

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

# SECOND CORINTHIANS



*An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Gwen O. Blakely*

## Lesson #40

### COMMENTARY ON: 9:11-15

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

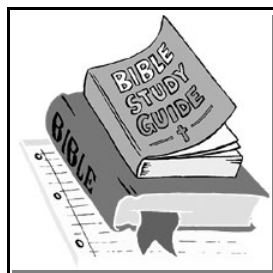
*"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."*

#### THE LOGIC OF SOWING, #2

Paul continues to shine the light of eternal purpose upon the matter of giving. Not only are there God-honoring effects in the earth, as a result of insightful giving, there are also influences in the heavenly chambers. When, however, the flesh becomes prominent within the church, the real purpose of godly consideration can no longer be served. The Divine element is thus removed from religion, and it becomes nothing more than "a resounding gong and a clanging cymbal" <sup>NIV</sup> (1 Cor 13:1). There are holy actions that "cause thanksgiving unto God." For such actions to be suppressed by selfish interests reveals a fundamental deficiency. This is why Paul lingers so long on this subject – one that, in the flesh, does not appear to be significant at all, but is only viewed as a matter of personal preference or opinion. That, however, is not the case.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

*"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"*



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## The Epistle of Second Corinthians

### Lesson Number 40

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Standard Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **JPS** = Jewish Publication Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD** = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT** = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TNK** = JPS Tanakh (1985), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

**LEXICON LEGEND:** **FRIEBERG**=Friberg Lexicon, **UBS**=UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA**=Louw-



**AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.**

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

# THE LOGIC OF SOWING, #2

“ 9:11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup> For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; <sup>13</sup> Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; <sup>14</sup> And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” (2 Cor 9:11-15)

## INTRODUCTION

Paul is in the midst of reasoning with the Corinthians concerning the collection they had determined to gather for “the poor saints in Jerusalem” (Rom 15:26). Although they had resolved to gather this collection “a year ago” (2 Cor 8:10; 9:2), they had not yet accomplished it. They had started, but not finished. They had begun, but not carried the work through to completion. **This type of conduct, whatever justification for it may have been presented, was in contradiction of everything about salvation.** It certainly was not an aspect of “the Divine nature,” of which we are made partakers by means of the promises (2 Pet 1:4). It was at variance with the nature of Jesus Himself, of whom

believers are also “made partakers” (Heb 3:14). Such a delay had nothing whatsoever to do with the “newness of life” in which we are intended to “walk” (Rom 6:4). The Holy Spirit, always operating within the will of God, would certainly not provoke the saints to engage in such a delay. The holy angels would not clear the way for such a response, as they went about ministering to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14). The Gospel of Christ, in which the “righteousness of God” is revealed, would never lead those who believed it into this kind of conduct. All of this should be abundantly clear.

**All unacceptable conduct – and**

**the Corinthian conduct on this matter was unacceptable – is traced to inimical influences.** First, this is something the devil would provoke. Second, only “the flesh” could succumb to such a suggestion. Third, self interest must be dominant in order to conclude that it was somehow satisfactory to delay gathering a needy collection for the children of God.

Because the Corinthians had lost their ability to reason soundly, Paul is leading them back into the Temple of holy thought. He knows they have been subverted, or moved into the profitless arena of carnal thought and worldly consideration. From one point of view, he states that this writing is “superfluous” –

*When we sow our resources, there are effects wrought in both heaven and earth– by Given O. Blakely*

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- THEIR PRAYER FOR YOU (9:14)
- GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT (9:15)
- CONCLUSION

that is, there is *"no need"*<sup>NIV</sup> for him to write them on this matter (9:1). By this, Paul means that they are well familiar with the needs of their suffering brethren in Jerusalem. When they first heard about it, they were forward in their willingness, and desirous to come to the aid of their brethren. In fact, they were so zealous about, that their zeal *"provoked very many,"* moving others to join in the cause. Paul was not, therefore, acquainting the Corinthians with a **new** cause, a **new** open door, and a **new** opportunity to minister. They were very familiar with this project, for they had been the very first ones to lead out in meeting the need of the Jerusalem brethren (9:2).

However, with the introduction of some new teachers in Corinth, their noble desires had been blasted with the heat of false teaching, and they had soon forgotten their brethren. That is the manner of the flesh, and of the emphases upon which it thrives.

Now, Paul is sending some brethren to Corinth to ensure that this offering is finally collected. He is doing this because he has already been boasting of their forwardness to help the brethren in their hour of need. Now, he is even planning to come to Corinth,

bringing with him some of the Macedonian brethren who had been provoked to good works by the original intention of the Corinthians (9:3-4). Additionally, he has exhorted the brethren he is sending to Corinth, in order that their offering may be ready when he arrives.

Paul is not satisfied to merely remind the Corinthians of their obligation to do what they have determined, fulfilling their vows, so to speak (Psa 50:14). He has also introduced the subjects of sowing and reaping, reasoning with the Corinthians on the matter.

- ☛ He that sows sparingly will also reap sparingly (9:6a).
- ☛ He that sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully (9:6b).
- ☛ Every person should purpose in their heart to give, not grudgingly, reluctantly, or under unwanted compulsion (9:7a).
- ☛ Their giving should be done with this in mind: *"God loveth a cheerful giver"* (9:7b).
- ☛ God can *"make all grace"* abound to the individual, so they will always have sufficiency for themselves, and be able to contribute to every good work as well (9:8).
- ☛ Scripture confirms that God does, in fact, *"disperse abroad,"* giving *"to the poor."* He does this because *"His righteousness remaineth for ever"* (9:9).
- ☛ This dispersion, however, is done through His people – to whom the Lord ministers both seed and bread (9:10a).
- ☛ In doing this, the Lord increases *"the*

*fruits of your righteousness"* (9:10b).

**What had happened at Corinth is this: the Divine manner of supplying the needs of the people of God had been unnecessarily complicated.** The Macedonians, who had less resources than the Corinthians, and were in a great trial as well, were enabled to contribute beyond their ability to the need of the suffering saints (2 Cor 8:1-5). As wonderful and God-glorifying as this was, **it did not relieve Corinth of their obligation.** Nor, indeed, did their offering completely meet the needs of their brethren in Jerusalem. The Corinthians were not freed from their vows by the liberality of the Macedonian saints! This is not the manner of the kingdom. **Those who make vows to the Lord are not freed from them because other brethren are brought into the work.**

### STRICTLY SPEAKING, THIS IS NOT TEACHING, BUT CORRECTION

This may appear to be a rather technical point, but it is very needful to see this. **Strictly speaking, this passage is not teaching, but correction, and instruction in righteousness.** The Word of God has a wide range of profitability. As it is written, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Tim 3:16). While it is possible to press this matter too far, making the text more academic than spiritual, some definition will be helpful.

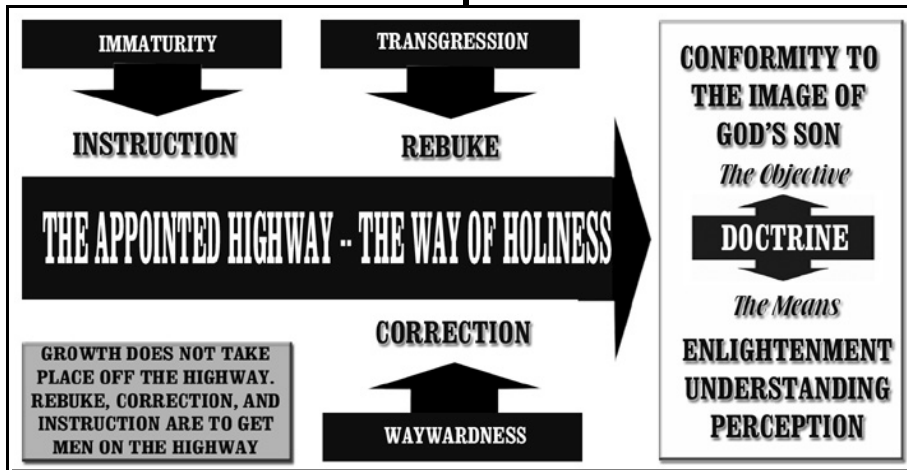
- ☛ **DOCTRINE.** Other versions read *"teaching,"*<sup>NASB</sup> and *"teach us what is true."*<sup>NLT</sup> The word *"doctrine"* has more to do with instruction in the facts of the Gospel, the eternal purpose of God, and the accomplishments and objectives of redemption. These are matters that enlarge the spiritual treasury of the believer. They center in salvation itself rather than bringing human

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conduct into conformity to it. “Doctrine” is the means whereby men are brought more into conformity to the image of Christ.

- **REPROOF.** Other versions read, “rebuking,” <sup>NIV</sup> “training,” <sup>BBE</sup> “conviction,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “refutation,” <sup>NAB</sup>

- **INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Other versions read, “training in righteousness,” <sup>NASB</sup> “education in righteousness,” <sup>BBE</sup> “teaching them to be upright,” <sup>NJB</sup> and “teaching us to do what is right.” <sup>NLT</sup> This is a reference to chastening, which is the appointed means of being “trained.”



“refuting error,” <sup>NJB</sup> and “make us realize what is wrong in our lives.” <sup>NLT</sup> Technically speaking, “reproof” has to do with persuading men of their lack of likeness to Christ. It points out ways and manners that are not acceptable, and which must be discarded before growth can occur.

