

SECOND CORINTHIANS

[Chapters 8 and 9] *

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When Paul met with the pillars of the Jerusalem church to discuss with them the Law-free Gospel as he had preached it among the Gentiles, and when they acknowledged it as in full agreement with their own, then, on the basis of that agreement and in view of the special gift of Paul for the work among the Gentiles, they divided the field, assigning to Peter the work among the Jews and to Paul that among the Gentiles. Their idea was not to organize two separate churches or church bodies, as is clearly shown by the request which they added that Paul “should remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10). Paul did not have to be told twice, he was very eager to carry out the request. From the experience at the Council in Jerusalem it was evident that forces were at work, though repressed for the time being, which tended to rend the Church in twain. The Judaizers kept up their nefarious efforts in the churches which Paul had founded, and the minds of the Christians in Jerusalem were poisoned against him by false reports which were peddled about him, which even his solicitous care for the needy Christians in Jerusalem, the great collection which he had gathered, and the personal presence of representatives from the various Gentile-Christian congregations of his field, could not completely neutralize, as he was soon to see (cf. Acts 21:20, 21).

In the two chapters from Second Corinthians, chaps. 8 and 9, which we are now to consider, we get a clear picture of Paul’s warm interest in this part of his ministry, of the evangelical manner in which he conducted the collection, of the goal which he hoped to achieve.

The two chapters may conveniently be divided into the following six sections: 1) 8:1–6; —2) 8:7–15; —3) 8:16–24; —4) 9:1–5; —5) 9:6–11; —6) 9:12–15.

1. II Cor. 8:1–6.

Paul had been busy for some time already organizing a collection for the needy brethren in Jerusalem. In I Cor. 16 he had instructed the Corinthians how to systematize their work. At the same time he informed them that the churches in Galatia were observing a similar system. In the present section of Second Corinthians he mentions the progress of the work in the Macedonian churches. From the list of representatives of the various churches, who later accompanied Paul to Jerusalem to deliver the collection, we see that also the churches in and about Ephesus took part in the collection (cf. Acts 20:4).

In Corinth the troubles which intruders had caused had not only disturbed the relation between the congregation and its founder, but had also seriously hampered the progress of the collection, which, indeed, badly bogged down. If it was not to be a complete failure, then no time dare now be lost in reorganizing it. That is the task which Paul aims to achieve by his plea in these two chapters, and by the measures which he here reports that he has taken. —As long as the disrupted confidence of the Corinthians in their founder was not restored, there was no point in trying to revive the lagging collection. Chapters 1–7 serve to seal the restored relation. Hence Paul is now ready to tackle the second task.

He does so by emphatically calling the attention of the Corinthians to the success of the collection in Macedonia. The verb *γνωρίζομεν* stands at the head, not only of the sentence, but of the entire section: *γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν*, We make known to you. *Δε* is merely transitional. The important thing is that Paul has great news, good news, impressive news for the Corinthians. He calls them *ἀδελφοί*. This news concerns them,

* The original version of this essay transliterated the Greek into Latin characters. The original Greek has been added in this online version – WLS Library Staff.

not as interesting items about some strangers, no, but as of people who are involved in the same business, as of members of the same spiritual family.

Paul is beginning to report on the progress of the collection in Macedonia. It was to be a joint endeavor in the nature of a service rendered by the Christians to needy brethren. Yet the word διακονία, or some similar expression, does not occur until v. 4. Paul opens the discussion by placing the whole section under the head of χάρις, grace. The collection, the participation in the collection, must be viewed as part and parcel of the grace of God which the Christians had experienced and were continuing to experience. The success of the collection is not produced by their personal effort, it is God's grace alone which does it. Paul does not even say that it is the Christians' response to the grace of God, no, grace itself is the active factor. The Christian donors are really on the receiving end.

Paul underscores this thought by calling this grace a gift, τὴν δεδομένην. He does not use a word like ἐργατικός, effective, operative. He does not intend to report on God's grace as a productive force, but as a gift. —Were the Corinthians aware that by taking part in the collection they were really becoming the beneficiaries of a gift from God? We may safely assume that their Old Adam was as wise in such matters as is our own. They figured that they were doing something, they were imposing a loss on themselves. They may well have been startled when they read τὴν δεδομένην. But once they assimilated this truth, it made them desirous of ever more grace, even though it came to them in the form of a request for a donation. It is God's nature to give; and by His grace His children have the same nature.

In the next verse Paul paints, in a few bold strokes, a vivid picture of God's grace which was found as a gift in the congregations of Macedonia. ὅτι ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἢ περισσειᾷ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν καὶ ἢ κατὰ βάθους πτωχείᾳ αὐτῶν ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν, In a full test of tribulation the abundance of their joy and their bottomless poverty overflowed into a rich development of their singleness (of purpose).

The high point of this statement is ἀπλοτης. The King James Version translates "liberality," while Luther correctly has *Einfaltigkeit*. The original meaning of the word is "simplicity," and it is very difficult to trace a line from that starting point to the idea of "liberality." No one, to my knowledge, has so far succeeded in doing it. Moreover, it will be extremely difficult to find a passage in the New Testament which forces that understanding. First of all let us look at our own text. Paul is extolling the grace of God, which was present as a gift in the churches of Macedonia, and which manifests itself in connection with the collection. Later in this section he will also have something to say about the amount of every one's contribution; but then he uses a different word, εὐλογία, a blessing, in contrast to πλεονεχία, stinginess. When speaking about the amount he compares the collection to a sowing for a harvest, and speaks of sowing ἐπ' εὐλογίας, in contrast to sowing φειδομενως, *sparingly* (chap. 9:5, 6). In our present passage he speaks of ἀπλοτης, without any hint that he is deviating from its original meaning. Christians have but one aim in life, and on the achieving of that aim their heart is set.

Moreover, Paul is speaking of a richness, a rich development of this ἀπλοτης. Does that thought force us to abandon the original meaning of ἀπλοτης? Not in the least, rather it would seem to agree better with the idea of singleness of purpose.

And when we look at the two factors which with their combined force served to produce that wonderful increase of ἀπλοτης, it may strike us as peculiar that the one of them should be mentioned at all as a source of liberality. Paul refers to the bottomless poverty of the Macedonians. From the joy in the Gospel, which they experienced in their hearts alongside of deep poverty, and from that poverty and, shall we say, from their victory over its temptations, the Macedonians learned the lesson that "One thing is needful." They discarded all doubts, all double, all divided interests, and concentrated on the one thing needful. They, or better, the grace of God developed in them this singleness of purpose.

The new *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* lists, besides our passage, also chap. 9:11, 13, as using ἀπλοτης in the sense of liberality. The verses occur close to the end of our present section. A detailed study must be deferred to a later time. Only one remark at present. There Paul says that the Christians in Jerusalem, the recipients of the present collection, will glorify God because of the ἀπλοτης of the Corinthians'

fellowship towards them and *toward all*, καὶ εἰς πάντας. Did the Corinthians take up a collection for all Christendom? But this collection demonstrated the fact that all Christians are of one heart and of one soul, so that when one member suffers, all members suffer with it.

One more passage is adduced, Rom. 12:8, “He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.” The new Lexicon suggests “liberality.” St. James has a word on God’s giving, which we may well compare here: “God giveth to all ἀπλῶς, and upbraideth (ὀνειδίζω, reproach) not” (chap. 1:5—Cf. Luther’s translation: *Gott ... gibt einfaeltiglich und ruecket es niemand auf.*) When anyone is elected to administer the alms of a congregation, he should simply give to the needy without “rubbing it in” to the recipient, or making him feel that he is a burden on the congregation. The King James translation of ἀπλῶς, liberally, is not called for by the context. The St. James passage is the only one where the adverb ἀπλῶς occurs in the New Testament.

We now take a brief look at the other terms used in v. 2. Paul speaks about a δοκιμη through which the Macedonians passed. Δοκιμη means more than a mere testing. The new Greek-English Lexicon has this definition in single quotes: ‘the quality of being approved.’ The German word *Bewaehrung* conveys about the same idea as the Greek δοκιμη. It means that a test is imposed and that the person, or thing, that was subjected to it passed it successfully, demonstrating his (or its) genuineness. The Macedonians won their laurels in πολλη δοκιμη; it was a severe test which they passed with flying colors. It had been a test of θλιψις, affliction. We are not told in what the affliction consisted. About the Thessalonians we know that the Christians there suffered from their own unbelieving relatives (I Thess. 2:14); and Philippi was a Roman colony, settled by Roman ex-soldiers, where the citizens frequently out-Romed the Romans. But since we have no direct information on the nature of the θλιψις, we can say no more than that it was very severe, and that thus in a grand way it proved the character of the Macedonian Christians.

In this δοκιμη two characteristics stood out prominently, one was ἡ περισσεια τῆς χαρᾶς, the abundance of their joy. The peace of their heart and the happiness which they enjoyed on the basis of their justification proved stronger than the severe θλιψις; their θλιψις merely served to clarify and strengthen it, and to set forth its real character. Their θλιψις set off the chain reaction which Paul describes in Rom. 5: “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed” (vv. 3–5). The other characteristic which stood out in bold relief in their affliction, and probably was greatly intensified by it, was ἡ κατὰ βάθους πτωχεία, their bottomless poverty. Κατὰ βάθους literally: down to the depth. Πτωχεία by itself means the poverty of a beggar. A πενης is a poor man who owns no property, but must support himself by his labors, living from hand to mouth; but a πτωχος has not even so much, he is forced to beg, and is dependent on alms for a living. That was the kind of poverty which the Macedonians experienced, and in their case there was no bottom.

This poverty, however, did not interfere with their χαρα, rather, both their πτωχεία and their χαρα were welded into one to produce a wonderful result. Note the singular of the verb ἐπερίσσευσεν with the double subject of χαρα and πτωχεία. This combination helped the Macedonians to concentrate their hearts and minds on the one thing needful.

How did this manifest itself in the matter of the collection? The verb of the main clause in the sentence beginning in v. 3 is ἔδωκαν (in v. 5). It is an aorist, summarizing the action of the Macedonians: they gave. Yes, they gave to the collection, but that was not the first thing they did. It was preceded by a far more important act of giving. Paul uses the adverb πρῶτον. The first thing they did was to give ἑαυτους, themselves. They gave themselves τῷ κυρίῳ, to the Lord. This is a graphic description of faith. They gave themselves to the Lord with all their sins for justification. They also gave themselves, in the same act, to the Lord with all their thoughts, their emotions, their desires for sanctification. They did this in their ἀπλοτης, without any reservations, without any division of loyalty. —They were not perfect in this. What Paul confessed of himself: “Not as though I had already attained,” could be said of them also. Nor were they spared the difficulties of which Paul complains in Rom. 7. We remember what Paul said in the previous chapter of the present epistle about his arrival in Macedonia: “Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were rightings, within were fears” (v. 5). There was no perfection.

There is another angle to this giving of the Macedonians. Paul says that they gave themselves to the Lord καὶ ἡμῖν διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, and to us by the will of God. This was not a second act of giving, it was done in one and the same act with the giving of themselves to God. It was not an act of personal allegiance. Paul never sought a personal following; in fact, he severely rebuked the Corinthians for using his name as a party label: “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos: are ye not carnal?” (I Cor. 3:4.) In recommending the Macedonians for giving themselves to Paul and his associates Paul has his office in mind, as he indicates by the phrase διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ. They gave themselves to Paul because they recognized in him a God-appointed representative and administrator of the Gospel. They could not give themselves to God if they ignored Paul; nor could they give themselves to Paul under these conditions without giving themselves to the Lord.

