

Epistle - Thanksgiving Day - November 27, 2014 - Kieth Bernard Kuschel

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***2 Cor 9:6-15***

<sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: “He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” <sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

This is a national day of thanksgiving. I think Americans on Thanksgiving Day are hypocrites. We set aside one day to be thankful. The rest of the year we complain. If we would be truly thankful, we would be living thankfully. Today Paul reminds us how that takes place.

## Hypocritical Thanksgivers

You are cheerful Thanksgivers

### I. God makes His Grace Abound to us

#### A. Setting

1. Need in Jerusalem
2. Attitude in Corinth

#### B. Attitude discussion

1. Negative motives
2. Cheerful = HS's work

#### C. God gives

1. Changed heart
2. By giving

### II. God supplies us

#### A. Farming

1. Generous or sparing sowing
2. Generous = trusts God

#### B. Application

1. Psalm = believer gives
2. Righteousness lasts

#### C. Resources

1. From God
2. Increases and enlarges
3. Promise of God

### III. God makes through us other Thanksgivers

#### A. Thanksgiving

1. By recipients
2. Because of Jesus

#### B. Thanksgiving defined

1. Praise God
2. Product of grace
3. Produces thanksgivers

conc: 15

IA1 This section is taken right out of the middle of Paul's discussion of the offering that was being gathered by the Christians for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Why did the Christians in Jerusalem have an ongoing need for help? Because anybody in Jerusalem who became a Christian was no longer eligible for help from the usual channels. Charity and relief were carried out by the people at the temple and synagogues. When a person became a Christian, that person became ineligible for food stamps, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and welfare all at the same time.

2 How did the Christians in the city of Corinth respond to Paul's request that they participate in this offering? They agreed to participate. At what level. Their attitude was: We want to help those poor people. But we are in the midst of a recession. We need to make sure that we have enough for ourselves first. You never know when we are going to lose our jobs. So, we will participate. But we will have to give sparingly at this time. Maybe at some other time, when circumstances change, we will be able to do more.

B1 How do we know Paul was dealing with that attitude? Look at the words he uses. Not reluctantly. Literally the Greek says, "not out of grief." If a person is going to give, but is very sad over the loss of funds, thinking that those funds should have been used in a better way, then that person is giving with the wrong attitude. Not under compulsion. There could have been lots of compulsions. Compelled by Paul's dynamic, forceful personality. Compelled by the bad feeling if you don't help. Compelled by the fact that everybody else was doing it. Any compulsion leads to a wrong attitude.

2 Cheerful. That is the attitude Paul was looking for. Cheerful happens when 7"Each man gives what he has decided in his heart to give." Who is in control of the heart of the Christian? The Holy Spirit. So, cheerful becomes the motive for giving and helping when the Holy Spirit leads us to be thinking as God wants us to be thinking.

C1 How do I jump to that conclusion? Verse 8. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." Available resources don't make cheerful, confident givers. God who changes hearts makes cheerful, confident givers.

2 How does God change hearts? He gives and gives and gives even though we don't deserve what He gives. He gives us forgiveness, holiness, and eternal life because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, not because we deserve those blessings. He gives us the Holy Spirit who gives us righteousness, joy and peace even though we don't deserve them. He gives us physical life. We didn't deserve that. He gives us the physical blessings that we need to sustain life. We don't deserve those. We become cheerful givers as we God's children mimic God's actions. We become conduits of God's gifts to others as He continues to give and give and give to us.

IIA1 Paul, recognizing human beings to be selfish sinners by nature, draws a lesson from the world of agriculture. 9"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." If a farmer thinks that he really needs the grain to have something to eat, he will save the grain, grind it, bake bread from it and eat it. He will sow sparingly. If the farmer recognizes that the more he sows, the more new kernels of grain he will have, he will sow generously in view of what is anticipated.

2 The farmer who sows in view of what is anticipated trusts that the LORD is going to send rain for the seed to germinate. He trusts that the LORD will protect the seed from the birds. He trusts that the LORD will send the sun to heat the ground to help the seed germinate. He trusts that the LORD will send sun to help the plant develop chlorophyl so that it stays healthy.