- **CORRECTION.** Other versions read, “guiding,” <sup>BBE</sup> “guiding people’s lives,” <sup>NJB</sup> “straightens us out,” <sup>NLT</sup> “to amend,” <sup>TNT</sup> “setting aright,” <sup>YLT</sup> and “correction of error.” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> Again, “correction” does not have to do with real progress, but with getting to the place where progress can be made. It is like getting on the right road – the “way of holiness” (Isa 35:8). Strictly speaking, we do not become more like Jesus by what we do NOT do. It is when we “hate iniquity” that we are more like Christ (Heb 1:9). That hatred is the result of seeing, not abstaining – of discerning, not refraining. Abstaining from “fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11) does not clear the vision, but brings us to a place where our eyes can be enlightened by God and through “sound doctrine.” It is imperative that this be seen.0

The word “instruction,” or “training” comes from the Greek word *παιδείαν* (pai-dei-an), which has to do with the training and disciplining of children. Lexically it means, “the whole training and education of children . . . according to Biblical usage, chastisement, chastening,” <sup>THAYER</sup> and “training, instruction, discipline . . . discipline, punishment, correction.” <sup>FRIBERG</sup>

### THE TIMES CALL FOR A GREATER UNDERSTANDING

It is necessary to briefly comment on this subject because of the present academic thrust of Christendom. This is the time when research, statistics, word studies, the “original language,” etc., have been vaunted to a place of theological prominence. This is the reason for such great stress being placed on hermeneutics, contextual considerations, historical perspectives, and cultural circumstances. Mind you, it is not that such things are unlawful or inherently sinful. However, in matters pertaining to “life and godliness” they do not have the weight they do in the acquisition of worldly knowledge.

For example, there are some who feel that admonitions concerning sowing and reaping (2 Cor 9:6), casting out the “old leaven” (1 Cor 5:7-8), cleansing

ourselves of “all filthiness of flesh and spirit” (2 Cor 7:1), and being mindful of the weaker brethren (1 Cor 8:9-12), are spiritual meat – things that cause us to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. But this is not so. **We are NOT justified by our works (Gal 2:16), nor are we conformed to the image of Christ by our works.** The actual conformity is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The means that He employs is our “beholding” of “the glory of the Lord.” Therefore, it is written, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

### HOW DOES THE TRANSFORMATION ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE?

And how is it that we actually behold the glory of the Lord? Is it by means of rebuking our waywardness? Or correcting the manner in which we are living? Or administering training and instruction to children? Is that the means by which we are “changed” to bear Christ’s likeness “with ever-increasing glory?” <sup>NIV</sup> **Indeed, it is not!** The appointed means was revealed in our new birth, and it continues as we advance to spiritual maturity. Here is how it is stated in the fourth chapter of Second Corinthians. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

**It is the consideration of what Christ has done that changes us, not what we have done!** It is that consideration that is used by the Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ. Remember, it is the “Gospel of Christ” that is affirmed to be “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). This power is **not** found in “rebuke” – facing the people with the fact of their waywardness. It is **not** found in “correction” – getting the people off of the broad road and back on the narrow one. It is **not** realized in “instruction in righteousness” – being trained and disciplined, and becoming more fully acquainted with how we are to live.

All of those things are necessary, and let no one doubt it for a moment.

However, they all have to do with getting the people back to the place where the Spirit can work in them, changing them *“from glory to glory.”* **Waywardness and carnality, regardless of their cause, stifle the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, quenching and grieving Him.** They move the people off the *“the way of holiness”* (Isa 35:8), and point them toward *“the broad road”* that leads to destruction.

That is why carnality, such as was found in multifarious forms in Corinth, had to be rebuked, and the people corrected and instructed more perfectly in *“the way of God”* (Acts 18:26). Rather than the people being changed *“from glory to glory,”* they were descending into the quagmire of the flesh. **Paul is therefore bringing them back to the point where the conforming work can be resumed.**

I must admit that I do not recall this point being made by anyone to whom I have been subjected. That does not mean it is totally unknown, for that is too difficult for me to accept. However, there are religious circles, such as the one in which I formerly walked, that have managed to totally obscure this reality. It should not surprise us that all manner of carnality is found among such people. Nor, indeed, should it be startling that there is so little Christ-likeness among them, to say nothing of the near-total lack of interest in realities that will remain after the present heaven and earth have passed away.

### THE FATAL FLOW OF CHRISTIAN SPECIALISTS

Today is the time for religious specialists. Fields of expertise include children, young people, single people, married people, aged people, praise, worship, church planting, church history, family life, stewardship fund-raising, grieving, and a host of other things. **All of them, however, have to do with human behavior, which is not the center of Divine purpose.** However important conduct in this world may seem to be, there is no transforming power in it. Behavior is not the room in which grace is sent to us, but rather lies in the area of evidence, not cause. Behavior, in all of its varied objectives and responses, has to do with the outer court of the Temple of truth, not the holy place or most holy

place! **What men ought to do is not at the heart of Divine purpose.** When it comes to doing, accomplishing, obeying, etc., the activity of Jesus ranks at the top. It is his doing that is to capture the attention of men, because that is the means through which faith is both initiated and maintained.

### WHAT JESUS HAS DONE

When we consider who the Lord Jesus is, what He has done has done, and the manner in which it all was accomplished, our emphasis is quite apparent. The following is a brief summation of Christ's Person and works.

- ☛ His name is *“Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”* (Isa 9:6).
- ☛ He is the *“express image”* of God's Person (Heb 1:3).
- ☛ The *“fulness of the Godhead”* dwells in Him bodily, and God is *“pleased”* to have it so (Col 1:19; 2:9).
- ☛ He is *“the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (John 14:6).
- ☛ The *“light of the knowledge of the*

- ☛ He *“destroyed the devil”* through His death (Heb 2:14).
- ☛ He *“spoiled,”* or plundered, *“principalities and powers, triumphing over them”* in His cross (Col 2:15).
- ☛ *“He led captivity captive,”* and has given *“gifts”* to the church (Eph 4:9-11).
- ☛ He has been made *“The Head over all things,”* and given to the church in that essentially required capacity (Eph 1:22-23).
- ☛ He is *“able to save to the uttermost”* those who come to God through Him, seeing He *“ever lives to make intercession for them”* (Heb 7:25).
- ☛ All the *“treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* are hidden in Him (Col 2:3).
- ☛ The race set before us can only be run successfully while looking to Him (Heb 12:2).
- ☛ We are to consider Him in the capacity of *“the Apostle and High*

**It should not surprise us that all manner of carnality is found among such people. Nor, indeed, should it be startling that there is so little Christ-likeness among them, to say nothing of the near-total lack of interest in realities that will remain after the present heaven and earth have passed away.**

*glory of God”* is seen in *“His face”* (2 Cor 4:6).

- ☛ He took *“away the sins of the world,”* bearing them *“in His body on the tree”* (John 1:29; 1 Pet 1:24).
- ☛ He *“reconciled the world”* unto God (2 Cor 5:18-20; Col 1:21).
- ☛ He *“made peace through the blood of His cross”* (Col 1:20).

*Priest of our profession”* (Heb 3:1).

- ☛ We are to look for His *“glorious appearing”* while denying *“ungodliness and worldly lusts,”* and living *“soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Tit 2:11-12).
- ☛ The essence of salvation is knowing Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:10).

*When we sow our resources, there are effects wrought in both heaven and earth— by Given O. Blakely*



### THINGS THAT ARE NOT POSSIBLE

It is not possible to concentrate on Christ and end up diverted from the purpose of God. Nor, indeed, is it remotely possible to count everything loss in order to “win Christ” (Phil 3:8) and find ourselves unfamiliar with God and alienated from Him. Having our lives “hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3) cannot possibly produce carnality. No person can “hear Christ” (Eph 4:20-21) and end up confused or grossly deficient before God. “Fellowship” with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) will not cause one to live in the flesh,

stumble, or become ignorant concerning the things of Christ. There is nothing about Jesus that does not contribute to completeness (Col 2:10), maturity (Eph 4:15), and being “rooted” (Col 2:7).

**When fundamental flaws are found within the church, or conformity to Christ’s image is not taking place, it is always because of an unacceptable presentation of and approach to the Lord Jesus Christ.** Somehow, through an erroneous emphasis, He who is the Head of the church has been given the back

seat. He has been upstaged by other priorities, and thus spiritual deterioration has set in. Regardless of what men may profess, “another Jesus” has been embraced, “another spirit” has been received, and “another gospel” has been believed (2 Cor 11:4).

This is precisely what had happened in Corinth, and therefore Paul must rebuke, correct, and instruct them in righteousness. He must bring them back to the “highway” on which all legitimate spiritual life is lived.

## BEING RICH IN EVERYTHING

“9:11a **Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness . . .**”

In this section Paul will teach

righteousness. “As it is written, *He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever*” (2 Cor 9:9).

*being increased in everything.*”<sup>BBE</sup> “Yes, God will give you much,”<sup>LIVING</sup> and “Thus you will be enriched in all ways.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**Paul is here describing the manner of the Kingdom – the evidence that it is in the presence of men (as in Luke 17:21). Now he will declare WHY God supplies men with an overabundance, or more than thy need.**

Here, being “enriched in everything” has particularly to do with earthly needs being met. The principle also applies to inner resources, but that is not the focus of this text. To be “enriched in everything” means that no aspect of their lives had been impoverished. They had received adequacy in every area of life in this world, and it was for a reason.

that men withhold from giving only because they are not convinced that God can be liberal toward them, causing “all grace to abound” toward them (9:9). **He will confirm that no man can give abundantly and liberally until he perceives that this is precisely how God gives to His children.** This is an elaboration of the previous verses, that strongly affirm how bountifully God can minister to His children.

☛ **God provides our own needs, giving us supplies to be sown into the lives of others, and thereby increasing the fruits of our righteousness.** “Now He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness” (2 Cor 9:10).

Paul is here describing the manner of the Kingdom – the **evidence** that it is in the presence of men (as in Luke 17:21). Now he will declare WHY God supplies men with an overabundance, or more than thy need.

☛ **God can provide all of our needs, with an abundance left over so that we may be liberal toward others.** “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Cor 9:8).

☛ **Dispersing abroad, and giving to the poor, is an exhibit of His**

### BEING ENRICHED

“Being enriched in every thing . . .” Other versions read, “While you are enriched in everything,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “You will be enriched in everything,”<sup>NASB</sup> “You will be made rich in every way,”<sup>NIV</sup> “Your wealth

### TO ALL BOUNTIFULNESS

“ . . . to all bountifulness . . .” Other versions read, “for all liberality,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “so that you can be generous on every occasion,”<sup>NIV</sup> “for your great generosity,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “unto all free-hearted liberality,”

DARBY “so that you can give away much,”  
LIVING “so as to give with perfect  
liberality,” WILLIAMS “that you may give  
ungrudgingly,” MONTGOMERY and “the more  
scope there will be for generous giving.”  
PHILLIPS

The Divine intention behind their abundant adequacy was that they might become the providers for the children of God who were less fortunate. This is how God governs His kingdom. When He gives “seed to the sower” and “bread to the eater” – particularly to His children – He often intends that it should come through other members of the body of Christ. From the givers point of view, an abundance, or more than is needed, is intended to free the believer to become a supplier – a point through which needed distribution is made.

