

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter the apostle seems to excuse his earnestness in pressing the Corinthians to the duty of charity (v. 1-5), and proceeds to give directions about the acceptable way and manner of performing it, namely, bountifully, deliberately, and freely; and gives good encouragement for so doing (v. 6 to the end).

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-5

CHARITY URGED

In these verses the apostle speaks very respectfully to the Corinthians, and with great skill; and, while he seems to excuse his urging them so earnestly to charity, still presses them thereto, and shows how much his heart was set upon this matter.

I. He tells them it was needless to press them with further arguments to afford relief to their poor brethren (v. 1), being satisfied he had said enough already to prevail with those of whom he had so good an opinion. For,

1. *He knew their forwardness* to every good work, and how they had begun this good work a year ago, insomuch that,

2. He had boasted of their zeal to the Macedonians, and this had provoked many of them to do as they had done. Wherefore he was persuaded, that, as they had begun well, they would go on well; and so, commending them for what they had done, he lays an obligation on them to proceed and persevere.

II. He seems to apologize for sending Titus and the other brethren to them. He is unwilling they should be offended at him for this, as if he were too earnest, and pressed too hard upon them; and tells the true reasons why he sent them, namely,

1. That, having this timely notice, they might be fully ready (v. 3), and not surprised with hasty demands, when he should come to them. When we

would have others to do that which is good we must act towards them prudently and tenderly, and give them time.

2. That he might not be ashamed of his boasting concerning them, if they should be found unready, v. 3, 4. He intimates that some from Macedonia might *haply come with him*: and, if the collection should not then be made, this would make him, not to say them, ashamed, considering the boasting of the apostle concerning them. Thus careful was he to preserve their reputation and his own. Note, Christians should consult the reputation of their profession, and endeavour to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

CHARITY URGED

Here we have,

I. Proper directions to be observed about the right and acceptable manner of bestowing charity; and it is of great concernment that we not only do what is required, but do it as is commanded. Now, as to the manner in which the apostle would have the Corinthians give, observe,

1. It should be bountifully; this was intimated, v. 5, that a liberal contribution was expected, a matter of bounty, not what savoured of covetousness; and he offers to their consideration that men who expect a good return at harvest are not wont to pinch and spare in sowing their seed, for the return is usually proportionable to what they sow, v. 6.

2. It should be deliberately *Every man, according as he purposes in his heart*, v. 7. Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design; whereas some do good only by accident. They comply, it may be hastily, with the importunity of others, without any good design, and give more than they intended, and then repent of it afterwards. Or possibly, had they duly considered all things, they would have given more. Due deliberation, as to this matter of our own circumstances, and those of the persons we are about to relieve, will be very helpful to direct us how liberal we should be in our contributions for charitable uses.

3. It should be freely, whatever we give, be it more or less: *Not grudgingly, nor of necessity*, but cheerfully, v. 7. Persons sometimes will give merely to satisfy the importunity of those who ask their charity, and what they give is in a manner squeezed or forced from them, and this unwillingness spoils all they do. We ought to give more freely than the modesty of some necessitous persons will allow them to ask: we should not only deal out bread, but draw out our souls to the hungry, ²⁵³⁰ Isaiah 58:10. We should give liberally, with an open hand, and cheerfully, with an open countenance, being glad we have ability and an opportunity to be charitable.

II. Good encouragement to perform this work of charity in the manner directed. Here the apostle tells the Corinthians,

1. They themselves would be no losers by what they gave in charity. This may serve to obviate a secret objection in the minds of many against this good work who are ready to think they may want what they give away; but such should consider that what is given to the poor in a right manner is far from being lost; as the precious seed which is cast into the ground is not lost, though it is buried there for a time, for it will spring up, and bear fruit; the sower shall receive it again with increase, v. 6. Such good returns may those expect who give freely and liberally in charity. For,

(1.) God loveth a cheerful giver (v. 7), and what may not those hope to receive who are the objects of the divine love? Can a man be a loser by doing that with which God is pleased? May not such a one be sure that he shall some way or other be a gainer? Nay, are not the love and favour of God better than all other things, *better than life* itself?

(2.) God is able to make our charity redound to our advantage, v. 8. We have no reason to distrust the goodness of God, and surely we have no reason to question his power; he is *able to make all grace abound* towards us, and abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can cause us to have a sufficiency in all things, to be content with what we have, to make up what we give, to be able to give yet more: as it is written (²⁵³¹ Psalm 112:9) concerning the charitable man, *He hath dispersed abroad. He hath given to the poor. His righteousness, that is, his almsgiving, endureth for ever.* The honour of it is lasting, the reward of it eternal, and he is still able to live comfortably himself and to give liberally to others.

(3.) The apostle puts up a prayer to God in their behalf that they might be gainers, and not losers, v. 10, 11. Here observe,

[1.] To whom the prayer is made to God, *who ministereth seed to the sower*, who by his providence giveth such an increase of the fruits of the earth that we have not only bread sufficient to eat for one year, but enough to sow again for a future supply: or thus, It is God who giveth us not only a competency for ourselves, but that also wherewith we may supply the wants of others, and so should be as seed to be sown.

[2.] For what he prayeth. There are several things which he desires for them, namely, that they may have *bread for their food*, always a competency for themselves, *food convenient*, that God will *multiply their seed sown*, that they may still be able to do more good, and that there may be *an increase of the fruits of righteousness*, that they may reap plentifully, and have the best and most ample returns of their charity, so as to be *enriched in every thing to all bountifulness* (v. 11), that upon the whole they may find it true that they shall be no losers, but great gainers. Note, Works of charity are so far from impoverishing us that they are the proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich.

2. While they would be no losers, the poor distressed saints would be gainers; for this service would *supply their wants*, v. 12. If we have reason to think them to be saints, whom we believe to be of the household of faith, whose wants are great, how ready should we be to do them good! Our goodness can not extend unto God, but we should freely extend it to these *excellent ones of the earth*, and thus show that we delight in them.

3. This would redound to the praise and glory of God. Many thanksgivings would be given to God on this account, by the apostle, and by those who were employed in this ministration, v. 11. These would bless God, who had made them happy instruments in so good a work, and rendered them successful in it. Besides these, others also would be thankful; the poor, who were supplied in their wants, would not fail to be very thankful to God, and bless God for them; and all who wished well to the gospel would *glorify God for this experiment*, or *proof of subjection to the gospel of Christ*, and true love to all men, v. 13. Note,

(1.) True Christianity is a subjection to the gospel, a yielding of ourselves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws.

(2.) We must evince the sincerity of our subjection to the gospel by works of charity.

(3.) This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God.

4. Those whose wants were supplied would make the best return they were able, by sending up many prayers to God for those who had relieved them, v. 14. And thus should we recompense the kindnesses we receive when we are not in a capacity of recompensing them in any other way; and, as this is the only recompence the poor can make, so it is often greatly for the advantage of the rich.

Lastly, The apostle concludes this whole matter with this doxology, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift*, v. 15. Some think that by this unspeakable gift he means the gift of grace bestowed on the churches, in making them able and willing to supply the necessities of the saints, which would be attended with unspeakable benefit both to the givers and receivers. It should seem rather that he means Jesus Christ, who is indeed the unspeakable gift of God unto this world, a gift we have all reason to be very thankful for.