

CORINTHIANS - The MORE EXCELLENT WAY

STUDY 25

Not of Necessity ...

... they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means ... not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us ...

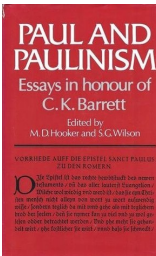
2 COR.8:3,5 (NRSV)

Study 25a: DIVINE WILL, HUMAN WILLINGNESS (8:16-9:5)

8:16,17 What can we glean from Paul's thanksgiving about the relationship between human 'free will' and purpose and the Divine will? (NOTE: Those who reject the ABSOLUTE sovereignty of God, such as JW's and other Arminians, claim that we would be robots, not humans, unless we had true 'free will'. But what do they unconsciously deny by placing no boundary about our 'free will'? - Phil.1:6; 2:12,13; 2 Tim.1:6-9; Psalm 139:1-4,7,13-16,23,24; Jer.1:4-8; Luke 1:13-15,35)

8:18-21 What goals lie behind Paul's precautions about accountability? (1 Pet.2:11-15, 3:1,2,15,16)

[8:20,21] Paul was very much alive to the readiness with which



Apostles and the authority of the churches

The *brothers* are *envoys of churches* – apostles [*apostoloi*], but in a sense different from that in which Paul was an apostle. He was appointed by no human agency whatever, but was 'an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of god' (i. i.; cf. Gal. i. i). The word however was not in Paul's time the technical term it has since become; its ordinary meaning was *agent*, and it was Paul himself more than anyone else who gave it the meaning of 'missionary'. The *brothers* had been appointed by churches, not as missionaries or as ministers in the modern sense of the term but to act as collectors. As such they enjoyed the authority their principals committed to them ... These men are subordinate apostles, local agents helping to supervise a financial operation, but they are *the glory of Christ*, because they are carrying out faithfully the work of love and service that has been assigned to them. [Barrett 230]

his critics would seize upon any circumstance in this business which could be made to look suspicious: it was not enough that honesty should be practised (**in the Lord's sight**); it must be visibly practised (**in the sight of men**). [Bruce 224]

8:22-24 How does Paul ensure accountability in positions of trust? (cf. v.19; 1 Tim.3:1-13; 2 Tim.2:2)

9:1-5 Despite his certainty that this is God's work, notice Paul is careful about all HUMAN arrangements involved

We are naturally so self-centered that we are inclined to believe the greatest happiness is found in receiving rather than giving. We all enjoy receiving gifts. We delight in receiving praise, love and adulation. We sometimes imagine that if everything that our hearts crave could be poured out upon us, we would be supremely happy. But this is a total mistake. The happiest people in the world are those who give most unselfishly; and herein lies the challenge to Christians everywhere to whom God has entrusted the means of furthering His interests in the world by financial gifts. [Ironsides 207]

He is not afraid that they will refuse to give, but he is afraid that they may be dilatory for want of organization. It will produce a bad impression if the money is not ready when it is wanted. [Plummer 254]

A universal law even Christians have trouble recognizing!

STUDY 26

NOT of NECESSITY, but out of THANKSGIVING

Study 26a: GRACE and GRATITUDE (9:6-15)

9:6-10 In giving, unlike under the law of Moses, no necessity or obligation is laid upon us (cf. 1 Cor.9:16). Rather, another *universal law* is at work, from which even Christians are not exempt

The sphere of giving, then, presents no exception to the inexorable rule, valid in the moral no less than in the agricultural realm, that a man reaps according to the manner of his sowing, which Paul enunciates in Gal. 6:7ff. The thought of the text we are considering is in complete harmony with his exhortation there: "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith". Calvin comments well that "whenever fleshly reason calls us back from doing good through fear of loss, we should immediately oppose it with this shield: *But the Lord declares that we are sowing*" ... This principle of reaping in accordance with what has been sown is thus

seen to belong to the moral no less than to the physical structure of god's universe. Goodness brings its own reward and indeed leads to an increase of goodness. [Hughes 329,330]

9:11-15 Let us note the ULTIMATE goal of ministry is NOT service of the saints, even less the world -- but what? (Ps.50:14,15; 136)

[9:11,12] Liberality is nothing less than a public service within the community of believers (though the outreach of Christian generosity is not limited to believers). It is a ministry which is open to all. And, as verse 12 shows, it has a twofold effect; first, *material* – it fills up what is lacking to their poorer brethren of the necessities of life; but, second, there is a *spiritual* overflow of praise and gratitude to God. Christian giving, therefore, not only ministers to the physical needs of men, which in itself calls forth the blessing and approval of God, but it causes men to glorify God, which is a result far more wonderful than any material benefit conferred; for when men glorify god they then behave as they were created to behave. [Hughes 337]

[9:15] One of Paul's gems flashed out after the somewhat tangled sentence (vv. 10-14) like a gleam of light that clears the air. Words fail Paul to describe the gift of Christ to and for us. He may have coined this word as it is not found elsewhere except in ecclesiastical writers save as a variant ... [A.T. Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament* Vol.4 p250]

Paul and the good Greek Samaritans

For Gentile converts to come to the aid of Jewish converts would be a tangible and compelling proof to the latter of the genuineness of the former in their Christian profession, and an undeniable expression to each other and to the world of their true unity in Christ. It would be the parable of the Good Samaritan enacted and extended; for with the Samaritans the Jews had no dealings (Jn. 4:9), but with the Gentiles mere contact meant, according to rabbinical tradition, contamination and the need for ceremonial cleansing (cf. Mk. 7:3ff.). The deed of the Good Samaritan, therefore, would be seen by the believers in Jerusalem to have been carried a stage further by the believers in Greece, so as to become the merciful action of the "Good Gentile" ... This would indeed be a splendid consummation of the tireless labours in the cause of the gospel of him who before had himself been a Hebrew of the Hebrews, belonging to the strictest sect of the Pharisees (cf. 11:22; Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6, 26:5). Paul the Apostle was in his own dynamic history the very focal concentration of Christian ecumenicity. [Hughes 339,341]

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