This is the point behind the statement, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6). This has to do with more than a percentage of our income. It is specifically dealing with how we handle our surplus – whether we store it in barns like the foolish farmer, or use it for the glory of God. Jesus delivered a parable on this matter that was designed to warn men about the snare of covetousness. “And he said unto them, Take heed, and **beware of covetousness**: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). An abundance, or over-plus, tends to make men think of themselves. To confirm the danger of this way of thinking, Jesus delivered the parable of “a certain rich men.”

He was given an abundance. “And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully” (Luke

**In a nation that boasts of “the American dream,” “financial security,” and personal wealth, this text has little appeal. Jesus spoke of those who forsook “houses” or “lands” for His “name’s sake,” considering an investment in His cause worthy of forfeiting purely personal interests**

12:16).

- He pondered what to do with the surplus. “And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow **my** fruits?” (Luke 12:17).
- He decided the surplus was intended for his own use. “And he said, This will I do: I will pull down **my** barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all **my** fruits and **my** goods” (Luke 12:18).
- He determined this was a means of securing his own future, allowing for his own ease and merriment in the world. “And I will say to my soul, Soul, **thou hast much goods laid up for many years**; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19).
- He assumed he was going to live, and did not take his own death into account, thereby confirming he was a fool. “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night **thy soul shall be required of thee**; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20).
- Jesus said this aptly described the

person who used his treasures for himself, and was rich toward God. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and **is not rich toward God**” (Luke 12:21).

In a nation that boasts of “the American dream,” “financial security,” and personal wealth, this text has little appeal. Jesus spoke of those who forsook “houses” or “lands” for His “name’s sake,” considering an investment in His cause worthy of forfeiting purely personal interests (Matt 19:29). He also taught that God would take due note of this sacrifice, giving such people “now in this time,” among other advantages, even “houses” and “lands” (Mk 10:30). That is, no one who puts the interests of Christ and His brethren above their own will be put to a disadvantage.

This is not a teaching that can be encapsulated in a routine, or a procedure that excludes the heart, a fervent love for Christ, and the discernment of His purpose. That does not mean that it can be ignored, or tabled in favor of seemingly more palatable teaching. This is precisely why Paul is laboring this point with great wisdom and spiritual tenacity. We do well to listen. To say the least, carnality is always dangerous!

## CAUSING THANKSGIVING

“<sup>11b</sup> . . . which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.”

Paul now deals with the sure effects of the Corinthian’s carrying out

their resolve to aid their needy brethren. He will reason about the offering they are to gather together, showing them the God ordained results of such activity.

### WHICH CAUSETH THROUGH US

“ . . . which causeth through us . . . ” Other versions read, “which through us is producing,” <sup>NASB</sup> “and through us will result in,” <sup>NIV</sup> “which worketh through

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us,<sup>ASV</sup> “when we take your gifts to those who need them,”<sup>NLT</sup> “through our instrumentality,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “your gifts, of which I am the agent,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and “[your generosity as it is] administered by us.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Here is something that is caused by men – holy and devoted men. Men promised to give an offering. A man are urging them to follow through with that offering. Men are administering the offering. Men will be delivering the offering. All of this is to be done because of faith toward Christ and the love of His people. Thus John summarized New Covenant obligations: “And this is his commandment, That we should **believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ**, and love **one another**, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 3:23). Both of these requirements have to do with the offering being considered in this text.

The role of human involvement in the work of the Lord must be comprehended to some profitable degree. Some conceive of God as always miraculously supplying the needs of men independently of human involvement. And, indeed, He has done this.

Israel was supplied “bread from heaven,” manna, during their forty-year sojourn through the wilderness. “Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day . . .” (Ex 16:4).

For a while, God provided the prophet Elijah with bread and flesh through the instrumentality of birds. “And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook” (1 Kgs 17:6).

When Israel confronted the Egyptians pursuing hot after them, God fought for them, without them having to raise their hand. “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye

shall hold your peace” (Ex 14:13-14).

When the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir came up against Israel, God told them they would not be required to fight. “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you” (2 Chron 20:17). When appointed singers praised “the beauty of holiness,” God “set ambushments” against the enemy, and they destroyed each other (20:21-23).

However, God does not always work in this manner, and woe to the person who thinks that He does! When Israel fought the Amalekites, they were involved extensively in the battle. The army fought, Moses held up his hands, and Aaron and Hur kept his hands in the air so Israel could win (Ex 17:10-13).

Take, for example, the very subject of this passage: the collection for “the poor saints in Jerusalem.” Ponder the extensive involvement of God’s people in this matter.

God used Agabus the prophet to alert the brethren to a coming famine that would require relief to be sent to the brethren in Judea. “And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:28).

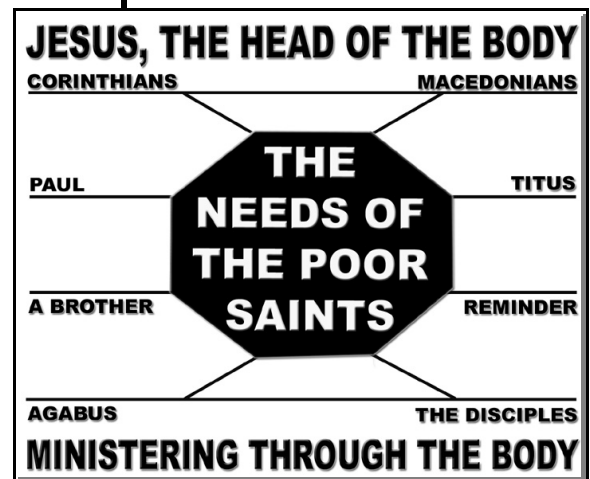
God stirred the hearts of His people to provide relief for their brethren. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea” (Acts 11:29).

The Corinthians were the first to determine to carry out this resolve.

“For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many” (2 Cor 9:2).

The brethren in Macedonia were stirred to contribute to the cause. “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Cor 8:1-2).

Paul stirred up the brethren in Corinth to fulfill their intentions. “And herein I give my advice: for this



is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have” (2 Cor 8:10-11).

Titus is brought into the matter, being appointed to see to it that the gathering of the offering was completed. “Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also” (2 Cor 8:6).

Another brother is sent along with Titus to ensure all is done to the glory of God. “And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in



*the gospel throughout all the churches . . . I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?"* (2 Cor 8:18; 12:18).

☛ Paul was administering the offering, and planned to actually deliver it to the brethren in Jerusalem. *"Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God"* (2 Cor 9:11; 8:19).

In the world, men use marketing techniques to promote their financial causes. In the religious world, "fund-raising" is a special area of knowledge in which expertise is cultured using the wisdom of this world. Most large "Christian" institutions spend considerable time in this area, with some even maintaining a fund-raising department, or at least one key fund-specialist. For someone to question this practice is to invade hallowed territory. However, I will gladly do so anyway, having some personal experience in this facet of religious activity.

This text provides us a sort of index into the Divine manner of gathering funds.

First, there must be a cause in

came (Rom 9:5). They represented the ones into whose tree Gentile believers had been grafted (Rom 11:17). Gentiles believers had been made *"partakers of their spiritual things"* (Rom 15:27).

Second, the Lord will work through the members of His body to make the cause known. First, he will announce the condition before it comes to pass through the prophet Agabus. This announcement will be made in the presence of godly leaders and people who have a grasp of the nature of Divine workings (Acts 11:27-28). Second, the saints of God will perceive the need and determine to *"send relief"* to the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:29). Third, the Corinthians will lead out in the resolve to gather an offering for the needy saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:10; 9:2). Paul will be brought into the cause because of his frequent travels among the Gentile churches (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 9:4; Gal 2:10). He will testify to the response of other brethren (2 Cor 9:2). The Macedonians will be stirred to join in the cause, and will even give above their ability (2 Cor 8:1-2). Titus will be brought into the matter as a sort of administrator to ensure that the Corinthians, who were lagging behind, did not fail to fulfill their promise (2 Cor 8:6). Another brother is sent with Titus to Corinth to ensure that the nobility of the cause is maintained (Cor 8:18; 12:18). The Lord uses Paul to

One of the tragic results of a professing church that is not living by faith or growing up into Christ in all things is that it begins to lack Divine utility. **The further a person or a congregation is from the Lord, and the less it is walking in the light, the more it becomes unuseable to the Head of the body.** Men may create and employ various programs and incentives, thinking to promote the work of the Lord. However, all such efforts are nothing more than an exercise in vanity. Whatever manages to get done, it will not be the work of the Lord, for He does not fulfill His purpose by such means. However, when individuals are brought back into the Divine fellowship into which they were called (1 Cor 1:9), they will become involved in what the Lord is doing. In this case, it was providing the necessities of some of His people.

Now we will see that the provisions themselves were not the whole of the matter. They were rather an appointed means to an end.

#### THANKSGIVING TO GOD

*"... thanksgiving to God."* Other versions read, *"praise to God,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"makes people thank God,"*<sup>NJB</sup> *"they will break our in thanksgiving to God,"*<sup>NLT</sup> and *"thanks are given."*<sup>PNT</sup>

Paul's involvement in this whole matter, together with that of the Macedonians, Titus, and another brother, was designed to cause *"thanksgiving to God."* Not thanksgiving to the Corinthians alone, but thanksgiving primarily to God, who supplied their need through the Corinthians. Not thanksgiving to the Macedonians alone, but to the God who employed them in this holy work of *"brotherly kindness"* (2 Pet 1:7).