Paul leads up to this grand statement by a number of steps which, grammatically considered, are modifiers of the verb ἔδωκαν. The first is κατὰ δύναμιν, μαρτυρῶ, καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν, according to ability, I testify, and beyond ability. This phrase calls for no further elucidation. —The second modifier is αὐθαίρετοι, in predicative apposition to the subject. This word is composed of αὐτος and a form of αἰρέομαι, meaning that they themselves did the choosing, they took the initiative, acted entirely by their own choice, quite voluntarily. —The third modifier even hints that Paul or his associates did some dissuading: μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν, with much urging begging of us. Note that not the collectors but the contributors did the begging, δεόμενοι. Note that they were insistent, μετὰ παρακλήσεως. Note that their pleading was repeated and very solemn, πολλῆ. How did they regard the thing for which they were pleading? Paul repeats the word which he used at the very beginning, τὴν χάριν. They realized that in doing their giving even under the adverse conditions imposed on them by their extreme poverty they were not imposing a burden on themselves; they were enriching themselves spiritually, being steeped deeper into God’s grace. It would mean for them a new experience of grace.

Grace is a general term. The specific grace for which they pleaded in this case meant τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους, the fellowship of this service to the saints. The needy Christians in Jerusalem are called saints, not as though they constituted a special class of Christians by themselves; but because the whole Church is composed of people whose sins have been forgiven, whom God embraces as His holy children for Christ’s sake, whom they have put on in faith. To be permitted to minister to people to whom God Himself has already rendered the greatest service by sacrificing His only-begotten Son for them—that is grace indeed. —What is the κοινωνία τῆς διακονίας? Superficially considered κοινωνία might here be translated with participation, a taking part. A gift is being served to the Christians in Jerusalem, and the Macedonians ask to be let in on it, to participate in the giving. This διακονία was not common relief work, it was very pointedly directed to fellow believers (in Jerusalem). A fellowship, created by the Holy Ghost, existed between Christians everywhere, whether they lived in Macedonia, or in Achaia, or wherever it might be, with those in Jerusalem. The present collection was a manifestation of that fellowship. By taking part in the collection, whether on the giving or on the receiving end, this fellowship was in evidence. The ones gave their gift as an expression of the existing bond, and the others accepted the gift in the same spirit.

Paul adds one more modifier. The attitude of the Macedonians by far exceeded his fondest expectation, καὶ οὐ καθὼς ἠλπίζαμεν, and not as we had hoped. Paul knew how firmly the Philippians, one of the Macedonian churches, were rooted in the Gospel. In his letter to them he speaks about their κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον from the very first day (chap. 1:5). The struggle with the problem of irregularities in Thessalonica (the second church in Macedonia) cannot but have had a beneficial influence on the spiritual understanding of both the leaders and the membership of the group. The Bereans, the third Macedonian congregation, had been very “noble” from the beginning. Paul knew that he could expect much from these churches. Yet his fondest hopes were left far behind by the spirit which he now actually found.

What was Paul’s reaction? And why does he write all these things to the Corinthians? He wanted the Corinthians to share the blessed experience. They should be enriched with the same grace, their ἀπλοτης should be confirmed and deepened. Though not at present passing through the same test of affliction and

extreme poverty, but emerging from a terrific spiritual struggle, their appreciation of the blessings which the fellowship with the saints carries should be stimulated by this novel experience.

Thus his immediate reaction was εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι Τίτον, that we urged Titus. Titus had just returned from Corinth, where Paul had sent him to help the church clean up the mess which the false apostles had caused. Titus never grew tired of repeating his rosy report. Titus may have undertaken the trip to Corinth with a heavy heart, but the response which he met had set his mind completely at ease, ἀναπέπαιται τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν (chap. 7:13).

The work which Titus had done in restoring the Corinthian congregation was of a general nature, repairing the damage which had been done and getting the Corinthians back on a straight course. Although the matter of the collection, which had suffered along with other church work, had been corrected in a general way with the help of Titus, it had not been given special attention. Now time was running out fast, and something special had to be done if the collection in Corinth was not to be a failure. Titus had done good work in Corinth, he was trusted and respected by the Corinthians, his heart was filled with glowing enthusiasm for the Corinthians; it was natural for Paul to think of Titus as the logical man for the task. He urged him to return to Corinth.

What was his special assignment? ἵνα καθὼς προενέρχασθε οὕτως καὶ ἐπιτελέση εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην, that, just as he had already begun, so he should also complete for you also this grace. The groundwork for the collection had been done in the previous year, and in a general way the collection had gotten under way again during Titus' stay in Corinth. This is contained in the προενέρχασθε. What remained was that the collection be brought to a speedy and successful finish. This is contained in the καὶ, also, before the ἐπιτελέση. The καὶ before τὴν χάριν singles out this grace as the object of special attention, that he also finish particularly this grace.

Is not the sending of Titus for this specific task actually implying a lack of confidence on the part of Paul both in the reliability of the Corinthians and the thoroughness of the work of Titus? And will not such an attitude of Paul doom the new mission of Titus to failure even before it gets under way? Paul explains the meaning of Titus' visit in the following section.

2a. II Cor. 8:7-9

The meaning of Titus' mission is not that the Corinthians were not able or willing to carry out the collection themselves, or that Paul had to order them to do the proper thing. The thought of being lord over this or any part of their sanctification was as foreign to Paul's mind as was the thought that he was lord over their faith (cf. chap. 1:24).

He reminds them first of their spiritual riches. Ἀλλ' ὡςπερ ἐν παντὶ περισσεύετε, But just as you abound in every respect. Paul begins with ἄλλα. To what do the thoughts which he will now present form a contrast? The best assumption seems to be: against a possible misunderstanding of Paul's motives, as briefly indicated above. There is no lack of confidence implied in Titus' mission, the purpose is rather to aid the Corinthians in a certain point in which special help may be needed just now, and thus would be welcomed by the Corinthians.

The Corinthians abound in every respect. Paul enumerates five points, naming first three spiritual blessings in singular nouns without any modifiers, then points four and five in increasingly longer phrases, (ἐν) πίστει καὶ λόγῳ καὶ γνώσει. The Corinthians have faith. Their faith had been threatened by the work of false apostles, and they had been wavering, on the verge of yielding to the ingratiating words of the seducers. But the danger was averted, their faith has been reestablished. Τῇ γὰρ πίστει ἐστήκατε, Paul had said in the close of the first chapter. —They abound also in λογος. They know how to confess their faith, and they are willing to do so. They abound in this point. We remember how highly they prized the gift of tongues. They had not shown proper judgment in the evaluation of the various gifts of the Spirit. The special glamour that attached itself to the somewhat spectacular gift of tongues had warped their minds and had led to an over-use, if not abuse, of this gift. But that mistake now seems to have been corrected. They abound in the proper confession of their faith. —

And they abound in γνώσις, not only in the correct understanding with the intellect, but in actual living experience of the heart. When they confess their faith, this is not a confession of the mouth only, but an expression of the blessings which their heart has found in the Gospel.

To these three Paul now adds as the fourth (ἐν) πάσῃ σπουδῇ. There is not only a willingness, but complete eagerness to live their faith. From First Corinthians we see that there were many flaws in the Corinthians' conduct, both in their personal lives and in their church practice. This has been changed. Their practice certainly was not yet 100 percent clean, but they were striving for improvement in every way with all eagerness.

In the fifth point the Nestle text does not seem to be correct. A variant reading, which also Jerome used for the Vulgate, seems preferable. The corrected text would read: καὶ τῇ ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀγάπῃ, and in the love from you on us. In the previous four parts it was always some characteristic of the Corinthians which Paul mentioned, it was *their* faith, *their* confession, *their* gnosis, *their* eagerness: why should he in the last point suddenly speak about the apostles' love? Moreover, it was the Corinthians' love toward Paul that had become shaky. The Corinthians may have unjustly doubted Paul's love momentarily; but by that very act their own love had come under a cloud. But that had been remedied. They had dropped their suspicions, and their hearts were again filled with warm love toward their apostle. It was ἀγάπη, an understanding, purposeful love. They again acknowledged Paul as their God-sent apostle, and were ready and happy to receive his instruction.

Since they abound in these five important basic points, Paul is now sending Titus to them for the purpose ἵνα καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε, that you may also abound in this grace. —We quoted and translated this hina clause as a clause of purpose. In reality that is not quite correct. In form it is a clause of purpose, but this here takes the place of an imperative. Paul's meaning is: As you abound in faith etc., so abound also in this grace. But why then did he not write just so? The Greek sentence would have been subject to misunderstanding. The imperative would be περισσευετε; but that form could also be read as the indicative, and might easily be read so in line with the previous five indicatives. His words would then be understood to say: As you abound in faith etc., so you also do abound in this grace. In order to insure the understanding of an exhortation Paul chose the form of an ἵνα clause (used for commands in colloquial Greek; Blass-Debrunner, 387, 3. —Compare the German form of a command: *Dass ihr mir aber usw.*)—Paul again uses the term χάρις, and he is anxious to see the Corinthians abound in it.

The somewhat brusque form of a command must not be misunderstood. It is not meant as an order from a master, but as an expression of Paul's concern for the Corinthians. He continues, Οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν λέγω, I do not say this by command. In what sense, then, is he speaking? He answers, δοκιμάζων, testing your love and giving you a chance to prove its genuineness. In connection with δοκιμάζων must be repeated what was mentioned above about δοκιμῇ, v. 2. Paul does not say that he is putting their *love* to a test, but says, τὸ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον. Το γνήσιον is the neuter of the adjective, here used for the abstract idea: the genuineness. This Paul is putting to a test in order to give the Corinthians an opportunity to prove it, and in the sure expectation that they will welcome the opportunity and will pass the test with flying colors.

He is using the rich experience of the Macedonians as a touchstone, as an incentive. Διὰ τῆς ἑτέροων σπουδῆς, by the eagerness of others. The Macedonians found great joy in Christ, which even their bitter afflictions could not dim, which rather became all the more intensive in their victory over their trials. The Corinthians have the same Christ, and have tasted His love, though their trials outwardly were different from those of the Macedonians. Γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ had been proclaimed to them, and they had found peace and joy in the message. And although this heavenly rest of their heart had been seriously disturbed, and they had passed through bitter spiritual struggles, they had found their way back to the knowledge of Christ and His grace. The Sun of righteousness was again beaming on their hearts "with healing in His wings." Yes, they knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul now pictures this grace of Christ in words suggested by the topic under discussion, the collection for needy saints: ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν, that for your sake He became (beggarly) poor although He is rich. Christ became poor. This does not refer to the incarnation as such; that was merely a

preparatory step enabling Him to become poor. Even after the incarnation He was in the form of God; but because He did not consider it as ἀρπαγνος, something to be displayed jealously at all times, namely to live on an equal footing with God, He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant. The fact of the exinanition Paul here expresses with the word ἐπτώχευσεν. The Macedonians experienced a κατα βαθους πτωχεια, but that was as nothing by comparison with the πτωχεια to which Christ lowered Himself. That took Him down to death, yes, the death on the cross, to the πτωχεια of being forsaken by God.

Why did Christ do it? δι' ὑμῶς, because of you, for your sake. We may say, In your stead. Paul continues, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε, in order that you (yes, you) by means of His poverty should become rich. By using the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς Paul stresses the fact that the redemption procured by Christ is not a thing merely made ready for us, to which we then help ourselves; it is not a redemption procured for the world in a lump payment, but it is a very personalized, individual affair. Christ took the poverty of every individual sinner upon Himself, and with His grace bought back and brought back the riches of heaven for every individual sinner.

We might ask the question, When is the ingressive aorist, πλουτήσητε, to go into effect? In other words, Do we become rich in the moment we come to faith? In the moment a sinner comes to faith he becomes aware of his riches, but his riches were a fact, and were declared in the moment when Jesus cried, It is finished.

Paul introduces this sentence with γαρ, for, since, because. —Because you are tasting the saving grace of Christ and are rejoicing in its riches, namely full pardon, which He has won for you, you will welcome the opportunity of exercising and proving the sincerity of your love.

