in Christ in Gentile Europe.

First and foremost, however, thanks are due to 'God for his inexpressible gift'.

This is God's gift of a Saviour to a lost and dying world.

This is the gift beyond all other gifts, for no gift could be greater. It is also the gift behind all gifts because God's unspeakable generosity to us is the motivation to all our attempts to be generous.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

By giving the world the magnificent gift of his Son, God has given to such a degree that no words can describe it.

When Christians whether in Corinth then or around the world today, realize even a little of the vast scope of God's sovereign kindness, it opens their hearts and their wallets.

Paul's reason for closing this section of his epistle in this way is clear.

Given that God has given us so much, what right do Christians have to be mean-spirited?

Matt. 10:8 You received without paying; give without pay.