#### The Matter of Praise to God

When summarizing the ultimate purpose for the salvation of men through grace, the Spirit says: ***"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved"*** (Eph 1:6). And again, ***"That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ"*** (Eph 1:12). This particular praise occurs among the heavenly hosts, who are brought to know the *"manifold wisdom"* of God through His workings in

**First, there must be a cause in which God has a vested interest. That is, His glory, His purpose, and His people must be impacted by the cause. If this is not the case, then the cause is of man, through man, and to man.**

which God has a vested interest. That is, His glory, His purpose, and His people must be impacted by the cause. If this is not the case, then the cause is of man, through man, and to man. In this text, the cause was the condition of the *"poor saints which are at Jerusalem"* (Rom 15:26). In particular, these were some of the people through whom the Savior

issue a reminder to the Corinthians of their resolve, exhorting them to fulfill it in a timely manner (2 Cor 8:10-11).

Thus, working through the body of Christ, God worked everything together for the good of the destitute brethren in Jerusalem – opening doors and constraining hearts.

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*“the church”* (Eph 3:10).

However, it is also produced among the saved themselves as they are brought to behold the working of the Lord among them. Ultimately, that *“praise”* will fill the area around the Throne when our bodies are redeemed and we are released from every vestige of corruption. *“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory”* (Eph 1:14). When the Lord appears in glory, then *“the faith of God’s elect”* (Tit 1:1) will *“be found unto praise and honor and glory”* (1 Pet 1:7).

To this point, the texts that I have cited refer to *“praise”* either among heavenly hosts, or after the present heavens and earth have passed away. But there is also the matter of discerning praise now – while we are living by faith and walking in the Spirit. I use these qualifiers because there is no such thing as praise independent of such living and walking.

The Spirit witnesses that insightful praise (and there really is no other kind), is something that is to be *“continually”* rising from the household of faith. *“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Heb 13:13-16).

Notice the contextual realities that have to do with this praise.

- ☛ **Separation from the world:** going to Jesus *“outside the camp”*<sup>NIV</sup> of this world and corrupt religion, bearing His reproach – that is, the reproach that the world heaps upon believers.
- ☛ **An awareness that we do not belong here:** *“here we do not have an enduring city.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Whatever we have in this world is only temporal, and it can only be held temporarily. Let no one imagine for a moment that this world is the place of ultimate blessing.

- ☛ **An earnest quest for the world to come:** *“we are looking for the city that is to come.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Apart from an acute awareness that we do not have a continuing city in the realm of the seen, it is not possible to praise God.
- ☛ **Praise is offered to God by Christ’s enablement:** *“through Jesus, therefore, let us offer . . .”*<sup>NIV</sup> It is in the process of fellowship with Christ that He Himself enables us offer praise to an unseen God.

being perpetrated today. The praise that is being hawked among the churches is actually more akin to heathen mantras, or ritualistic incantations than to anything remotely associated with Jesus. It is commonly taught in some circles that praise is like a key that opens the door of access to the God of heaven. It is also depicted as an environment into which God happily rushes, and from which He cannot possibly exclude himself.

These views are largely based upon the Psalmic expression, *“But Thou*

**Paul knows that the poor saints in Jerusalem, because of their grounding in the faith, will perceive the working of God in the provisions being sent to them. They will detect the hand of God in it all, and give praise to Him, glorifying Him for His marvelous works among the sons of men.**

- ☛ **Praise is not seasonal, but continual:** *“let us continually offer . . . a sacrifice of praise.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Seasonal, or occasional, religion is after the order of the Old Covenant, **not** the New Covenant. It betrays a condition of at-homeness in this world, which makes praise impossible.
- ☛ **This particular praise consists of thanksgiving:** *“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”* This is thanksgiving that results from perceiving the Lord at work – seeing past the means to the Divine Cause!

Paul knows that the poor saints in Jerusalem, because of their grounding in the faith, will perceive the working of God in the provisions being sent to them. They will detect the hand of God in it all, and give praise to Him, glorifying Him for His marvelous works among the sons of men.

#### A Further Word

I am compelled to say something further on this subject because of the wholly erroneous concept of praise that is

*art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel”* (Psa 22:3). Another version reads, *“But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel”* (Psa 22:3). **The idea is not that God comes to inhabit the praises, but that the Person of God is the Object of the praise.** That is, real praise is offered within the framework of an acute consciousness of God. The AMPLIFIED Bible accents that this refers to the time under the Law when the awareness of the Living God was brought to its highest point – in the holy place of the Tabernacle and Temple: *“But You are holy, O You Who dwell in [the holy place where] the praises of Israel [are offered]”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> **That is, the point of the Psalm is not God’s awareness of the praise, but the ones praising being aware of God.**

In the case of our text, God would be praised by the insightful thanksgiving of those saints who perceived the gracious offering of the saints as actually coming from God Himself.

**When it comes to main things, helping people is important, but seeing**

that God **“worketh all in all”** is more important! (1 Cor 12:6).

In this whole matter, Paul is

acutely aware of the centrality of the Lord in every aspect of religion – even is rendering assistance to needy brethren. **If God does not receive insightful**

thanksgiving for what is done, it really **does not amount to much.** There is no aspect of His **“great salvation”** that allows Him to being given second place.

## THE ADMINISTRATION

**“12a For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints . . .”**

With the care of a faithful servant, Paul proceeds to accentuate both sides of the coin of service – what the **saints** receive, and what **their Lord** receives.

### THE ADMINISTRATION

**“For the administration . . .”**

Other versions read, **“for the ministry,”** NASB **“the rendering of,”** NRSV **“this work,”** BBE **“the help,”** NJB **“for the office,”** TNT and **“the service of the ministering.”** AMPLIFIED

Here, from the standpoint of purpose, the word **“administration”** refers to the godly managing and distribution of the offering for the poor saints. From the standpoint of participation it is a ministry in which the Corinthians can participate.

We behold something of the manner of godly **“administration”** in this collection. It is not managing affairs after the manner of the world. **In this case, Paul has the utmost regard for the care of saints and the praise of God.** He exhorts them to be timely in their offerings (2 Cor 8:11). They are also to remember the recipients of the offering – their brethren (1 Cor 16:1). Additionally, he summons them to remember the effects of both sparing and bountiful sowing (2 Cor 9:6). He reminds them of the giving nature of the Lord Jesus, as revealed in their own salvation (2 Cor 8:9). He involves faithful brethren to assist in the gathering and distribution of the offering (2 Cor 8:16-18,22). He shares the original forwardness of the Corinthians, thereby provoking other saints to love and good works (2 Cor 9:2).

God has placed the gift of **“administrations,”** NKJV or **“governments,”**

in the church: **“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues”** (1 Cor 12:28). **This gift, like all other gifts, functions under the direct supervision of Deity.** This is affirmed in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians.

☛ **One unchanging and consistent Holy Spirit.** **“Now there are distinctive varieties and distributions of endowments (gifts, extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians, due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit) and they vary, but the [Holy] Spirit remains the same”**(verse 4). AMPLIFIED

☛ **All of them serve the Lord’s interests.** **“And there are distinctive varieties of service and ministration, but it is the same Lord [Who is served]”**(verse 5). AMPLIFIED

☛ **One God, with an eternal purpose, works all of these gifts within men.** **“And there are distinctive varieties of operation [of working to accomplish things], but it is the same God Who inspires and energizes them all in all”**(verse 6). AMPLIFIED

☛ **All of the gifts are designed to profit the whole body of Christ.** **“But to each one is given the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit [the evidence, the spiritual illumination of the Spirit] for good and profit”**(verse 7). AMPLIFIED

The gift of **“administrations,”** that is here exhibited in Paul, is operating within the framework of these revealed facts. The Spirit is working through it. The Lord’s interests are being served. God Himself is working through the gift in both purpose and power. The benefit of the body of Christ is the objective among

men – not an institutional agenda, and not purely personal interests. Thanksgivings being directed toward God is also the intended result of this act of kindness.



In administering this gift, Paul is ensuring that these Divine objectives are met – **both of them.** His work is not merely that of good organization, but that God’s objectives will be realized.

### OF THIS SERVICE

**“. . . of this service . . .”** Other versions read, **“this ministry,”** NRSV **“of giving,”** BBE **“of this office,”** DOUAY **“this public service,”** NAB **“this contribution,”** NJB **“your gifts,”** LIVING **“this sacred gift,”** WEYMOUTH and **“this fund.”** AMPLIFIED

The expression **“this service”** applies to the collection that is being taken. This gift, graciously being gathered by the saints, has been referred

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to in a variety of ways.

- ☛ “The collection for the saints” (1 Cor 16:1).
- ☛ “Their liberality” (2 Cor 8:2).
- ☛ “The gift” (2 Cor 8:4a).

### SUPPLYING THE SAINT’S WANT

“... not only supplieth the want of the saints . . .” Other versions read, “not only supplies the needs of the saints,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “not only fully supplying the needs of the saints,”<sup>NASB</sup> “not only supplying the needs of God’s people,”<sup>NIV</sup> “not only supplies the wants of the saints,”<sup>RSV</sup> “those in need are helped,”

**From the higher vantage point, the need was given to one group of brethren, while the means of supplying it was ministered to another group. The interests of God were served, and therefore He was being glorified in it. The needs of the brethren were also being served, and therefore they would give thanks to God for it.**

- ☛ “The fellowship,” or “participation”<sup>NASB</sup> (2 Cor 8:4b).
- ☛ “This same grace” (2 Cor 8:6).
- ☛ “This grace” (2 Cor 8:7,19).
- ☛ “Your abundance” (2 Cor 8:14a).
- ☛ “This abundance” (2 Cor 8:20).
- ☛ “A supply for their want” (2 Cor 8:14b).
- ☛ “Your bounty” (2 Cor 9:5).
- ☛ “This service” (2 Cor 9:12).
- ☛ “Liberal distribution” (2 Cor 9:13).

As used here, “service” means the activity of believers that minister to, or serve the needs, of others. **From the higher vantage point, the need was given to one group of brethren, while the means of supplying it was ministered to another group.** The interests of God were served, and therefore He was being glorified in it. The needs of the brethren were also being served, and therefore they would give thanks to God for it. This is what was being “administered.”