2b. II Cor. 8:10–12

When Paul saw the unexpected success of his collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem as it developed in the churches of Macedonia, and remembered how this same collection had bogged down in Corinth because of the disturbance stirred up there by the trouble makers, he immediately dispatched Titus to Corinth to “finish in you the same grace also.” In explaining this move to the Corinthians Paul very carefully warded off the false impression as though he were giving orders to them. He is not speaking κατ' ἐπιταγην, he is merely δοκιμάζων the genuineness of their love, giving them in this way an opportunity to prove its genuineness in action.

In the section which is before us now he adds καὶ γνώμην ἐν τούτῳ δίδωμι, and in this I am giving (you) an opinion. He is here adding a new thought, yet one that pertains to the same matter which he discussed in the previous verses. While he had stated his first motive in a participle, δοκιμάζων, he elevates the present point to a main clause. There is no specific, easily recognizable antecedent to τουτο. It may refer to Paul's action as just outlined by him, or perhaps to the whole matter of the collection as far as the Corinthians are concerned. For practical purposes both assumptions fall in one, since Paul's present action is concerned specifically with the collection. Thus τουτο points to the collection and to Paul's sending of Titus with respect to it.

In all this he is giving them his γνώμη. This word occurs several times in the New Testament. We look at a few cases. In I Cor. 1:10 Paul urges the congregation, which stood in danger of a rupture into a number of splinter groups, to be joined together in the same νους and in the same γνώμη. As νους denotes an attitude of the mind, so must γνώμη, which is added to complete the concept. —When Paul in Corinth became aware of a plot of the Jews against his life, who intended to assassinate him as he boarded his ship for Syria, then he ἐγένετο γνώμης to travel by way of Macedonia (Acts. 20:3). Here γνώμη indicates a planning, a decision. —Paul desired to keep his convert Onesimus with him as his assistant, but since Onesimus was still the slave of Philemon, he would not do it χωρις his γνώμης, without his express consent. —In I Cor. 7:25 we find the same combination which we have in our text: γνώμην διδοναι, to render an opinion, or, as Jerome translates in both instances, *consilium do*, I give you a piece of advice.

Paul's action, which might easily be misunderstood as a command, which however was intended as an assistance in a welcome test of their genuine love, really is of such a nature that it must be called a counsel or advice. Paul points this out by connecting the next sentence to the foregoing with γάρ, since, or for. Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει, For this is helpful to you, profitable, advantageous. —Paul wants to say that he is aware of a certain aim of the Corinthians in regard to the collection, and by sending Titus to them at this time he will help them to achieve it more readily. The form of the relative which he uses is meaningful and revealing: οἵτινες. The antecedent is ὑμῖν. A plain relative, οἱ, would have done no more than link the following statement to the Corinthians (ὑμῖν) as being the grammatical subject, while οἵτινες adds the thought that the new statement flows from the fact that the Corinthians are people of a certain type, having certain objectives in mind, being activated by certain motives. Paul's γνώμη and his sending of Titus should be welcomed by the Corinthians, since it is in line with their own plans, and will help them to carry them out.

What were their plans? οἵτινες οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενήρχασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι, (you) who have made the beginning not only of doing but also of willing already last year. Προενήρχασθε, the aorist of προενάρχομαι, is a compound in which ενάρχομαι, to make a beginning, is reenforced by the prefix προ, in advance, already. The ground work for the collection has been finished some time ago. It is now merely a matter of carrying out their plans.

What was the situation? The words of Paul may startle us: The Corinthians had been ready not only for the ποιῆσαι but for the θέλειν. At first reading we may feel that the order should be reversed: they were ready not only with the willing but also for the doing. But Paul meant exactly what he said. The aorist infinitive ποιῆσαι refers to the action as such of taking part in the collection. The matter was brought before the congregation, and the congregation adopted an enabling resolution. Paul goes deeper. Behind this action there was a real θέλειν, a readiness, a determination. The collection was not begun in a half-hearted, haphazard way, as an affair that might be dragged out indefinitely. They were determined to carry it through promptly, and to make a success of it. And they would have done so if the false apostles had not disturbed them and interrupted the work. All the more will they now welcome any help that may expedite the collection.

They were ready ἀπὸ πέρυσι. When was that? Already in his first epistle Paul treated the matter of the collection as something with which the Corinthians were thoroughly familiar. There he did not explain the situation at length, he did not plead with the Corinthians to participate. Anything that might have been necessary along these lines seems to have been settled completely before Paul took up his pen to write the letter. He merely suggested something regarding the mode of procedure: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store" (chap. 16:2). Thus the ἀπὸ πέρυσι must lie farther back than First Corinthians. On the other hand, it can not well be more than a year. The first epistle was written about Easter of 57, and the second in late summer of the same year. Also the intrusion of the trouble makers, which had temporarily delayed the collection, must have started a little prior to First Corinthians, because already then Paul announced that he had changed his travel plans. He made this change, as he explains in the first chapter of the present epistle, v. 23, φειδόμενος, sparing the Corinthians, giving them a chance to rectify matters themselves.

Things now having become more normal again, Paul sends Titus to assist the congregation in speeding the collection and making up for lost time. Νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε, now, however, complete also the doing. The two aorists indicate that now they must concentrate all efforts on this one project, so that the execution of the collection will match their readiness, ὅπως καθάπερ ἡ προθυμία τοῦ θέλειν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐπιτελέσαι.

To this Paul adds the modifier ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν, from the having. Carry out the collection according to each member's ability to contribute. —Paul had mentioned, in v. 3, the self-sacrificing efforts of the Macedonian Christians, who had contributed beyond ability. He does not want the Corinthians to get the impression that similar super-human efforts were expected from them. The attitude of the Macedonians is praiseworthy; it shows their great devotion to the cause of the Gospel. However, their manner is not to be regarded, legalistically, as an absolute standard. Rather, ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν, every one as God has prospered him.

Paul develops this thought in the following: εἰ γὰρ ἡ προθυμία πρόκειται, καθὸ ἐὰν ἔχη εὐπρόσδεκτος, οὐ καθὸ οὐκ ἔχει, for if (as is a fact in your case) the willingness is plainly evident, (then) according as (one) may have, not as he does not have, he is acceptable.

Since Paul had testified in the previous verse that the θέλειν was present in Corinth already since a year ago, the conditional clause in the present verse does not express an element of uncertainty, but the εἰ can correctly be rendered with “since.” For the simple θέλειν Paul now substitutes the more formal προθυμία, with little difference in meaning, if any. For the reference to their preparatory work (προενηργασθε) he now mentions the result of those efforts, πρόκειται, their readiness lies there openly for all to see. Such being the case, let each one determine the amount of his contribution according to whatever he may have (ἐὰν with the subjunctive ἔχη), not according to what he does not have (the plain indicative ἔχει). —Let not a man who is poor, and who because of his poverty can contribute but little, imagine that because of his small gift he is less acceptable, less pleasing to God. God does not measure the value of a gift by its size, but by the genuineness of the προθυμία. Else, what about the poor who not only are unable to give, but find themselves in the predicament that they must ask for and accept gifts? —Grammatically προθυμία may be considered as the subject of the predicate εὐπρόσδεκτος; but then it would almost have to be considered as the subject also of ἔχη and οὐκ ἔχει, which would sound a little harsh. But the sense would not be affected. There is neither a copula in the sentence, nor a personal or an indefinite pronoun before the ἔχειν. Paul tersely brings the main concepts to the fore, and his whole statement is perspicuous.

2c. II Cor. 8:13–15

At this point Paul takes the occasion to speak about another concept pertaining to the collection. In the beginning he mentioned χάρις as the great factor. Then he presented ἀπλότης, the singleness of purpose in a Christian’s life; also the κοινωνία, as it finds expression and is cultivated in the collection. Now he adds ἰσότης.

Οὐ γὰρ ἵνα ἄλλοις ἀνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἰσότητος, For not that others may have rest, you distress, but as a matter of equality. This ἰσότητος is really a phase of κοινωνία. Κοινωνία is not a one-way process, but is reciprocal. It would be a caricature of κοινωνία if some would sit back and twiddle their thumbs, while others had to labor with sweat and blood. Paul says that that is not the idea of the collection. The idea rather is a sort of equalization.

Paul immediately applies this truth to the case in hand: ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ τὸ ὑμῶν περίσσευμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, ἵνα καὶ τὸ ἐκείνων περίσσευμα γένηται εἰς τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα, on the present occasion, your abundance toward their lack, that also (or, on the other hand) their abundance may (be-)come to your want.—Καιρος, a word which really denotes a measure, does not mean time as such, but always connotes a special relation, conditions or circumstances, connected with a given period of time. Thus it may mean opportunity or occasion. ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ may conveniently be translated: “in the present case.” The remarks which Paul will now make about ἰσότης are to be applied directly, and limited, to the collection which he was just then administering for the needy believers in Jerusalem. His remarks refer strictly to the case in hand, the νῦν καιρος. There is a certain περίσσευμα which the Corinthians enjoy, and a corresponding ὑστέρημα in Jerusalem; and there is a certain περίσσευμα in Jerusalem with a corresponding ὑστέρημα in Corinth. An exchange will be helpful to both congregations and bring about an approach to ἰσότης.

Some commentators think that Paul is urging the Corinthians to give liberally to the needy Christians in Jerusalem now, because possibly at some time in the future the tables might be turned, the Corinthians might suffer an attack of misfortune and poverty, while the people in Jerusalem lived in plenty. And then the people in Jerusalem would feel under obligation to return the present favor. *Hodie tibi, cras mihi*. That idea represents not only a peculiar type of ethics, which Jesus condemned as characteristic of sinners (cf. Luke 6:34), but it directly violates Paul’s statement, who is speaking about the νῦν καιρος, the present case. The Christians in Jerusalem were in physical need, and would welcome some help from the Corinthians, while the Corinthians after the

gruelling spiritual troubles through which they had passed would be greatly benefited by this exercise of the Christian fellowship with the people in Jerusalem, and by the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession which it would evoke from them.

God is a friend of ἰσότης. Paul refers to an incident in connection with the gathering of the manna in the wilderness. God had given orders that an omer of manna per person would be the right amount. Now some families were large among the Children of Israel, some were small. But when they went out to gather the manna, God directed matters so that each one found exactly the quantity which he needed for his family: “He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack” (Ex. 16:18). —The manner in which the ἰσότης was brought about is not the point. In the wilderness God brought it about in His own way; in the collection for the needy in Jerusalem the Christians should bear it in mind and recognize that if the collection is carried out in the proper spirit the givers will at the same time be recipients, and vice versa. This is easily overlooked by the givers.

Paul quotes the words from Ex. 16: Καθὼς γέγραπται, ὁ τὸ πολὺ οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν, καὶ ὁ τὸ ὀλίγον οὐκ ἧλαττόνησεν.

3a. II Cor. 8:16–17

Paul is anxious that the Corinthians should experience the rich grace of God, as had the Macedonians. He trusts the Corinthians that they have the same desire, and that they will therefore welcome any assistance which Paul may give them. And he knows that Titus, whom he is sending, has the same concern for the Corinthians. Paul gives thanks to God for this. Χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ τὸ δίδοντι τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδὴν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ Τίτου, Thanks (be) to God, the Giver of the same eagerness for you in the heart of Titus. Δε simply connects this statement with the foregoing; it is not adversative but transitional. It may be omitted in the translation.

The interest which Titus takes in the Corinthians is not one of mere human friendship; it is one which God has planted and keeps alive in the heart of Titus. Paul was sending him, yes, but Titus himself was not unwilling to go. It did not take much coaxing on the part of Paul. Titus did not put up a stubborn resistance; he did not look for excuses, as did Moses when God called him to go to Pharaoh. Rather, Titus was happy to accept the assignment.

