

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is a retired pastor and serves on the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

### Guidance on Giving

(Texts: 2 Corinthians 9:1-13)

In this passage Paul is encouraging the Corinthian churches to give generously “for the needs of the saints” which will “overflow with many thanksgivings to God.”<sup>1</sup> Honestly that sounds a bit to me like a *trickle down theory* in politics that has not worked out so very much for those who require the *trickle* in order to merely survive. My own skepticism indicts me, for I see that today those who have power and means can sometimes *guilt* those of lesser means to give what they do not have in some misguided theory that God wants *them* to give generously, *beyond* their means. In other words, even though Paul advises against “extortion”<sup>2</sup> and giving “under compulsion”,<sup>3</sup> I see the risk for spiritual abuse in this passage.



Paul says in the very beginning, “But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting...may not prove to be empty...so that you may be ready, as I said you would be...”<sup>4</sup> So, upon further reflection what Paul is really talking about is readiness. And readiness is about preparation and knowing as much as possible all of the factors before proceeding on to generosity and giving.

Paul is boasting about the readiness of Achaia<sup>5</sup> and encouraging the Corinthian churches to be ready to give generously in resources and service. And so, before we do anything, we must make ourselves ready to do it. Readiness takes thought and focus; readiness takes commitment and prayer; readiness means preparation and prioritizing.

Readiness considers what needs to happen in order for the thing for which we are readying to take place. Paul suggests that once we are ready, our zeal can

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adequately prepare others to give abundantly in both service work and financial resources.

In order to make ourselves ready for service to God, we must know ourselves well *and* consider our God-given gifts - both special talents and financial resources - and discern how God may want us to worship and serve in relation to them.

Most of us are limited by finite financial resources; and all of us are limited by a 24-hour-a-day lifecycle. But the ways we may serve God in abundance are unlimited! We just have to consider all of our resources and make ready to give glory to God through all of them: time, talents, *and* treasure.

Being ready to give with God's guidance assures that no one will be wanting and all will enjoy the abundance of God's blessing. For me, the test and the proof that God's will is being accomplished is that - when I look around - I see that *all* God's children are being fed, clothed, and housed no matter their circumstances; and that the errors of the people are being corrected in a just manner.

We can see in this passage that God's holy kingdom is a kingdom of reciprocity: "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness...Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience...and by the generosity of your sharing with them...while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that has been given you."<sup>6</sup>

And so, do all for the glory of God, and be ready to reap the abundant life lived in faithfulness to the "gospel of Christ."<sup>7</sup> Thanks be to the saints who seek God's guidance, and make themselves ready to do God's will. *To God be the glory, great things he hath done!*<sup>8</sup> Amen.

#### Notes

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- |               |                                                      |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. 2 Cor 9:12 | 5. Achaia is in Greece outside of Athens             |
| 2. Ibid, 9:5  | 6. Ibid, 9:10-14                                     |
| 3. Ibid, 9:7  | 7. Ibid, 9:13                                        |
| 4. Ibid, 9:3  | 8. Fanny J. Crosby, hymn: To God Be The Glory, 1875. |

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