LIVING “it takes care of the needs of the holy people,”<sup>IE</sup> “helps to relieve the wants of God’s people,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “fully supply what is lacking to the saints (God’s people)”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “does not end in meeting the wants of our fellow-Christians.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Although we have dealt with this in another lesson, it is needful to make brief mention of it again. There are people who insist that those who trust the Lord will never suffer need. To them, the existence of “need” contradicts the Divine promise to supply “all our need” (Phil 4:19). However, such reasoning is too simplistic, and is unbecoming of a child of God. It assumes that all needs are met directly, and that the supply is in advance of the need. But these assumptions are foolish. God has been known to supply need by the fowls of the air delivering both bread and meat to the needy one (1 Kgs 17:6). In such a case, provision was not found in a storehouse, and it only came when the need arose. Jesus spoke of his “brethren” being “hungry,” “thirsty,” “naked,” and “sick” (Matt 25:35-36). James reminds us of our ministry to brethren who are “naked and destitute of daily food” (James 2:15). John calls us to consider the sight of a

brother who has “need” (1 John 3:17). The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of those who lived by faith wandering “about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Heb 11:37).

Paul himself affirmed that he had “learned” how to be “content” under all circumstances – and that included being “hungry” and suffering “need” (Phil 4:11-12). When he was with the Corinthians, he said there were times when he “wanted,” lacking the essentials (2 Cor 11:9). While he was engaged in labor for the Lord, and doing so extensively and faithfully, he experienced “hunger and thirst,” with “cold and nakedness” (2 Cor 11:27).

It should not surprise us, therefore, that we here read of “the want of the saints,” or “what is lacking to the saints.” Such expressions would be nothing more than the eruption of unbelief if God had promised we would never be put to a disadvantage, or experience times of want and need.

The work of the Lord is being carried out in an arena where deprivation, inconvenience, and not having the essentials of life **can** be experienced. In fact, they are often experienced in order that God might work among men for His own glory by meeting the needs of His people through His people. Earlier Paul referred to this arrangement in these words: “**But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality**” (2 Cor 8:14). When, therefore, we experience need, “the faith of God’s elect” (Tit 1:1) is convinced that God can and will supply that need, and hope can stretch forward to anticipate how He will do it. This is the higher view of “need.”

These are things that Law cannot accomplish, for it is, in all of its varied forms, “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3). Flesh cannot believe, and it cannot receive grace. It attempts to stand on its own, and refuses to change its mind. Therefore, those who are in the flesh “cannot please God” (Rom 8:8) – it is absolutely impossible to do so.

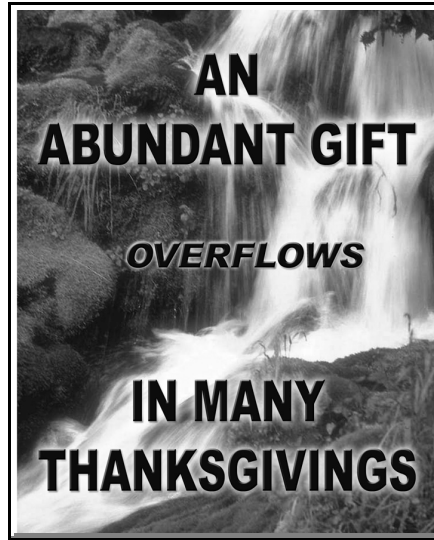
## ABUNDANT IN MANY THANKSGIVINGS

<sup>12b</sup> . . . **but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.** Other versions read, “*but is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*but is the cause of much praise to God,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God,*”<sup>NAB</sup> “*overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God,*”<sup>NIB</sup> “*overflows into widespread thanksgiving to God,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*awakens a chorus of thanksgiving to God,*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “*more and more prayers of thanksgiving to God,*”<sup>ISV</sup> and “*running over with many thanks to God for it,*”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

The idea here is that the gift, or offering provided for the poor saints in Jerusalem, will not only be used to supply the needs of the saints, it will, actually increase, or multiply, in “*many thanksgivings to God.*” It is as though the currency, or coinage, was converted to another media – a spiritual substance. That substance is called “*many thanksgivings*” – that is, as the need grew and grew until it was actually met by an abundance answering that need, so the abundance, or offering caused thanksgivings to multiply exponentially.

The word “*thanksgivings*” comes from the Greek word εὐχαριστιῶν (yoo-khar-is-tee-on). Lexically, this word means, “*the giving of thanks,*”<sup>THAYER</sup> “*gratitude, thankfulness,*”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> and “*to express gratitude for benefits or blessings.*”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> In the New Covenant Scriptures, the giving of thanks is equated with praise, although it is not limited to it. “*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God*

*continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name*” (Heb 13:15). In this Hebrews passage, the context is going to Jesus, in our hearts leaving the realm of the temporal, knowing that “*here we have no continuing city, but we*



*seek on to come*” (Heb 13:14). The fact, therefore, that we are acutely conscious of the transitory nature of life in this world, yet are journeying to a blessed and permanent above, produces praise to God, or thanksgiving to His name. **In other words, our thanksgiving proceeds from spiritual insight, fervent longing, and the firm persuasion of hope.**

While it is true that thanksgiving is, in a sense, an obligation, it is much more than that. Nor, indeed, is praise, or thanksgiving, a sort of key that unlocks

the courts of heaven. In both cases – obligation, and a means of access to God – faith and the insight it brings are put into the background. In this text, however, both are brought into the foreground.

In this text, thanksgiving is both a result and an objective. The result is found in men who perceive what the Lord has done. The objective speaks of the Divine intent that moved Him to supply the need through His people. If, therefore, the need was not supplied – which it would not have been if the matter depended wholly upon Corinth – the whole manner of the kingdom would have become distorted. That is why God enabled the Macedonians to give above their ability to this very cause. In so doing, they made up for the Corinthians deficiency, and ensured that thanksgiving would be found among the saints who were helped by their offering.

All of this does not let the Corinthians “*off the hook,*” so to speak. More is involved here than meeting the needs of the saints. There is also the matter of “*many thanksgivings*” being raised up to God. The “*many*” would correspond with the “*many*” saints that participated in the offering. Paul therefore continues to reason with the Corinthians, insisting that they get to the business of completing this offering. To this point, they have been living in contradiction of these two kingdom objectives: (1) supplying the wants of the saints, and (2) enabling many thanksgivings to God. They can do this no longer.

## THE EXPERIMENT

<sup>13a</sup> **Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ . . .**

The circle of reasoning is now

made even larger. Not only do “*many thanksgivings*” have to do with the saints having their needs met. They also are produced by the confirmation that the Corinthians have **subjected** themselves to the Gospel of Christ. This is a most

intriguing consideration.

### THE EXPERIMENT OF THIS MINISTRATION

“*Whiles by the experiment of this ministration . . .*” Other versions read,

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*"the proof of this ministry,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"the proof given by this ministry,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"the service by which you have proved yourselves,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"the testing of this ministry,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"the test of this service,"*<sup>RSV</sup> *"it is proof that you put yourself under Christ's authority,"*<sup>IE</sup> *"the practical proof of it which you exhibit in this service,"*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"through the test you get by doing this service,"*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *"this ministration proves you,"*<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> *"standing of the test of this ministry,"*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *"your very giving proves the reality of your faith."*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

From the standpoint of appearance, Agabus' announcement of a coming famine was a Divine means of preparing the saints to assist their brethren. **From the perspective of this text, it was a test to determine the sincerity of their faith and commitment to the Gospel.**

It is not enough to do what is conceived to be necessary to obtain salvation. It is also not enough to wear the right name, belong to the right assembly, and make a reasonable effort to live acceptably to God. None of those things are to be despised, and all are absolutely essential. However, none of them are taken for granted by God, and they are not to be assumed by us either. **It is God's nature to test the fabric of our trust, and the resiliency of our resolve.** He did this with Israel (Ex 20:20; Deut 8:2,16; 33:8), and He does so with the church as well.

The Word of God speaks of opportunities to do good: *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal 6:10). However, such occasions are more than an opportunity. **They are also a test to see how serious we are about serving the Lord, and how deep our roots extend into the love of God.**

The word "experiment" is translated from a word meaning, "a proving, trial, approvedness, tried character, a proof, a specimen of,"<sup>THAYER</sup> "the proof of genuineness, evidence,"<sup>FRIBERG</sup> "character, worth, proof, evidence,"<sup>UBS</sup> "to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing,"<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and "a proof, text: tried character."<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

Viewed from this perspective, what was this opportunity to assist the suffering saints in Jerusalem? What was the Divine purpose behind it all – or did God have a purpose in this? Paul leaves no doubt about this matter. **God was testing the fabric of the faith of the Corinthians.** Their response to this situation would testify to the extent of their faith and love. If they have really excelled as they supposed, they will excel in this "ministration." If their faith is weak and they are infantile in their perceptions, that too will be made known. This was nothing less than God examining their faith, and **the examination will uncover their real situation!**

The opportunity would never have presented itself if it was beyond their ability. We know this is the case because of this revelation: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor 10:13). Some sophist will remonstrate, saying that this is speaking only of the temptation to commit sin. But this is not true, for God also tempts, or tests, our faith. It is said of Abraham, *"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of*

*the mountains which I will tell thee of"* (Gen 22:1-2). This very same word is translated "proved," when God tested Israel at bitter waters (Ex 15:25). It is also used in His testing of Israel with the manna, to see if they would walk in his ways (Ex 16:4). Additionally, it was used to denote the testing of Israel during their forty-year trek in the wilderness, *"to know what is in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no"* (Deut 8:2).

Again, the novice sees no need for such testing, because, he affirms, God knows everything already. While God does know all things, the spectators of the drama of redemption, the holy angels, do **not** know everything. There are also other servants of God who behold those associated with the Lord, and they do **not** know everything either. This is not to mention the ones being tested, who also are **not** fully aware of all of their strengths or weaknesses. These tests are for the advantage of such spectators and participants.

Now, up to this point, the Corinthians had failed the test. They had seen the need and made a commitment, yet had not carried it out. However, they had not altogether renounced their commitment. They were like a bruised reed or a smoking flax. Recovery from their miserable condition was still within their reach, and thus Paul is fanning the feeble flame, and binding up the bruised reed, in order that God might be glorified.