This eagerness of Titus served to show Paul how successful Titus had been on his previous mission. If that mission had been a failure, or if Titus had met with exceptional difficulties and opposition from the Corinthians, he certainly would not now have been very anxious to accept a second assignment, one that might, if the first one had been only a partial success, by its very nature offer more and greater difficulties than did the first. The fact that he was ready to go again assured Paul that the troubles and misunderstandings in Corinth had been completely overcome. Conditions again were normal, or at least a good way along on the road to normalcy.

Paul says, ὅτι τὸν μὲν παράκλησιν ἐδέξατο, because (my) urging, yes, he accepted (it). But that is only part of the story. Paul continues, σπουδαιότερος δὲ ὑπάρχων αὐθαίρετος ἐξῆλθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, but being unusually eager he is departing for you by his own choice. The comparative σπουδαιότερος expresses the idea that the eagerness of Titus was greater than Paul had anticipated. Paul does not say ὦν, but ὑπάρχων, thereby indicating that Titus' eagerness was not superficial; it was genuine, deep-seated. The aorist, ἐξῆλθεν, is epistolary. Titus had not yet left for Corinth when Paul wrote his letter, rather, Titus served as the carrier. Αὐθαίρετος, which Paul here applies to Titus, is the same word with which he described the readiness of the Macedonians to participate in the collection (v. 3). They did not wait to be prodded; rather, they themselves took the initiative. Similarly now Titus.

Titus had been with the Corinthians only a short while ago, helping them to work out a most troublesome problem. The fact that he was so soon ready, yes anxious, to return to help them in what under the circumstances must have appeared as a most delicate matter, would certainly open their hearts toward him to receive him with full confidence and joy.

3b. II Cor. 8:18–22

During the disturbance caused by the false apostles in Corinth the collection had sagged seriously. Even now after the crisis had passed, and though the willingness of the Corinthians could not be questioned, the success of the collection still hung in the balance, unless experienced help could be provided. For this purpose Paul was sending Titus. But was one helper, even a man like Titus, sufficient? Paul did not think so. Therefore he was sending two companions together with Titus to assist him in the work.

In order that this step might not be misunderstood by the Corinthians, Paul explains his action in the present subsection of this part of his epistle. Twice, in v. 18 and again in v. 22, he begins with the verb *συνεπέμψαμεν*. This is the epistolary aorist, meaning, we are sending together with him, *μετ' αὐτοῦ*, i.e. Titus, and then *αὐτοῖς*, i.e. Titus and his previously mentioned companion.

The first companion is described in these words: *τὸν ἀδελφὸν οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*, the brother whose praise in the Gospel is (heard) throughout all the churches. He is a man who is no novice in Gospel work. How far the expression *πάσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι* is to be stretched, Paul does not say, but at least, it includes all the churches among whom Paul was working at this time, all churches in Macedonia. Among them, and for them, this man had done Gospel work. He had been faithful and efficient. The congregations are unanimous in their praise. The Corinthians will be pleased to receive such a helper in the company of Titus.

But there is more to be said about him. *Οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν συνέκδημος ἡμῶν*, But not only (that) but (who) has also been elected by the congregations as our fellow traveler. —His zeal and his ability had been previously recognized, now it was further acknowledged by the churches of Macedonia in electing him as a fellow traveler for Paul. Evidently this man was not one of Paul's regular assistants. The congregations of Macedonia had, in their own mission endeavors, recognized and employed his special gifts. Just as some years previous the churches of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe had noted the gifts of Timothy, and had recommended him to Paul, so now the congregations of Macedonia had engaged the services of this brother, and on the basis of their observation elected him as a traveling companion for Paul to deliver the collection in Jerusalem. We see from this that from the very beginning local congregations did not remain isolated. They joined hands with their neighbors to do Gospel work in common. They were sufficiently organized to carry out a joint election, as they now appointed this brother to be a fellow traveler with Paul.

Who this man was, we cannot say. Most likely he was a Macedonian. The men who traveled with Paul to Jerusalem to deliver the collection are mentioned in Acts 20:4: "Sopater of Berea, and of the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus." Since Aristarchus was a regular assistant of Paul (cf. Acts 19:29), our present choice apparently is limited to Sopater and Secundus. But from Acts 20:5ff. we learn that also Luke, who seems to have remained in Philippi since Paul's second mission journey, accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. That raises the number of possibilities to three men.

We see how far the matter of the collection had progressed by this time. In the spring of the year it was not yet certain whether Paul himself would go up to Jerusalem when the collection was to be delivered (cf. I Cor. 16:4). That question had now been decided; Paul is going. And at least some of the congregations which took part in the collection had already elected their representatives who were to go with Paul. All this shows that special efforts were necessary if Corinth was not to fall too far behind.

Yet Paul never loses sight of the fact, and never allows his readers to forget, that the success of the collection is not a matter of human effort. It is a matter of God's grace. He describes it *ἐν τῇ χάριτι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένη ὑφ' ἡμῶν*, in this grace which is being administered by us.

Now he adds another thought. It is really not new but rather is given as a corollary to the former. If the collection represents the grace of God as a gift to us, then it must be brought up in proportion to the honor of God and also to our willingness in receiving His grace, or, as Paul had called it before, our *ἀπλοτης*. *Πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυρίου δόξαν καὶ προθυμίαν ἡμῶν*. The preposition *προς* brings persons or things "face to face"; the specific import of this relation must be determined from the context, it may be direction, purpose,

reference, and the like. In our case Lenski translates with “to show,” to show the Lord’s glory and our willingness. To me it seems advisable to leave the “face to face” relation a little more general, say, in proportion to. The glory of the Lord is emphasized by the addition of αὐτοῦ, the glory of the Lord Himself, of the very Lord. The collection is to stand face to face with the Lord’s glory, in proportion to it. —It is to stand in proportion also to our willingness. Who are the “our”? Not only Paul and Timothy who are administering this grace of God, but also the Corinthians who are contributing, whose willingness Paul had praised in vv. 10ff. There was no doubt about their willingness. There could be no doubt, but because of adverse circumstances the size of their collection was far from being in proportion to their willingness. There was a sore discrepancy. Time was running out, and, therefore, the Corinthians will welcome any help that may assist them in raising their collection to the proportion of their willingness.

Paul has another purpose in mind: στελλόμενοι τοῦτο μή τις ἡμᾶς μωμήσῃται ἐν τῇ ἀδρότητι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν, avoiding this that any one may blame us in this abundance which is being administered by us. In making all arrangements for the collection Paul is very careful to avoid any occasion for blame. The thought that perhaps somebody might suspect him of embezzlement is suggested nowhere in the entire discussion. What blame, then, did Paul wish to forestall? In v. 4 we saw that one of the chief purposes of the collection was the strengthening of the κοινωνία of the Church, specifically the κοινωνία of the two branches, viz., the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. This κοινωνία should stand out as clear as possible. Anything that might tend to overshadow it in the least must be avoided. There was danger that the Christians in Jerusalem might consider the collection more or less as a personal affair of Paul, and overlook the spirit of the congregations who so willingly cooperated with Paul in raising it. To avoid this impression Paul had at first hesitated to be personally present when it was delivered. Since his presence had now been decided, he worked toward the end that the representation of the congregations both in raising and in delivering the collection be as widespread as possible. Both in Jerusalem and among the Gentile congregations it should be clearly understood that the collection was a spontaneous expression of their spiritual fellowship.

The thought which Paul thus had stated negatively he now renders positively: προνοοῦμεν γὰρ καλὰ οὐ μόνον ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπων, for we are providing (all things to be) proper not only before the Lord but also before men. Καλός speaks of the intrinsic quality of a thing. It may be translated with excellent, or honorable, or more generally with proper. In making his preparations Paul takes chiefly this into consideration that every step be καλός. No matter how expedient any method may seem, if it lacks propriety in any measure, Paul will reject it. In the present case this means that every step must be in accord with the general purpose of the collection, viz., of strengthening and sealing the unity of the Church.

Since that is the main test of propriety in this case, it is not sufficient that the propriety be evident before God, it must emphatically be evident to men’s eyes.

What Paul has said so far about sending Titus and the brother who had been chosen by the Macedonian group of congregations as Paul’s traveling companion to Jerusalem, applies with equal force to his sending of a third man. We must note particularly what Paul says about this man by way of introducing him to the Corinthians.

Συνεπέψαμεν δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν ὃν ἐδοκιμάσαμεν ἐν πολλοῖς πολλαῖς σπουδαῖον ὄντα, We are sending jointly with them our brother whom we have found often (and) in many tests to be earnest. This man is evidently one of Paul’s regular assistants. Paul has used him on many occasions for various kinds of assignments. He never disappointed Paul. Paul always found him faithfully applying himself to the tasks before him and successfully completing them. He never shirked, nor did he ever quit a task which was only half-finished.

But Paul has an additional reason for delegating him now with the other two to go to Corinth: νυνὶ δὲ πολὺ σπουδαιότερον πεποιθήσει πολλῇ τῇ εἰς ὑμᾶς, but now being unusually eager with full confidence in you. The comparative σπουδαιότερον does not compare this man with the other two delegates, but rather points out his present attitude as exceeding his ordinary eagerness. There is a reason for his unusual zeal: he has full confidence in the Corinthians. He feels sure of their general Christian attitude and specifically of the collection and their inner readiness for it. Assisting them in taking up the collection will not mean a battle, it

will not even be uphill work, it will be the happy gathering in of a rich harvest. Such is the confidence of this third delegate whom Paul is sending to Corinth to help them complete the collection. He should receive a most hearty welcome.

3c. II Cor. 8:23–24

This brief section is in the nature of a concluding summary. So far Paul had presented in some detail the steps which he had taken to help the Corinthians finish the collection speedily and successfully, and had introduced to them the men whom he had dispatched for their assistance.

What was the status, the “call,” of these three men? How were they to be regarded by the Corinthians? Paul vouched for their competence, for their interest in the Corinthians, and for their faithfulness. Paul was not foisting them on the Corinthians as “bosses,” who would give them orders, nor, on the other hand, were the Corinthians to regard them as their hirelings, who should do their work for them. In what spirit, then, were they to receive them?

Local congregations have from the beginning experienced a twofold danger, on the one hand, isolationism, on the other, submersion in a larger body. First Corinthians shows that this congregation did not always appreciate the bonds of spiritual unity by which they were joined with all other Christians and Christian congregations in the spiritual body of Christ, by the bonds of a common faith and of mutual love. They considered themselves as autonomous, who could manage their own affairs without regard for other churches. To counteract this unhealthy attitude Paul frequently refers to the “other churches” and their customs (cf. I Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16); he warns the Corinthians not to give offense to the “church of God” (ch. 10:32); he rebukes them sharply: “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?” (ch. 14:36). Although this spirit of self-sufficient isolationism had, under Paul’s instruction, been recognized as sinful, and had to a great extent been subdued, yet careful vigilance was still in place in this respect.

But just as the spirit of isolationism violates true Christian liberty, so does the other extreme, if a local congregation simply waits for orders from superiors, from the leaders, e.g., of a larger church body.

Accordingly Paul now gives brief instructions on the proper attitude of the Corinthians over against the three men whom he is sending to them.

He presents the theme in the form of a question with two parallel members, joined by εἴτε—εἴτε, whether—or. The two members are parallel, but not quite on the same level. In the first one Paul uses the preposition ὑπέρ, in the second, the simple nominative: εἴτε ὑπὲρ Τίτου... εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν. Now whether about Titus ... or whether our brethren. Titus is singled out because he is serving, so to say, as chairman of the committee which Paul is sending. The first εἴτε thus mentions Titus alone, while the second refers to the committee as a whole.

What about Titus? He is κοινωνὸς ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you. Titus represents Paul personally, he is Paul’s associate in a special sense. The Corinthians must look upon Titus as though Paul himself had come to them. Wherever Paul goes he goes in the spirit which he expressed in this epistle, ch. 1:24: “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.” His was the spirit as he described it a little more fully a few months later in his Epistle to the Romans: “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and of me.... I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise” (ch. 1:11–14). Titus is Paul’s κοινωνός, he shares the same spirit. Now he is coming to the Corinthians as Paul’s συνεργός, Paul’s fellow-laborer, εἰς ὑμᾶς, with respect to the special task which they have on their hands. He does not come as master, to give orders, nor as slave, to take orders; but as a brother to counsel and assist. As such he should be received by the Corinthians.

Εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, or whether our brethren. This does not refer to the two companions of Titus in contrast to Titus, but includes Titus; it refers to the whole committee. What about our brethren? In his answer Paul uses two terms, the one referring to their official position, the second to the general aim and purpose and the fruit of their labors, and their person.

The official position of all three men is ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, apostles of churches. Paul does not mean to say that some congregations sent these men as their delegates to Corinth. In the foregoing verses he had stated very clearly that he himself was the one who was sending these men. They were representing him in the assistance which they gave to the Corinthians in raising the collection. They were apostles outside of and before their present commission.

In New Testament times the title apostle acquired a new and very specific significance. The twelve men whom Jesus chose to proclaim His Gospel in all the world are commonly known as His Apostles. Jesus Himself gave them this title. St. Luke, in recording the calling of these men, describes the procedure as follows: “And when it was day he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles” (ch. 6:13). In the preceding verse Luke reported that Jesus prepared Himself for this solemn action by spending the night in prayer.

Jesus took the initiative. He summoned His disciples. This was not a call to faith; they had accepted Him as the promised Messiah at some time prior to this occasion. He did not ask for volunteers among His disciples. He Himself made the selection. Then He explained to them the work which they were expected to do, the special position which they were to hold in contradistinction to the other disciples by being called as apostles. The general function of an apostle was well known. This general relation should now mark their specific connection with their Savior.

On the day of ascension Jesus, in correcting some gross misconceptions still held by His apostles even then, told them that their specific task consisted in this that they were to be “witnesses” unto Him, and that they would be qualified for this task by a special gift of the Holy Ghost. Even on an earlier occasion Jesus had already told them: “And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:27). On the basis of this concept of the Christ-created apostleship Peter, at the election of a successor to Judas, declared: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:21, 22).

On the method in which an apostle functions and on the scope of his work we get some light from a combination of terms as Paul uses them. In I Tim. 2:7 he says that he was appointed “a preacher and an apostle” (κηρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος), and adds “a teacher of the Gentiles” (διδάσκαλος). In II Tim. 1:11 he uses the same three terms in the same order: “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” Thus the function of an apostle seems to lie somewhere between that of a κηρυξ and that of a teacher. A herald makes solemn announcements; an apostle does more. A teacher trains his pupils by continued instruction in the proper application of the truth. Thus an apostle does not seem to be limited, as is a herald, to the bare announcement. He is to explain, to amplify, to “put across” his message, while the teacher continues this work by training the hearers on the basis of the apostle’s exposition of the message.

The three men whom Paul is sending to Corinth are apostles of congregations. Christian churches had employed them in some way to carry the Gospel message abroad in their name. Now Paul is sending these experienced men to Corinth.

They are also devoted men, who carry out their commission, not in a mechanical way; but their heart is in their work. They themselves are monuments to the glory of Christ, and they perform their work with the sole purpose in mind of spreading the glory of Christ. They are δόξα Χριστοῦ.

How will the Corinthians respond to the mission of such men? They themselves stand in need of help; three men are coming to them who are not only experienced in Gospel work but are themselves models of devotion: what else can the Corinthians do but fall in line with such leadership?

Paul connects his following statement to the foregoing with οὖν, now then. The verb of the sentence appears in two different moods in the various manuscripts. The simplest and most natural form is the imperative, ἐνδείξασθε. The Nestle text has the more difficult form, the present participle, ἐνδεικνύμενοι. In the latter case the imperative of εἶναι would have to be supplied. The verb is accompanied by the cognate object, ἐνδειξιῶν. The meaning of the combination would be to give proof: τὴν οὖν ἐνδειξιῶν ἐνδεικνύμενοι.

To whom should the Corinthians give proof? Not to Paul, nor to the three delegates. They do not need any proof. They understand the Corinthians, and have full confidence in them. The Corinthians have an obligation before all congregations of Christ. Their recent lapse has grieved and offended many. Now they must undo the damage which they have caused, undo it as far as possible. Hence they must give proof εἰς πρόσωπον τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, in the sight of the churches.

Of what must they give proof? First of all, τῆς ἀγάπης ὑμῶν, of your love. Love is a comprehensive term. It is the response to the χάρις of God, which Paul mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. It is an expression of the ἀπλοτης, their singleness of purpose; it is the bond which cements the κοινωνία of believers.

In this plea Paul injects a personal element. They should give proof καὶ ἡμῶν καυχήσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εἰς αὐτούς, and of our boasting concerning you before them. Paul had great confidence in the Corinthians, and he had forcefully voiced his confidence before the delegates whom he is now sending. Now he asks the Corinthians to live up to his expectations. If they failed to do so, they would not only make him out to be an irresponsible braggart, if not a liar; they would shake his confidence, and would undo the blessings which had accrued to the Church from their successful struggle against the influence of the false apostles.

For the sake of the churches give proof of Paul's truthfulness in praising you.

4a. II Cor. 9:1–2

The first part of ch. 9 (vv. 1–5) concludes Paul's discussion of the steps which he took to aid the Corinthians in bringing their collection to a speedy and successful close. He begins by reminding them once more of their readiness to participate in the undertaking. If we bear this in mind, it will greatly aid us in understanding his argument.

He connects this section to the foregoing with γὰρ. What statement in particular of the foregoing chapter is he going to explain, or motivate? The word καυχημα in v. 2 provides the key. In v. 24 of the previous chapter he had spoken about his and his associates' καυχησις concerning the Corinthians. He had pleaded that the Corinthians demonstrate the correctness of the boasts which Paul had made about them to the Macedonians. In v. 2 of the present chapter he again refers to his boasting, a boasting about the Corinthians' readiness.

In concentrating on this thought he first stresses, negatively, that he can omit a discussion of the collection as such. They understand the collection, and are in full agreement with Paul's views. Περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους περισσόν μοι ἐστὶν τὸ γράφειν ὑμῖν, For concerning the ministration as such to the saints it is superfluous for me to write to you.

What is the meaning of μὲν? This particle is usually followed by δε, German: *zwar—aber*, yes—but. In the present case, however, no δε occurs till we come to v. 3; and the mutual relation of the two thoughts of vv. 1 and 2, on the one hand, and of v. 3ff. on the other, does not seem to lend itself conveniently to a μὲν—δε association, an association in which μὲν tends to throw the emphasis on the second member, the one introduced by δε. —In our case μὲν, standing alone, simply serves to emphasize the subject of the clause which it introduces: the διακονία as such.

Paul mentioned the διακονία in v. 4 of the previous chapter without discussing it. He mentioned a number of factors in connection with it, chiefly that it is a part of God's χάρις, that it is an expression of the Christians' ἀπλοτης, that it flows out of an appreciation of the Christians' spiritual κοινωνία and helps to cement it. He had mentioned also that a certain ἰσωτης, equalization, is to take place in connection with it. He did not then discuss the διακονία itself, its nature, its meaning, its purpose, etc.

In our present verse he refers to the διακονία again, and declares a discussion to be superfluous. That the collection was εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους he had also mentioned before, ch. 8:4. He now declares any writing about this collection to the Corinthians as περισσόν. In I Thess. 4:9 and 5:2 he expressed a similar thought with οὐ χρειαν ἔχετε: you have no need γράφειν ὑμῖν, or ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι. Paul might have used the same expression in the present case; yet περισσόν seems to express the superfluousness more strongly. We note, moreover, that

Paul here prefixes the definite article το to the infinitive γράφειν, *the* writing to you is superfluous for me. This places a certain stress on the writing. We keep this in mind when we read the following.

Paul continues with an explanatory γαρ. Why would it be a waste of energy, perhaps even a violation of good taste, if he undertook to compose an elaborate explanation of the collection as such? He answers, οἶδα γὰρ τὴν προθυμίαν ὑμῶν, for I know your readiness, willingness, eagerness. We note that Paul does not use a form of γινώσκω, but says οἶδα, thus emphasizing the objective certainty of the matter. The point is not whether he has any personal connection with their willingness; it is rather that he is sure of it on the basis of compelling evidence. Their zeal stood indisputably established. It was so evident that Paul did not hesitate in the least to boast about it, ἦν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καυχῶμαι Μακεδόσιν, of which I am boasting for you to Macedonians. Μακεδόσιν is anarthrous. Paul is not boasting to the Macedonians as a group, he is boasting to individuals, as the occasion may present itself.

He sums up the content of his boasting in the words ὅτι Ἀχαΐα παρεσκεύασται ἀπὸ πέρυσι, that Achaia stands ready since last year, since a year ago. Paul does not limit his praise to the Corinthians - he includes all of Achaia. From Acts 17 we know that some people were won by the Gospel in Athens, and from Rom. 16, that there was a church in Cenchrea, the eastern harbor of Corinth, on the Saronic Gulf. Acts 18, 27f. informs us that Apollos carried on successful Gospel work in Achaia. The present epistle was addressed to the congregation in Corinth together with all the saints in all Achaia (ch. 1:1). About this entire group of Christian churches Paul is convinced that they stood ready for the collection since a year ago.

The verb παρεσκεύασται is the perfect tense, either of the middle or of the passive voice. Whether we read it as passive or middle does not alter the facts: Paul had prepared them, and they stood ready. With this verb Paul repeats the thought which in the previous verse he had summed up in the word προθυμία, their willingness, their zeal. It would be reading more into the word than the context warrants, when people assume that Paul meant to say that in Achaia the collection was practically finished a year ago. What he means with προθυμία and παρεσκεύασται, he explained in the previous chapter by saying that they had then begun not only the doing but also the willing, οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενηργάσθε, but that the ἐπιτελεσαι had yet to be achieved (ch. 8:10, 11).

The dating of ἀπὸ πέρυσι we discussed briefly in connection with ch. 8:10 (see *Quartalschrift* for Oct., 1957, p. 260). We now shall try to establish the sequence of events beginning with ἀπὸ πέρυσι. First Corinthians was written at Easter time in 57; Second Corinthians in late summer of the same year. First Corinthians presupposes the incest case, and a previous letter of Paul concerning it (ch. 5:9); it presupposes the preparation for the collection (ch. 16:1); it presupposes also the invasion of the Corinthian congregation by the trouble makers, at least Paul had then already changed his travel plans (ch. 16:5). Hence Paul probably went to Corinth from Ephesus in the latter part of 56, to propose the matter of the collection. Soon thereafter the incest happened and Paul wrote a letter to Corinth (which we no longer possess). About this time also the troublemakers arrived. The Corinthians wrote a letter to Paul, submitting a number of questions (I Cor. 7:1), and sent a delegation of three men (ch. 16:17). Paul answered in First Corinthians. He stayed in Ephesus till the riot of Demetrius (latter part of May), sending Timothy, and later Titus, to help the Corinthians in their troubles. After the riot of Demetrius he started for Corinth via Troas and Macedonia. A year full of work and bitter troubles.

Yet Paul boasts of the Corinthians, Achaia stands ready since a year ago. He does so in all sincerity. Timothy, whom he had sent to Corinth when he considered his work in Ephesus as finished (Acts 19:22), before the riot of Demetrius, had returned and is the co-author of Second Corinthians (ch. 1:1); and just recently also Titus had returned with a good report. Paul rejoiced over the success of the Gospel, and joyfully boasted about the readiness of the Corinthians for the collection. And many in Macedonia were encouraged thereby: καὶ τὸ ὑμῶν ζήλος ἠρέθισεν τοὺς πλείονας, and your zeal encouraged and stimulated the majority (to greater and more cheerful efforts). —In Macedonia, as in every congregation of Christians on earth, there were such as responded only feebly to God's grace when they were asked to give; but the majority—not a scant majority, rather, by far the greater majority—rejoiced about the zeal of the Corinthians and themselves gave more cheerfully.