B1 Next Paul quotes Psalm 112:9. Psalm 111 spoke of God's generosity in showering his blessings on His people. Psalm 112 pictured the grateful recipient's response to God's generosity. He(the thankful child of God) has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor." Sounds like a cheerful giver in action.

2 The second part of Psalm 112:9 is interesting. "His righteousness endures for ever." It is true God has declared people to be righteous because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. But here the actions of the cheerful giver are under the microscope. The believer's life is guided by the righteousness of the LORD. Jesus will point to that righteous life on Judgment Day as evidence of a believer's relationship with Him according to Matthew 25. Jesus repeated that in Rev 14:13. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." The Psalm quoted in the text says the same thing: "His (the believer's) righteousness endures for ever."

C1 If we are going to be cheerful givers as God is, we must have something to give. If we are going to scatter abroad gifts to the poor, we must have gifts to scatter. Where are we going to get the stuff we give away? 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply your store of seed. God will supply the resources for us to give away.

2 Paul makes a bigger promise. God will increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." This makes sense after the reference to agriculture. We give away the resources God gives us and the store of seed increases and the harvest of righteousness enlarges. We give and love and benefit others as God wants. He gives and loves and benefits us some more. We give and love and benefit others as God wants. More and more righteousness is done and more and more good results.

3 Intellectually this doesn't make sense. Giving away substantial portions of our resources will result in an increase? But this is a promise of our God. We give away the resources God gives us in anticipation of what is coming based on God's promises. God, who loves the cheerful giver, will not only provide all that we need, but will also in keeping with His ability to make all grace abound to us, increase our store of seed and enlarge the harvest of our righteousness. That is His promise. We can count on it.

IIIA1 There is another result when people are cheerful givers. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. Who gave thanks to God for the generosity of the Corinthian Christians? <sup>12</sup> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. The people who were receiving the offering, the people whose needs were being met, overflowed in many expressions of thanks to God.

2 We might have expected those people to thank the Corinthians who were giving them the help. I am sure they did that. But they thanked God. Why? Because the people who were giving the offering were only linked to the people who were receiving the offering through Jesus. They didn't know each other. They didn't live in the same area of the world. They didn't talk the same language. They were being helped by these people because they were in God's family. They all had Jesus as their brother. So, they thanked God for those people who had helped them and through that thanksgiving were also thanking the people who had helped.

B1 Verses 13 & 14 seem to say the same thing. But they define things more closely. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. The people were gathering the offering as part of their confession that Jesus was their Savior. Jesus had given them forgiveness by dying, holiness by never sinning and eternal life by rising from the dead. That gave these people a purpose in life. They wanted to live their lives for Him who died for them and was raised again. How could they say "Thank You," to Him for all He had done for them? By doing what He told them to do. By generously sharing resources He had given them with others who needed them. That connection was so obvious to the people who were being helped that they said, "God is great and God is good for producing this harvest of righteousness in these people." That is our goal in life too, isn't it? That is why we work so hard at managing everything that God has given us, isn't it? So that when we use it, spend it, and distribute it, God will be praised.

2 Verse 14 is a mouthful. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Paul is describing a situation that would be utterly impossible without the surpassing grace God had given. Jews, who because of centuries of separation and avoidance of Gentiles had developed a thorough abhorrence of them, would be served by the love of believing Gentiles. In turn the hearts of the Jews would go out to the Gentiles and their lips would overflow in praise and thanksgiving for the surpassing grace which God had shown also to the nonJews. As Paul very carefully pointed out in this section, all of this joy on the part of the believers, and all the praise and glory to God will have been caused by the collection gathered by Gentiles Christians for the needs of Jewish Christians.

3 So you can see the Spirit-worked giving of God's people is very helpful to the saving grace of God. Or, to put it another way - our lives of thanksgiving are used by the LORD to bring and depict His grace to others, so that those others are also led by Him to live their thanksgiving to Him. God makes through us other thanksgiving.

I don't think we can end this discussion today in any other way than the way Paul did:

<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!