#### THEY GLORIFY GOD

*"...they glorify God..."* Other versions read, *"they will glorify God,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"men will praise God,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"you glorify God,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"they give glory to God,"*<sup>BBE</sup> and *"they glorifying God."*<sup>DARBY</sup>

Here is the inevitable outcome of the response of faith: **men WILL glorify God!** The saints in Jerusalem who receive this "ministration" will not fail to give

THE  
OPPORTUNITY  
TO DO GOOD

THE EXPERIMENT OF  
THIS MINISTRATION

A TEST THAT  
DETERMINES  
FAITHFULNESS



abundant thanks for what they received. They WILL perceive the Lord in the whole matter, and glorify Him for His marvelous works. This is all by Divine design. It is the intended outcome of this “*experiment*,” or test from heaven. Faith will produce these results.

### FOR YOUR PROFESSED SUBJECTION TO THE GOSPEL

“... *for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ* . . .” Other versions read, “*for the obedience of your confession to the Gospel of Christ*,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ*,”<sup>NIV</sup> “*by your obedience in acknowledging the Gospel of Christ*,”<sup>RSV</sup> “*that your deeds are as good as your doctrine*,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*that you agree with this Gospel*,”<sup>IE</sup> “*for your fidelity to your professed adherence to the Good News of Christ*,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “*for your faithfulness to your profession*,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “*for your loyalty and obedience to the Gospel of Christ*,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*you practice the Gospel you profess to believe in*.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Paul now takes this matter even further, connecting it with the relationship of the Corinthians to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Regardless of their profession or imagined spiritual attainments, if they did not come through with this offering, a most tragic condition would be revealed. **They were not living in subjection to the Gospel!** They were not obeying the Gospel! They were not faithful! They were not loyal! They were not adhering to the Good News of Christ! **If they failed this test – a test that had been arranged by God – the futility of their religion would be made known!** It would make no difference what they said, what they confessed, or how impressive their assembly might appear!

However, if they did follow through with their resolve, the genuineness of their faith would be

**confirmed.** Their profession of subjection to the Gospel would thus be corroborated, and their obedience to the Gospel firmly substantiated. None of these things were to be taken for granted. Just as surely as Abraham offering up Isaac confirmed the genuineness of his faith (James 2:21-23),

Allow me to site our own experience at The Word of Truth Fellowship as an example. Although judged by many to be small in number, unparalleled doors of opportunity have been opened to us. Hungry and thirsty souls have approached us from the

**I have personally known kingdom laborers in remote places who received gifts that were so small and paltry that they tended to complicate their lives rather than bring relief. A genuine gift, or “distribution” must have a beneficial effect upon those receiving it.**

so the willing and abundant offering of the Corinthians for their suffering Jewish brethren would confirm their faith.

Some might object that this is being saved by works, and thus cannot possibly be true. However, that is not an accurate appraisal of the situation at all! Here is the real situation. The Corinthians had professed identity with God. Now God orchestrates the affairs of the church so that an opportunity is provided for the Corinthians to express their faith and love. The opportunity will precisely match their ability, and will not stretch them beyond what they are actually able to do. All of the grace that is required to meet this opportunity will be supplied to those who correctly perceive it. **Now, in that context, failure is disastrous, for it reveals a flawed heart.**

Obeying the Gospel, then, is not limited to our entrance into Christ as some suppose. It also includes passing the tests sent to us by God.

### Our Own Experience

United States, West Africa, Pakistan, Kenya, India, and other places. They have asked us to teach them, to assist their teachers and leaders in understanding, and to supply materials appropriate for those objectives.

These requests were tests – an appointed means of proving the genuineness of our faith and the consistency of our obedience. By experience, we have found that faith can pass the test, and personal resolve can be maintained under the most challenging circumstances. Because of this, a great chorus of thanksgiving continues to be raised in the areas requesting our ministry, and we ourselves are the better for it. We are experiencing a greater degree of spiritual understanding, more extensive willingness, and a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

**This is how the Lord works among believers, and it is most enjoyable experience.** It is a form of Divine fellowship, participation in the Divine nature, and being laborers together with God.

## YOUR LIBERAL DISTRIBUTION

“<sup>13b</sup> . . . *and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.*”

This is further elaboration of the reason for the receiving brethren glorifying God, giving Him “*many*

*thanksgivings.*”

### YOUR LIBERAL DISTRIBUTION

*When we sow our resources, there are effects wrought in both heaven and earth– by Given O. Blakely*

“ . . . and for your liberal distribution . . . ” Other versions read, “your liberal sharing,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the liberality of your contribution,”<sup>NASB</sup> “your generosity in sharing,”<sup>NIV</sup> “the wealth of your giving,”<sup>BBE</sup> “your free-hearted liberality in communicating,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “the generosity of your fellowship,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “generous-hearted liberality,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

It is assumed that the Corinthians will contribute liberally to the God-orchestrated cause. This will require them to believe and embrace what Paul has written to them about giving.

- ☛ Sowing (giving) and reaping (receiving) operate by the same standard. “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6).
- ☛ God is endeared to those who give cheerfully, which implies giving abundantly. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for **God loveth a cheerful giver**” (2 Cor 9:7).
- ☛ God can provide resources that allow for generous giving. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may **abound to every good work**” (2 Cor 9:8).

Many thanksgivings, therefore, will include glorifying God for those who were “liberal” in their gifts. It is important to remember that “liberal” is understood within the context of what is possessed. If a widow gives “two mites,” that is considered “liberal” or “bountifully.” If a rich man who feasts sumptuously every day gives “two mites,” that would be considered “sparingly.”

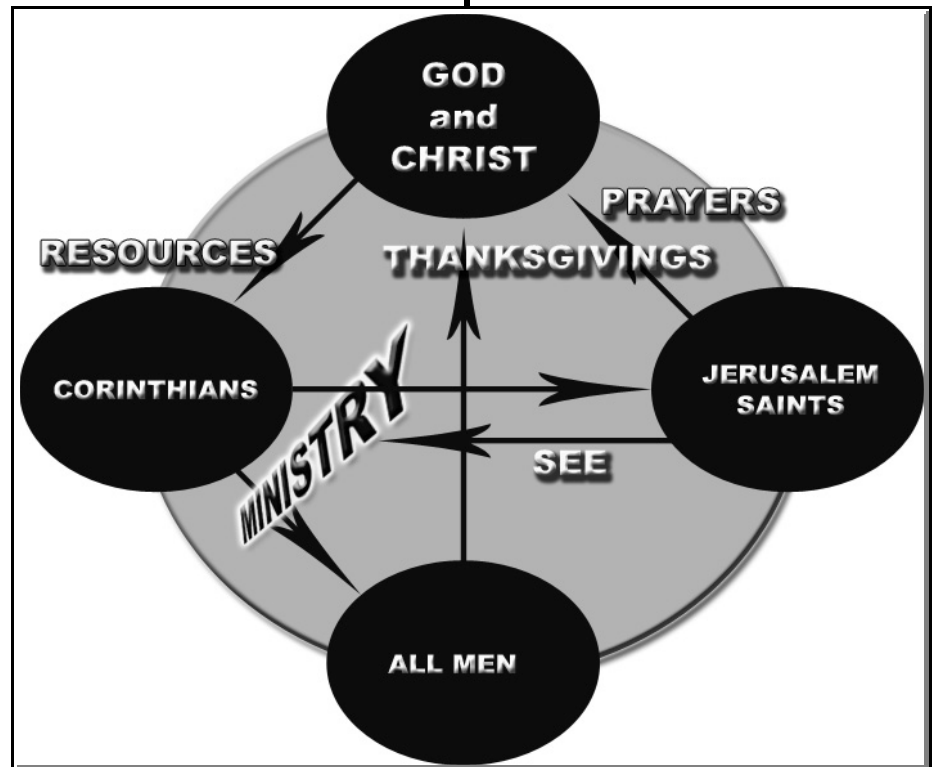
### UNTO THEM

“ . . . unto them . . . ” Other versions read, “with them,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “to them,”<sup>NASB</sup> “for them,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “towards them,”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “sharing with them.”<sup>NIB</sup>

This is the perspective of the receiver, not the giver, and not the spectator. The “liberal distribution” was

made to the people giving God glory. It would be good to consider just how much glory God receives from the gifts that we give. I have personally known kingdom laborers in remote places who received gifts that were so small and paltry that they tended to complicate their lives rather than bring relief. **A genuine gift, or “distribution” must have a beneficial effect upon those receiving it.** Within the context of organized religion, this is not often a consideration.

cause. God is represented as being “able” to so provide for us that we will always have sufficient for our own needs, and still be able to “abound unto **EVERY** good work” (2 Cor 9:8). We are also exhorted, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good **unto all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). Special attention is to be given to kindred believers. However, we are not to grow indifferent to opportunities to “do good unto **all men**.”



### AND ALL MEN

“ . . . and unto all men.” Other versions read, “and to all,”<sup>NASB</sup> “and with everyone else,”<sup>NIV</sup> “with all others,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “and for all others,”<sup>RSV</sup> “and towards all,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “and to all men,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “and for all who are in need,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “and all [the other needy ones].”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

It is to be understood that the poor saints in Jerusalem were not the only group of needy people. It would not be proper for the Corinthians to think that God put the Jerusalem saints on their minds, and that it was therefore appropriate to limit their giving to that

The Spirit also reminds us, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:2). And again, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). **All of this assumes that we understand a surplus of resources is God’s appointed means of providing for those who lack resources.** However, when a society centers in self, the accumulation of wealth, and being financially secure, this is a most difficult thing to see. Yet, this is the truth, and Paul is laboring as an expert builder to enable us to see it.