The verb ἐρεθίζω occurs only twice in the New Testament, in Col. 3:21 in the bad sense of irritating, as fathers are addressed: Μὴ ἐρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν; while in our passage it is used in the good sense.

Under the conditions, does Paul need to write an exhaustive discourse on the proposed collection? Could he justify his action if he did?

4b. II Cor. 9:3–4

If Paul has such firm confidence in the zeal of the Corinthians for the collection, and if he knows that they stand ready since a year ago, having been properly informed and motivated by Paul himself, and having wholeheartedly taken all necessary preparatory steps for doing their part, so much so that Paul finds it superfluous to explain the matter in writing—why, then, is he now sending a committee of three prominent men to assist them? Does this step not tend to cast doubt on his words? Paul knows, and the Corinthians know, what a terrific spiritual struggle the congregation had just gone through, a struggle which threatened their very existence as a Christian Church. Although the danger had been successfully averted, and the Christian character of the congregation, both in doctrine and practice, had been reestablished, yet the after-effects of the struggle were still in evidence, and it would take some time before all scars of the battle completely disappeared. Among others, the collection had lagged woefully. Concerted efforts in this matter might serve to speed the healing process.

For the present Paul concentrates his attention and his measures on the work of the collection in Corinth, and he uses the fact that Corinth was known throughout the Church as having been prepared since a year ago, in explaining the coming of the three helpers.

Ἔπεμψα δὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς ἵνα μὴ τὸ καύχημα ἡμῶν τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν κενωθῆ, But I am sending the brethren lest our boasting on your behalf be emptied. —Note the change of number in the personal pronouns. Paul alone is doing the sending (I), while the praises of the Corinthians had been sounded also by his associates (our). Καύχημα is not the act of boasting (that would be καύχησις) but is the content of the boasting. If the content is removed, then Paul's boasting would be reduced to empty words. And his boasting would appear empty and unfounded if the collection now produced only mediocre results. The completion should match the readiness, so Paul had said in the previous chapter (v. 11). If it did not, then it would appear that either Paul's instructions or the Corinthians' response, or both, had been insufficient. Paul's praise of the Corinthians would be deflated.

Paul and his associates had many words of praise for the Corinthians. They abounded, as he mentioned in ch. 8:7, “in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us.” All of these virtues would become doubtful if now a failure, or even only a half-failure, would have to be registered in the execution of the collection. For that reason Paul adds the limiting remark ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ, in this part (namely of our boasting). The collection will become a sort of test case; ἵνα καθὼς ἔλεγον παρεσκευασμένοι ἦτε, that, as I was saying, you stood prepared. This ἵνα clause serves to explain the meaning of τούτο το μέρος. It is not final, but appositive (substantive). On the basis of Paul's praises the Macedonians anticipate a very sizable collection to be raised by the Corinthians. If the Corinthians measure up to these expectations, well and good; but if they do not, then both Paul and his associates will stand disgraced as irresponsible braggarts.

Would such disgrace be very serious? In the following negative purpose clause Paul pictures a possible course of events which by all means should be forestalled. He says, μή πως ἐὰν ἔλθωσιν σὺν ἐμοὶ Μακεδόνες καὶ εὐρωσιν ὑμᾶς ἀπαρασκευάστους, lest, if (as is probable) there should come with me (some) Macedonians and should find you unprepared. Such an eventuality must by all means be avoided. Paul will soon be coming to Corinth, perhaps at the end of summer. Since he left Ephesus about June 1, and is writing this letter after his arrival in Philippi and some days after receiving the report of Titus, it may now be about the end of June. Since Paul plans to spend the winter in Corinth, there are still several months left in which to carry out the collection, sufficient to make it a success, provided no time is wasted.

Paul is coming, and there is great probability that some Macedonians will accompany him. The conditional clause with ἐάν and the subjunctive expresses “some prospect of fulfilment” (Chamberlain, p. 198;

cf. Blass-Debrunner, #371,4). Paul does not know who or how many of the Macedonian Christians will come with him, but he is pretty sure that there will be some. The Philippians had from the very beginning shown an active interest in Gospel work. When Paul had been forced to leave Philippi and had taken up work in Thessalonica, they twice sent a contribution for his support during the few weeks of his stay in that city. Lydia, the first convert in Philippi, had insisted that Paul accept free lodging in her house. Together with the other churches in Macedonia, as we heard in the previous chapter, they had engaged a certain “brother” for joint Gospel work in their territory. Is it too far-fetched to assume that much of this can be traced to the faithful labors of Luke, “the beloved physician,” who apparently remained in Philippi during the entire period of Paul’s second and third mission journeys (Acts 16:11–20:5)?—The Bereans had escorted Paul as far as Athens when the unbelieving Jews stirred up a persecution against him in their city and he was forced to leave.—Will the Macedonians, who from the beginning showed such an active interest in Paul’s mission work, now let him travel to Corinth alone? Paul does not think so, he expects that some of them will accompany him.

Since Paul had spoken in glowing terms about the staunch Christian character of the Corinthians, and since their example had served to stimulate and strengthen the zeal of the Macedonians, they will, of course, be greatly interested in the success of the collection in Achaia. They in their bottomless poverty had contributed much more than Paul in his fondest dreams had dared to hope: what will they find in prosperous Corinth? What will be their reaction if they would find (the same εἰν with the subjunctive as above) the Corinthians unprepared? Ἀπαρασκευάστος is the verbal adjective of the word which Paul used twice in the two preceding verses, plus the alpha privative prefixed. From the fact that the collection was disappointing they would naturally draw the conclusion that also the preparation, both on the part of Paul and of the Corinthians, must have been deficient. The Corinthians were simply ἀπαρασκευάστοι, from whatever angle you might look at them.

In that case, Paul says, we, who so confidently proclaimed their thorough preparation, must hang our heads in shame, μή πως καταισχυθῶμεν ἡμεῖς, lest ... we, yes we, be put to shame; we with our unwarranted boasting on the basis of an unsatisfactory work of preparation. Would the Corinthians want such a thing to happen, they who, after some terrible aberration, have just found their way back to an appreciation of, a love for, and confidence in the founder of their congregation? Paul is doing everything in his power to avert such a disgrace. He is dispatching three tried and faithful men to help the Corinthians expedite matters.

Would a failure in the collection bring disgrace to Paul only and to his associates? What about the Corinthians themselves? Paul adds, ἵνα μὴ λέγωμεν ὑμεῖς, not to say you. Paul does not feel guilty of any neglect. He had done his part in preparing the Corinthians for the collection so thoroughly that he finds it improper and superfluous to add anything now in his letter. If people will try to pin any blame on him he will be suffering innocently. The fault will be all the Corinthians’, who neglected to act on the instructions which they had heard from Paul and his associates, and which they had understood and absorbed, but which they had carelessly failed to translate into action. The Macedonians, who knew Paul as a teacher from their own personal experience, would be quick to place the blame where it belongs. By a telling *praeteritio* Paul calls this fact to the attention of his readers.

Paul closes his purpose clause with the prepositional phrase ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ. We leave the phrase un-translated for the present, since the word ὑποστάσις calls for some investigation. According to its etymology it literally means something laid under, a basis or foundation (ὑπο and ἵστημι). Then by means of a metonymy it signifies something that rests on such a foundation. Practically it then becomes a synonym to οὐσίᾳ. In this sense it occurs in Heb. 1:3, where Christ is called the imprint of God’s ὑποστάσις (erroneously translated with “person” in the King James Bible: “the express image of his person.”—The word received the meaning of person much later, during the Trinitarian controversies.) Usually in this metonymical use the word was applied to some mental processes (metaphor) to indicate trust or confidence (and expressions of trust) as resting on safe grounds. Its opposite would be “imagination” (Compare the expression: φαντασίαν μὲν ἔχειν πλουτου, ὑποστάσιν δὲ μή). In this sense the Epistle to the Hebrews uses it in the definition of faith as: the ὑποστάσις of things hoped for, i.e. the sure, well founded conviction (Heb. 11:1). The same epistle encourages its readers to avoid the bitter root of unbelief (ἀπιστία) and to hold fast to the end their original Christian faith:

ἀρχην της ὑποστάσεως (ch. 3:14). Thus Hebrews uses the word in two places for confidence. Paul uses the word only twice, both times for an expression of confidence. In our passage it means: in this confident boasting. In ch. 11:17, where he is “bragging” in ἀφροσυνη, he speaks about ταυτη τη ὑποστάσει της καυχησεως, this *venture* of boasting.

Might his confidence, after all, be without real ὑποστάσις? Might it have been misplaced? —Neither Paul nor the Corinthians will want that to be the case.

4c. II Cor. 9:5

This verse concludes the present subpart and, at the same time, the whole section begun at ch. 8:1. Paul states summarily his reasons for sending a delegation to Corinth to help the congregation in completing the collection.

Ἐπειδὴ ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἦγησάμην, Accordingly I considered it as necessary. The connective οὖν shows that Paul deduced the necessity of his measure from a consideration of the various factors which he had pointed out in this section. Adding them up, the result was the procedure which he had adopted and of which he just has informed his readers. That is the meaning of ἀναγκαῖον, a word which he places at the head of the sentence. The course may have some unpleasant implications, but since no alternate plan presents itself that would hold out any prospect of success, he considers it imperative to adopt this one. He is willing to submit to this ἀνάγκη, the force of circumstances, and he expects his readers to do so likewise. —His resolve was, as we have seen, to send three men to aid the Corinthians in completing the collection.

The first step which Paul took in this direction was to win the three men whom he was sending, for his plan. They, if they are to serve efficiently, must be convinced of its soundness. If they were not, or if they were not wholeheartedly for it, if they would do their work only mechanically, then, perhaps, it would be better not to send them at all. Paul says παρακαλέσαι τοὺς ἀδελφούς, to urge the brethren. He does not say how much urging he had to do. About Titus he had remarked before that he was eager of his own accord, he went αὐθαρῆτος. About the second partner of Titus he said that he was eager to go because of his great confidence in all of the Corinthians. About the other brother he remarked that he had been chosen by the Macedonian congregations to be a fellow traveler of Paul in delivering the collection to Jerusalem. Evidently they all agreed with Paul that a special help to the Corinthians was indicated by the circumstances. Evidently Paul had no difficulty in persuading the brethren to accept their assignment ἵνα προέλθωσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς.

The prefix προ in προέλθωσιν is easy to understand. Paul is going to Corinth to take the collected funds and together with some delegate of the congregation deliver them in Jerusalem. The three brethren whom he is sending are to go to Corinth in advance, before him, to help gathering the contributions. But this προ is only the first one in a series of three: καὶ προκαταρτίσωσιν τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν ὑμῶν, and complete in advance your blessing (which was) promised in advance. Καταρτιζῶ, from αρτιζῶ with perfective κατα, means to fit together completely. The idea is the same as Paul had expressed in ch. 8:11 with ἐπιτέλεσαι. Now he prefixes προ to it. The gathering of the collection should be completed before Paul and his Macedonian companions arrive in Corinth. Already in his first epistle he had urged prompt action, “that there be no gathering when I come” (ch. 16:2). The original Greek sounds even more urgent: ἵνα μὴ ὅταν ἔλθω τότε λογιῆαι γίνωνται, lest when I come then gatherings be made. If it was in place at that time (about Easter) to warn against easy going complacency, much more now, since during the disturbance much valuable time had been lost.

Paul prefixes a προ also to ἐπηγγελμένην. The Corinthians had enthusiastically agreed with Paul when he presented the matter of a collection to their congregation; they were for it heart and soul, there was a θερεῖν, and they made promises to Paul. Paul is now not making new demands on them, he is just reminding them of promises which they themselves had made earlier, in fact a year ago. But although these promises were made so long ago, they were still a far way from being redeemed. Hence the resolve of Paul to send able men to assist the Corinthians.