## THEIR PRAYER FOR YOU

***“<sup>14</sup> And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.”***

The remarkable intricacies of the kingdom of God are refreshing to ponder. Already Paul has said that thanksgiving and glorifying God will result from the liberal gifts of the Corinthians. Now he affirms that prayers will be made for them also. **Notice that Divine influences produce complementary effects.** That is, grace expressed through one person tends to increase the expressions of grace in another person. This is part of the body being *“fitly framed together”* (Eph 2:21). **Of course, where the members of the body are not built up, and self becomes more prominent, all of these**

as a sort of overflow of their tender hearts, they begin to offer prayers for those who have so gracious and abundantly supplied their *“wants.”*

Now the receivers of the gift will pray for the welfare of the Corinthians – that God will supply all of their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19). One man has written, “The prayers of the poorest Christian for us are worth more than all we usually bestow on them in charity; and he who has secured the pleadings of a child of God, however humble, in his behalf, has made a good use of his money.” <sup>Albert Barnes</sup> Who can afford to be without such prayers? Is this not part of the *“whole armor of God?”* As it is written, *“Put on the whole armor of God . . . Praying always with all prayer and*

that all such benefits are forfeited when professing believers remain either ignorant of the open doors set before them, or are indifferent toward them.

### WHICH LONG FOR YOU

*“ . . . which long after you . . . ”* Other versions read, *“yearn for you,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“their hearts will go out to you,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“their hearts go out to you in love,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“being desirous of you,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“long after you greatly,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“the affection they feel for you,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“with deep affection,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“deep fervor and feeling,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> and *“pour out their longing love for you”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

For those who are in Christ Jesus, **their** personal circumstance is not the most important thing. Therefore, they are able to long for things other than the things required to live in this world. Here, they are brought to yearn to see the Corinthians, and to be in their company. Which of us, upon experiencing some benefit from the *“household of faith”* has not felt this kind of longing? Again, this is the manner of the kingdom. It is how spiritual life expresses itself. It is what happens when men live by faith and walk in the Spirit. It is a frame of mind that accompanies the fervent love of the brethren.

### FOR THE EXCEEDING GRACE OF GOD IN YOU

*“ . . . for the exceeding grace of God in you.”* Other versions read, *“because of the surpassing grace of God in you,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“because of the surpassing grace of God that He has given you,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“because of the excellent grace of God in you,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“because of the surpassing grace of God upon you,”* <sup>ESV</sup> *“because of the unbounded grace God has given you,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“the wonderful grace God has shown through you,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“God’s unusual favor toward you,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“God’s surpassing grace which is resting upon you,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“because of God’s exceptional grace that has shown to you,”* <sup>ISV</sup> and *“because of the surpassing measure of God’s grace (His favor and mercy and spiritual blessing which is shown forth) in you.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Precisely what is that sparks such hearty thanksgiving to God? What has

**The catalyst for the marvelous expressions described in this passage was spiritual insight. The receivers of the gift were able to discern that God had showered His grace upon givers, both in substance and in attitude. It was God who was working in those who assisted them, “both to will**

benefits are forfeited. To further compound the problem, God does not work favorable in an environment where His grace is frustrated and the Spirit is quenched. This accounts for the less-than-ideal conditions that exist among the vast majority of American churches.

### THEIR PRAYER FOR YOU

*“And by their prayer for you . . . ”* Other versions read, *“by prayer on your behalf,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“supplication on your behalf,”* <sup>ASV</sup> and *“their supplication for you.”* <sup>BBE</sup>

What a marvelous effect is this! When a liberal and willing gift is sent to suffering brethren, they not only give thanks to God for the gift they have received, they also give thanks for their liberality toward *“all men”* who are in need. As if that is not enough, they also *“glorify”* God, beholding His hand in all of this, not crediting it to man alone. **Then,**

*supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”* (Eph 6:11,18).

And how is this kind of prayer brought to pass? Is it enough to know that this is a requirement? One might reason that this is theoretically true, and that nothing more needs to be said about it. However, things are not quite that simple in matters pertaining to life and godliness. **The will of God is best carried out in an environment of mutual spirituality and concern for one another.** Thus, as in this text, the prayers that were technically obligatory, were provoked by the liberal provisions of concerned brethren – brethren who entered into the door of opportunity that was opened to them. This is another means the Lord employs to work all things together for our good (Rom 8:28).

Of course, if ought to be noted

*When we sow our resources, there are effects wrought in both heaven and earth– by Given O. Blakely*

moved the ones who were helped to glorify God, offer prayers for their benefactors, and long to see them? Was it merely that their need was met? Was it that they were now able to provide for their households, rather than suffer even further impoverishment? That this is involved in a secondary sort of way cannot be denied. **But such a perspective is incapable of producing what is declared in this text.**

The catalyst for the marvelous expressions described in this passage was **spiritual insight**. The receivers of the gift were able to discern that God had showered His grace upon givers, both in substance and in attitude. It was God who was working in those who assisted them, *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13). They saw God’s grace in their provisions –

ministered through various members of the body of Christ. They perceived that when men excel, it is because they have received an *“exceeding measure”* of grace. They are also cognizant of the fact that faith took hold of that grace, associating the need of the brethren with an opportunity to come to their aid. God is greatly glorified by such circumstances. However, when appropriate responses to Divine promptings are not found, God is robbed of His glory, due thanksgivings are not offered, and fervent love for the brethren is diminished.

There is no way to make up for such a deficiency by means of a routine or supposed spiritual discipline. We are living in a day when a view of coming before God is more akin to magic than to the working of the grace of God. Men imagine that they can live in the flesh,

floundering about in the muck of life in this world, then, while engaging in some imagined praise, suddenly being wafted into the presence of God and experience great measures of His grace. It is all a gigantic delusion! Those who are marketing this kind of approach are not noted for their concern for the flock of God. They are not known for their perception of God’s grace, or for seizing opportunities that are set before them to minister to the whole body. They have developed their own culture, and it has too many boundaries that are not of God’s making. They are not noted for being holy, separated from the world, or maturity in Jesus. They are really the nursery of the church, but they pretend to be its new leaders – leaders who are sorely lacking in spiritual understanding and discernment. In my judgment, they are nothing more than a blotch on the canvas of Divine purpose.

## GOD’S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

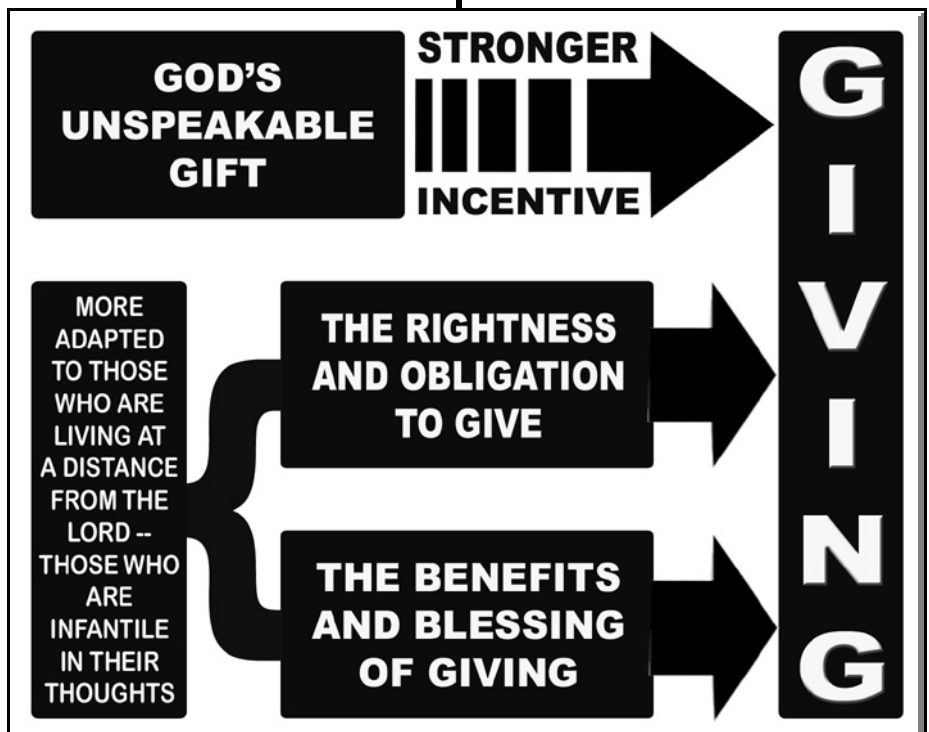
<sup>15</sup> **Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.** Other versions read, *“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”*, <sup>RSV</sup> *“Praise be to God for what He has given, which words have no power to say,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“Thanks be to God for His gift that is beyond all telling!”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“Thank God for His Son – a gift too wonderful for words!”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“Thanks be to God for His unspeakably precious gift,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“Now thanks be to God for His Gift, [precious] beyond telling [His indescribable, inexpressible, free Gift]!”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“Thank God, then, for His indescribable generosity to you!”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Paul has been speaking about gifts – gifts given by one member of the body of Christ to another member of that body – and even *“to all men.”* He is not content, however, to let the matter rest in the hall of sacred duty. He will not even bring a cessation to this corrective teaching by relating all of the benefits that are realized by cheerful and unbegrudging giving. Those are certainly noble incentives, but they are not the **most** noble inducements.

There are **“better”** ways of doing things – ways that make more provision

for the entrance of grace, Divine fellowship, more glory to God, and **greater benefit to His people**. Here, we are not speaking of right and wrong, or acceptable and unacceptable. Rather,

there are ways that are superior, giving a greater latitude for the Spirit to work, and less of an opportunity for the flesh to express itself.



### AN EXAMPLE

In his correction of the Corinthians, Paul spoke of a “*more excellent way*.” It was not that all other ways were unlawful. Rather, it was that they were inferior, making a greater opportunity for the intrusion of the flesh.

Among the Corinthians there was considerable confusion over “*spiritual gifts*.” Even though they “*came behind*” in none of them, they were not noble examples of the understanding and use of them. Paul devotes three chapters to this subject, endeavoring to correct their perceptions and use of these “*gifts*” (chapters 12-14).