He calls the contribution of the Corinthians an εὐλογία, a blessing. And he means just what he says. No doubt, the Corinthians agreed, they also intended their gift to be a blessing. But as things had been going, there was danger that this goal would not be reached. The three men are to help the Corinthians ταύτην ἐτοιμὴν εἶναι οὕτως ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν, that this be ready thus as a blessing, and not as (niggardly) stinginess. Thus Paul here again urges that the collection should be ready when he comes. Then he adds not only ὡς, as a blessing, but reinforces this thought by inserting οὕτως, let it be ready thus as a blessing, so that at the first glance every one can see that it is a blessing. The collection would fail of its main purpose, that of being an expression of the Christian κοινωνία, if it revealed a spirit of skimping. It would then furthermore demonstrate a lack of ἀπλοτησ, singleness of mind and purpose. It would arouse the suspicion that the Corinthian Christians were pretty far in arrears with banishing covetousness from their hearts.

The Corinthians have the correct understanding, but they are not fully alert to the situation. They need prodding, and should welcome assistance.

5a. II Cor. 9:6–7

Having explained the meaning of the delegation which he is sending to Corinth, Paul, beginning with v. 6 and continuing to the end of the chapter, speaks about the grand purpose which he is aiming to achieve in connection with the collection. He uses the figure of sowing and reaping. Taking part in the collection may be compared to casting seed into a field, expecting it to produce a harvest in return.

Paul calls special attention to what he is about to say with Τοῦτο δέ, Now this. —The demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο here stands alone; grammatically it is not connected with the rest of the sentence. It is neither the subject nor the object of any verb. It exhibits somewhat the characteristics of an exclamation: Now this! Yet the meaning is very clear. What Paul wants to say is: Now this is what I have in mind, and what I would like to have you consider carefully.

Ὁ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει, καὶ ὁ σπείρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει. The sentence stresses the agreement of the harvest with the sowing, and the careful attention which a sower pays to this fact. Note how Paul places the adverbial modifiers, φειδομένως in the one case and ἐπ' εὐλογίαις in the second, next to each other. If the sowing is done φειδομένως, φειδομένως will also be the reaping. Similarly with ἐπ' εὐλογίαις.

This prepositional phrase is unusual. The new GreekEnglish Lexicon of the New Testament says that it is adverbial in nature and expresses manner. To illustrate, the Lexicon refers to an expression like κακοτροπως καὶ ἐπι ραδιουργίας, deceitfully and on trickery; thus because the prepositional phrase is coordinated with a regular adverb. The said Lexicon lists our passage as the only case of its kind found in the New Testament. Not only the adverbial function but the meaning of the phrase as well is determined by its contrast to the adverb φειδομένως; ἐπ' εὐλογίαις means: in a bountiful manner.

Since Paul calls special attention to this correspondence between reaping and sowing, we shall do well to take a little closer look at the expressions which he uses. He does not say, e.g., he who sows *a little*, but uses the adverb φειδομένως. We met with the verb from the same stem in ch. 1:23, φειδομένως ὑμῶν, sparing you. There the participle does not stress the outward action of sparing, but calls attention to its motivation, viz., Paul's consideration for the Corinthians. Paul refrained from doing a certain thing because his love for the Corinthians prevented him. Also in our passage the φειδομένως does not merely suggest the small amount of seed that is used, but hints at a hesitancy of the sower about the act of sowing. The word εὐλογία, if anything, goes a little farther in this direction, pointing not only to the amount of the seed, but to the willingness, the cheerfulness, with which it was sown.

In spite of the fact that Paul places the two adverbs φειδομένως, and the two phrases ἐπ' εὐλογίαις, next to each other, they do not apply to the σπείρειν and to the θερίσειν in the same manner. As far as the sowing is concerned, the sower has it in his own hands whether he wants to sow sparingly or abundantly; but not so with the harvest. That depends entirely on the blessing of the Lord. So much is clear, that from a niggardly sowing no rich harvest may be expected. But if the Lord does not grant His blessing, even the most

bountiful sowing will not produce a rich harvest. Sowing demands a trust in God's providence, on the part of the sower.

Thus, while it is true that a sower is guided in his sowing by a consideration of the size of the harvest which he wishes to reap, yet he must exercise confidence, a trust in God, when he sows much in the hope of reaping a rich harvest.

It is this cheerful, hopeful confidence which Paul is trying to stir up in his readers. As a sower does not consider the seed which he casts into the ground as wasted, neither should a participant in the present collection enter his gift in the loss column of his ledger. It is, rather, an investment from which rich profits may be expected. —Paul uses the same figure of sowing and harvesting in his letter to the Galatians: “For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (ch. 6:7). This he says by way of encouragement, not to cultivate the lust of reward or the idea of merit. Remember how in the very beginning he placed the entire collection under the general heading of χάρις. The Corinthians had experienced the grace of God in a rich measure, not only when the Gospel message was brought to them, but recently in a special way, when they through a terrific spiritual struggle were led to a glorious victory.

By comparing the collection with the seeding of a field, and by holding out the prospect of a rich harvest Paul arouses the faith of the Corinthians in the grace of God to a cheerful response to the call for contributions. He does not say in what the harvest will consist, but will speak about that a little later. Yet if the collection serves as an expression of the spiritual κοινωνία, and will strengthen the bonds of this κοινωνία, that in itself would be a rich harvest. At present, however, Paul is interested in setting forth another point. He reminds the Corinthians that any form of coercion or constraint is foreign to the matter. Ἐκαστος καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ, Every one just as he has made up his mind (or chosen in his heart) first. Αἰρέομαι denotes a free choice, without any high-pressuring or coercion. This is to be exercised by the giver προ, beforehand. This privilege, this exercise of Christian faith and love, belongs to every member of the Church. His faith, the exercise and training of his faith, is a very individual, personal matter. Brethren may advise, they may admonish, they may urge and encourage, but in the last analysis even the size of a contribution is a question to be settled between the believer and his Lord.

After this general remark Paul adds two specific dangers that are to be carefully avoided: μὴ ἐκ λύπης ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, not from grief or from compulsion. Does a sower ever sow his seed from grief? Does he feel sorry that he has cast the seed into the ground? It is true, for him the seed is gone; he can make no further use of it. But does he feel sorry for that? He rejoices in the fact that he had seed to sow. He may even have gone so far that he borrowed the money to buy the seed to cast it away. Let a Christian giver look at his gift in the same light. —If he gives with grief in his heart over the loss, his gift becomes tainted. Does he not appreciate the grace of God which enabled him to give? Is his ἀπλοτης deficient? Does he cling to the treasures of this world? Does the κοινωνία mean little or nothing to him? Does he consider every mite that he spends on it, to express it and to strengthen it, as wasted?

Nor let a Christian give from compulsion, be it the compulsion of some quota system, be it the fear of the wrath of God; or be it the urge to “keep up with the Joneses.” If any form of compulsion plays a role in determining the size of the gift, that gift again has become tainted.

Paul adds by way of explanation, ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός, for God loves a cheerful giver—with the stress on *cheerful*. God is not interested in the gift as such; He is interested in the heart of the giver. If the heart is motivated by λύπη or ἀνάγκη, the gift loses its value. God does not need the gift. All the goods of the world are His. He created them. In the Psalm He says, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 50:12). If He needed a gift for His hungry children, He would not have to go begging. He can readily provide for them. If He asks others of His children to come to the assistance of their needy brethren, it is to give them an opportunity to exercise their new life, to show their love to their brethren and their thankfulness toward God. To invite them to contribute is, as Paul said from the very beginning, an act of God's grace. Let them respond cheerfully.

The words which Paul uses are adapted from Prov. 22:8, which in the LXX translation reads, ἄνδρα ἰλαρὸν καὶ δότην εὐλογεῖ ὁ θεός, God blesses a cheerful man and giver; while the Hebrew original says that

“a kind-eyed one, he is blessed.” For the specific term *to bless* Paul substitutes the more general idea *to love*, ἀγαπᾶν, which does not mean merely *to be pleased*, but to treat accordingly, thus including also the blessing. God actively loves a cheerful giver.

God Himself is a cheerful Giver. Not only can St. James say, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning” (ch. 1:17), but he also maintains that “God giveth to all men liberally (ἀπλῶς, i.e. simply giving) and upbraideth not” (v. 5). His children, being born of Him and being created after His image, will manifest the same spirit.

A Christian giver realizes that what he is able to give he has first received as a gift from God. His gift will be a happy expression of thanks to God who enabled him to have the happy experience of giving. He will remember the word of Jesus which Paul quoted to the Ephesian elders: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

5b. II Cor. 9:8

God loves a cheerful giver. He promises to bless him. Can He? Yes, it is easy for Him. However, first He must perform a more difficult task; but He is able to do that also. The more difficult task is—since all men by nature are rather unwilling givers—that He transform the Corinthians into cheerful givers. He does so, not by command, not by promise of a reward to be earned by the giver, not by threats of dire punishment for any one who does not comply. He does so by His life-giving, joy-creating grace.

The Corinthians had experienced the grace of God. They got their first taste of it when Paul brought them the Gospel of salvation for Christ’s sake. They got another rich taste only recently, when the grace of God led them out of the trouble into which they had permitted themselves to be lured, had granted them a victory and was leading them on the way of recovery. God had poured out His grace upon them richly. But that was only a beginning. He can do much more. Can He? Yes, He can.

Paul very emphatically places the verb δυνατεῖ at the head of the sentence; He can, there is not the least doubt about His ability. Let this truth sink in: God is able. —What is it that God can do?

Δυνατεῖ δὲ ὁ θεὸς πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεῦσαι εἰς ὑμᾶς, Able is God to increase (and make abound) every grace in you. Every grace, every form of grace. They have experienced the manifold grace of God richly, but God can make it abound still more and more. Particularly, God can make them cheerful givers. We now note first what a bold picture Paul paints of a cheerful giver.

ἵνα, that you ἐν παντὶ πάντοτε πᾶσαν ἀυτάρκειαν ἔχοντες, that you (as people) who have in all things at all times all sufficiency. Note the repetition of the “all,” πᾶν, in the description of the subject. The Corinthians have a complete sufficiency, they lack nothing. In his first letter Paul had written, “I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything you are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that you come behind in no gift” (ch. 1:4–7). In his second letter he had repeated, “Ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us” (ch 8:7).—Well may he now say that they have complete sufficiency. And they have it in every respect, and at all times.

The limit has not yet been reached. God is able to increase every grace.

This particular grace of God has not yet had an opportunity to manifest itself in their participation in the present collection. To be sure, they were ready a year ago for the doing with determination, but the spiritual struggle which they underwent in the mean time greatly interfered. But God is able to increase the operation of His grace also in this respect, ἵνα... περισσεύητε εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν, that you increase in every good work. Note another πᾶν, the fifth in a single sentence.

If any one recognizes this ability of God, embraces it in a believing heart, and appreciates it: can he be anything else but a cheerful giver? —Now what about the harvest? Paul brings a quotation from the Old Testament.

5c. II Cor. 9:9

Καθὼς γέγραπται, as it is written, Paul says. Yes, there it stands before all men's eyes as a permanent record.

The quotation which Paul introduces with these words is taken from Ps. 112. This Psalm must be read on the background of Ps. 111. These two Psalms form a unit. They are not only alike in structure, but, as an old saying has it, where the one leaves off the other begins: *Ubi haec ode* (Ps. 111) *desinit, sequens incipit*. Both Psalms are acrostics, consisting of twenty-two lines beginning with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In both Psalms two succeeding lines always form a pair, except that in each case the last six lines are grouped in two triplets. Concerning the thought presented in the two Psalms Delitzsch quotes Hitzig as saying: "Whilst Ps. 111 celebrates the glory, might, and lovingkindness of Jahve in the circle of the upright (cf. v. 1: in the assembly of the upright), Ps. 112 celebrates the glory flowing therefrom and the happiness of the upright themselves (cf. v. 2: the generation of the upright shall be blessed), of those who fear Jahve. The two Psalms are twins in form as in contents."