First he states, “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, “uninformed”<sup>NRSV</sup> or “misinformed.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (1 Cor 12:1). Why did he say this? **It certainly was not because a noble understanding of them existed in Corinth!** He reminds them of their background. “*You know that when you were heathen, you were led off after idols that could not speak [habitually] as impulse directed and whenever the occasion might arise*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (12:2). They were “*led off*” into unintelligible areas – after idols who could not speak, and therefore never delivered an intelligible and profitable message. Further, they were “*led off*” by impulse, not understanding, perception, or fervent desire. All such leading is out of order in Christ Jesus. This is simply not the way Jesus works among His people. In Christ Jesus, it is the Person of the Holy Spirit who directs and influences the people. He is not an unintelligent Spirit, but is noted for searching “*all things, yea the deep things of God*” – and He searches them out to give them to the redeemed in an intelligent form, so they can “*know them*.” They are, in other words, “*revealed*” or made known (1 Cor 2:9-10). Somehow, in all of the religious flamboyancy in Corinth, this had been missed, and therefore they needed to be instructed “*more perfectly*” in “*the way of God*” (Acts 18:26).*

In the novelty of it all, the purpose for “*spiritual gifts*” appears to have been greatly obscured. Therefore Paul goes to great lengths to establish this.

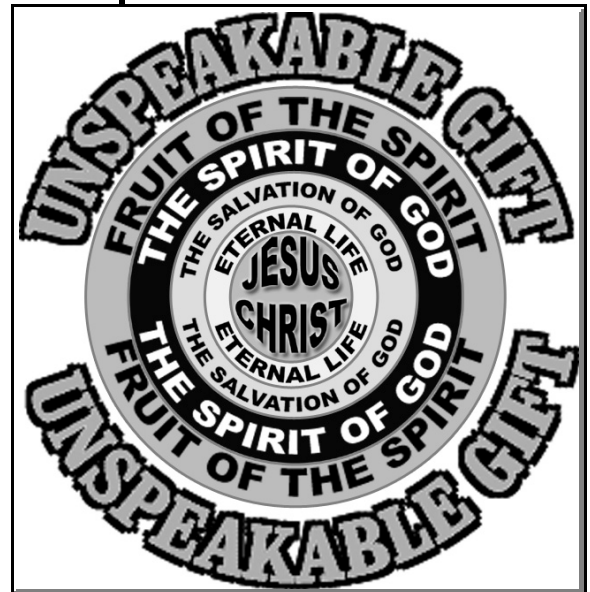
- One Spirit is the Author of the “*diversity of gifts*,” making them all harmonious with one another, and not competitive in nature (12:4).
- The remarkable “*differences of administrations*,” or “*varieties of ministries*”<sup>NASB</sup> are all under the supervision of “*the same Lord*.” Therefore they serve a Divine purpose, and not a human one (12:5).
- There are also a “*diversities of operations*,” or different activities with differing effects. Yet, “*it is the same God that worketh all in all*” (12:6). Therefore, none of them make for confusion, division, or the promotion of conflicting purposes.

- The purpose for every single “*spiritual gift*” is “*to profit withal*,” or “*for the profit of all*,”<sup>NKJV</sup> or “*the common good*”<sup>NASB</sup> (12:7).
- Paul then expounded that all members of the body do not receive the same spiritual enablement (12:8-31). Each gift is according to the will of the Spirit (12:11). None of the gifts **cause** a person to be part of the body (12:12-17). Each member has been placed where God wants him (12:18-20). No spiritual endowment removes the necessity of the other members (12:21-24). This arrangement is in order that “*there be no schism (or division) in the body*” (12:25).
- The church is admonished to “*covet earnestly the best gifts*” (12:31). That is, the gifts that most obviously profit the whole body, and make divisions and superior or inferior feelings less apt to occur.

Then, Paul makes this startling statement: “*and yet show I unto you a more excellent way*” (12:31b). This is a way that is “*better and more excellent*” than seeking earnestly the “*best gifts*” – although there is nothing inherently

wrong with that. The **better way** is declared in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. **It is the way of “charity,” or spiritual love.** Love has qualities that no spiritual gift has of itself. “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth . . .*” (1 Cor 13:8).

This statement is not designed to



denigrate the spiritual gifts, or suggest they have no place in the body of Christ. It is rather designed to show us the “*better and more excellent way*” – a way that can pervade the heart and will of the person possessing the gift, and therefore work profitably through the gift.

### OUR TEXT

This particular verse is declaring the “*better and more excellent way*.” **It is an awareness that will provoke more zealous involvement in the will of God than a sense of duty or a quest for benefits.** It will produce greater thanksgiving than is expressed when sustaining and liberal gifts are received from the brethren. It has a more powerfully constraining influence upon

the heart than knowing God has given us our “daily bread.”

Let no one imagine that this allows for a lack of thankfulness for provision, or for liberal gifts from the saints of God. The point here is that there is a foundation that firmly undergirds all other expressions of thanksgiving – and it is thankfulness for God’s “unspeakable gift.”

And, what is this “unspeakable gift?” The word “unspeakable” means

administration, the “unspeakable gift” is the Holy Spirit who convicts, cleanses, illuminated, and sanctifies the individual. Considered from the view of expression, or actual participation in the life of God, the “unspeakable gift” is the “fruit of the Spirit,” the outworking of the Divine nature in the believer.

The uses of “the gift of God” confirm the magnitude of the expression.

• **Living water.** “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest **the**

The answer is evident. **The Corinthians had lacked spiritual motivation.** They were not being compelled from within, which is the nature of salvation. Living waters were not flowing out of their belly, as Jesus said they would (John 7:38). An unacceptable condition had been induced by the acceptance of “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel.” As a result, Paul could not speak to them “as unto spiritual” (1 Cor 3:1). **Thus he lisped to them in rudimentary, or elementary language.** He told them they should keep their promise (2 Cor 8:10-11). He reminded them that it was embarrassing to have boasted about them, and yet for them to not yet to have fulfilled their commitment (2 Cor 9:4). He helped them along by sending Titus to exhort them to do what they has said (2 Cor 8:6). He reminded them that a sparing investment in the cause of the Lord, would bring them sparing returns from the Lord (2 Cor 9:6a). He challenged them to consider that a bountiful harvest comes from bountiful sowing (2 Cor 9:6b). Then he reminded them that God gave them a surplus so they could accomplish what they had delayed to do (2 Cor 8:13-15). He even stooped to tell them the brethren in Jerusalem would give thanks to God for receiving their gift, would see what God had done in the Corinthians, and would even pray for them (2 Cor 9:12-15).

**But after all is said and done, he calls them to remember how God had given to them!** He reminded them that in order to save them Jesus “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Cor 8:9). He calls upon them to consider the remarkable plentitude of salvation – an abundance that is too large to fit into the feeble bag of human speech. **Now, how is it possible to actually be reconciled to such a God, be accepted and blessed by Him, and conduct one’s life in such a manner that so contrasted and contradicted that salvation?** None but a fool does not know the answer! No one of sound mind does not know that two cannot walk together unless they are agreed (Amos 3:3) – and that is speaking of men walking together with God. Where men are at variance with God, He will not work for good through them. Such are unfit vessels.

**At its very core, the “unspeakable gift” is Jesus Christ Himself, the Sum and Substance of what God has to give men, Everything is wrapped up in Him, and it defies human expression. From the experiential point of view, the essence of the “unspeakable gift” is “eternal life.” This is the ultimate experience – knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent**

“indescribable,” THAYER “what cannot be told because it is too wonderful for words, indescribable, inexpressible,” FRIBERG “that which cannot be fully related or communicated – indescribable, beyond words,” LOUW-NIDA and “ineffable,” or incapable of being expressed in words. LIDDELL-SCOTT

What is this gift that cannot be adequately described – a gift from God that defies human explanation?

At its very core, the “unspeakable gift” is Jesus Christ Himself, the Sum and Substance of what God has to give men, Everything is wrapped up in Him, and it defies human expression. From the experiential point of view, the essence of the “unspeakable gift” is “eternal life.” This is the ultimate experience – knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). Looking at the “unspeakable gift” from the standpoint of a grand overview encompassing blessings, advantages, and the inheritance, it is the salvation of God. From the standpoint of its

**gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”** (John 4:10).

- **The Spirit.** “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that **the gift of God** may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20).
- **Eternal life.** “For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God** is **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23).
- **Salvation.** “For **by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God**” (Eph 2:8).

What is the passage saying, and why is this kind of language used with respect to gathering a collection for some poor saints – a collection that had been commenced over a year ago?



## CONCLUSION

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This passage has spoken strongly of the Divine nature, and of the stultifying effects of false teaching and the carnality that it produces. There is no “*provision for the flesh*” in the salvation of God – none whatsoever! Those who are reconciled to God may be forbearing and tolerant of one another, but it is not because there is anything acceptable in the flesh. **All Christian forbearance is in order to spiritual maturity and godly advance.** While the forbearance is taking place, and we are tenderhearted, forgiving one another for Christ’s sake, someone must put forth an insightful effort to bring the weaker brethren where God intends for them to be. God is not content for His children to remain in an undeveloped state. Jesus has already made clear that having no root is the sure prelude to falling away “*in the time of temptation*” (Luke 8:13). There is no

chance that this will not happen. That is to settle for the mediocre and the

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precisely what Paul is doing in this text, and he does it such great and refreshing spiritual expertise.

We are living in a time when the “*more excellent way*” and “*some better thing*” is not often affirmed. Merchants of form without power are teaching people

lukewarm. They do this by introducing psychological explanations for flawed conduct, and explanations of Divine love that cause men to think carnality and worldly-mindedness are not really so bad. Such an approach was not acceptable in Paul’s day, and it is not in our day either.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/3/2006. In this session, we will continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. Our text will be the first ten verses of chapter twelve: **“REVELATIONS AND A THORN.”** Because Paul had received such an abundance of visions and revelations, he was “given” a “thorn in the flesh,” called “a messenger from Satan.” This was designed to promote a certain weakness in Paul. However, that weakness was in order to the realization of the strength of Christ. This is a marvelous text, filled with good things. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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*When we sow our resources, there are effects wrought in both heaven and earth– by Given O. Blakely*

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COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

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## **REFRESHING WATERS RENEWAL #17**

**August 1-3, 2006**

**First Christian Church  
Crown Point, Indiana**

**Theme**

**“THE PROPHECIES OF CHRIST”**

*Spreading festival dealing with the nature and content  
of the Gospel of Christ. These sessions will affirm the  
real Jesus, as announced by the holy Prophets,  
thereby distinguishing from all false Christs.*