St. Paul's quotation is from the second of this pair of Psalms, from the one which sings about the blessings of the God-fearing, and thus is very appropriate for the occasion. Moreover, while Paul had compared the Christians' contribution to the collection for the needy to a sowing, the Psalm also speaks about a scattering as of seed.

Ἐσκόρπισεν, ἔδωκεν τοῖς πένησιν, He scattered, he gave to the poor (laborers).

Ἐσκόρπισεν is the translation of a Hebrew Piel form, denoting an intensive act of scattering and spreading; while ἔδωκεν is the translation of a simple Qal form, telling us in what the scattering consisted. It was a giving to the poor. One is reminded of Prov. 11:24: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Luther: *Einer teilt aus, und hat immer mehr; ein anderer karget, da er nicht soll, und wird doch ärmer*). —In the Greek there is a difference between πένης and πτωχος. While πτωχος denotes a beggar, πένης applies to a poor man who lives from hand to mouth. (So Plutarch explains, according to the new GreekEnglish Lexicon.) Whether the translators of the LXX had this distinction in mind, may be difficult to determine; compare their translation of Ps. 40:17: "poor and *needy*" as πτωχος και πενης; Luther: *arm und elend*. The distinction has little bearing on the point which the Psalmist is trying to put across, namely, that the fear of the Lord, which characterizes the "upright," expresses itself also in this way that he scatters and gives to the poor. He is not a pinch-penny, he is a cheerful giver. The blessing which he received from the Lord makes him such.

The point which Paul is trying to impress on the hearts of the Corinthians is that God loves and blesses a cheerful giver. So much for a description from the Psalm of what a cheerful giver is like. Now for the inducement it offers by holding out the promise of a bountiful harvest.

Ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, His righteousness endures unto the eon (for ever).

What is δικαιοσύνη? In ch. 3:9, Paul compared δικαιοσύνη with κατακρίσις. He contrasted the two terms and pointed out that the διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως is the direct opposite of the διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης. Κατακρίσις is the act of a judge who after due investigation declares a defendant guilty. By way of contrast δικαιοσύνη is a righteousness pronounced by a judicial verdict.

We take a little closer look at the use of this term in the Psalm from which Paul quotes. Ps. 111, which praises the works of the Lord, says in v. 3: "His righteousness endureth for ever." Then in unfolding the doings of the Lord in His righteousness the Psalmist says in v. 9: "He sent *redemption* unto his people, he hath commanded *his covenant* for ever, holy and reverend is his name." That is the righteousness of the Lord which the Psalmist has in mind: not the legislative righteousness, in which He issues just commandments, not the retributive righteousness, according to which He without partiality and without respect of persons rewards the good and punishes the evil, but that righteousness of which Paul says in Rom. 1:17, that it is revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith; and of which St. John writes: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

The Psalmist declares the fear of the Lord (*Gottesfurcht*) to be the beginning of wisdom, and concludes with the promise that if anyone acts accordingly (“do his commandments”) his praise will endure forever.

Here is where Ps. 112 takes over, singing about the blessedness of a man who shows this “wisdom” in his conduct, who “feareth the Lord” and “delighteth greatly in his commandments.” Already in v. 3 he declares: “His righteousness endureth for ever.” The righteousness which he has received from the Lord in the forgiveness of his sins will ever guide him in his life and conduct. His whole behavior will demonstrate undeniably that he is a justified man. He will “show favor” (v. 5) and “lend.” He will scatter his gifts among the poor (v. 9).

That is the δικαιοσύνη about which the Psalmist is singing: a righteousness effected by the righteous God, a righteousness proclaimed to the sinner in a sentence of justification, a righteousness which creates and motivates a life of righteousness. Of this righteousness the Psalmist sings that it endures forever. It will outlast this present life; it will outlast death and the grave; it will outlast the final judgment, and will follow into heaven, as the Book of Revelation says: “Their works do follow them” (ch. 14:13).

We are reminded of the description which Jesus gives us of the final judgment, how He will use our fruits of righteousness to demonstrate before the world the correctness of His verdict, which He proclaimed by placing us on His right hand and by inviting us to inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Neither the Psalmist nor Paul says that these works of righteousness are our own achievements, or that they merit us the favor of God. From the very beginning (ch. 8:1) Paul had placed the entire matter of the collection under the comprehensive heading of “the grace of God.” He underscores this truth in the following short paragraph, using the thoughts of the Psalm passage as a starting point.

5d. II Cor. 9:10–11

When Paul introduced the comparison of the collection with the act of sowing, it was simply assumed that the man who was going to sow his field had the necessary seed on hand, that it was simply left up to his decision whether he would sow much or little. But where did his seed come from? The One who blesses the seed so that it produces a harvest is also the One who provided the seed in the first place. So it is with the collection. God will bless it on the cheerful giver; but it was also God who provided the giver with the means to give.

Ὁ δὲ ἐπιχορηγῶν σπέρμα τῷ σπείροντι καὶ ἄρτον εἰς βρῶσιν, Now he who provides seed to the sower and bread for eating. Ὁ ἐπιχορηγῶν, the substantivised present participle, is equivalent to our English verbal noun in -er, *the provider*, not one who just happens to provide, but one whose characteristic it is to do so. It is necessary to remind also Christians again and again of this truth. We too easily forget, and take things as they are for granted. There is a Provider of seed, and without His providing there would be no sowing.

The same God, however, who provides seed to the sower, by means of that act also provides bread for eating: to the scanty sower scantily, and to the sower ἐπ’ εὐλογίας, bountifully. Apply this truth to the collection. The same Provider of natural seed and bread, He χορηγήσει καὶ πληθυνεῖ τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν καὶ αὐξήσει τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης ὑμῶν, He will provide and multiply your (spiritual) seed, and will increase your products of righteousness.

It seems advisable to take the double verb χορηγήσει καὶ πληθυνεῖ as more than an ordinary hendiadys: He will provide richly. Rather, the first verb simply repeats the action named in the substantivised participle of the subject; then the second adds the thought: and He will do so richly, so that you will have no difficulty as cheerful givers to give ἐπ’ εὐλογίας.

The parallelism of the two statements: The Provider of seed for the sower ... will provide your σπόρος, indicates that it is advisable to take σπόρος in its literal sense used metaphorically, not as Lenski suggests, metonymically, for the crop which it produces. While σπέρμα always is concrete, the seed, the first meaning of the word σπόρος is the act of sowing.

The expression τὰ γενήματα τῆς δικαιοσύνης is found in the LXX translation of Hos. 10:12, which differs from the original in several points. In Keil's translation the passage reads: "Sow to yourselves for righteousness, reap according to love; plough for yourselves virgin soil: for it is time to seek Jehovah, *till He come and rain righteousness upon you.*" Instead of the last clause the LXX reads, ἕως τοῦ ἐλθεῖν γενήματα δικαιοσύνης ὑμῖν, till there come products of righteousness to you. Δικαιοσύνη, the same word which was used before, is the righteousness declared by God in His irrevocable verdict, and announced to sinners in the Gospel, the righteousness which manifests itself in the sinner by a new life of righteousness, over which God rejoices. The works of righteousness performed by the justified sinner are not his own achievements, they are γενήματα, products of that imputed righteousness.

Paul holds out the promise that God ἀύξει, will increase in number, in vigor, etc. For this idea the prophet had used the figure: God will *rain* righteousness upon you.

All glory to God! —The next verse, in a way summarizes the thoughts which Paul developed beginning with v. 6, and serves as a transition to the glorious conclusion of this second part of the epistle. Paul addresses the Corinthians as πλουτιζόμενοι, as people who are being enriched. The fact that Paul does not connect the participle in its case to the pronoun of the previous sentence, ὑμῶν, to which it refers, indicates that the new thought is not to be subjoined to the foregoing. It marks an independent statement, yet one closely related to the preceding one. He had spoken about God's providing various gifts, of multiplying and increasing them. By these gifts the Corinthians are being enriched. We bear in mind that Paul's general topic is the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, toward which the Corinthians had agreed to contribute. When we give toward any purpose, we sometimes have the feeling as though thereby we ourselves are being impoverished in proportion to the amount of our contribution. Paul says to the Corinthians not only: No, but you are being enriched; he adds emphatically ἐν παντί, in every respect. There is a constant increase going on for the giver even in such things as, on the surface, might look like a setback.

The high point of this enrichment Paul mentions in the phrase εἰς πᾶσαν ἀπλότητα, in complete singleness of purpose. Paul mentioned the ἀπλότης before as evident among the Macedonians in connection with the collection; their Christian joy and their extreme poverty together resulted in a rich development of their ἀπλότης. The new Greek-English Lexicon insists that in this case (ch. 8:2) ἀπλότης must be rendered with "liberality." Also our present passage (ch. 9:11) is listed as an example of this use of the word. There is, however, no compelling reason for the change. Ἀπλότης expresses the attitude of the Christian heart which grasps the truth of Jesus' word to Martha: "One thing is needful," and that of Paul that God does "gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10).

There are many things in the world to distract a Christian's attention. To strengthen his ἀπλότης is indeed enriching him. The ἀπλότης sets its sights on the glory of God. With this thought Paul closes this transitional verse: ἥτις κατεργάζεται δι' ἡμῶν εὐχαριστίαν τῷ θεῷ, which (by its nature) effects through us thanksgiving to God.

ἥτις not merely, like the common relative pronoun, connects the new thought with the foregoing, but implies that the antecedent such as it is, by its nature, produces the result stated in the clause.

The ἀπλότης as such, by its very nature, produces thanksgiving. How can it be otherwise? If we are permeated with the recognition that by ourselves we are nothing, that by our own fault we are sinners, that we have justly merited God's wrath, temporal death, and eternal damnation, that by no means are we able to avert our doom, that we are unable to change our nature, but that, rather, by all our efforts we sink only deeper into perdition; if we are permeated with the knowledge that God spared not His own Son in order to save us, that He sent His Spirit to kindle faith in our rebellious hearts, that He by the power of His Word broke down our resistance against what seemed utter foolishness to us, and moved us to accept His gracious offer as our only hope of salvation—in other words, if we recognize that we who were beggarly poor by nature, now have been made rich by God, and are continually being made rich over and over: how can such concentrated realization do else than make us burst forth in thanksgiving? The more we recognize God as the sole source of all our blessings, the more will our ἀπλότης be strengthened, the more will it produce thanksgiving.

This applies also to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Deliberate participation in it will exercise and strengthen the ἀπλότης. What a wonderful hymn of praise it will help to produce Paul will present in the last sub-part of this second main part of his epistle, ch 9:12–15.

5e. II Cor. 9:12–14

The section which we are to study now ends with a very brief expression of thanks to God. But the sentence preceding this doxology is rather lengthy and of a form which calls for some grammatical discussion. Since the Greek writers had at their disposal certain word endings indicating number, case, and gender, which the English idiom lacks, they can at times express their thoughts with perfect clarity in a way which we simply cannot duplicate in our language.

The statement in our text is made in the form of an explanatory subordinate clause introduced by ὅτι, because. The first part, v. 12, is quite regular, but the second, v. 13, containing the participle δοξάζοντες, offers a construction which is foreign to our English grammar. The form of the participle is the masculine nominative plural; but there is no noun of that description, neither in the previous verse nor anywhere in the vicinity. Grammarians call it a nominative absolute. The subject of this participle must be taken from the ἁγίων mentioned in v. 12. The purpose is to explain in some detail the εὐχαριστία mentioned in v. 12. Thus the thought of v. 13 is subordinate to v. 12.

Verse 14 then contains another participle, this time in the genitive plural, ἐπιποθούντων, masculine, since it modifies αὐτῶν, which here refers to persons. The question is: whether αὐτῶν ... ἐπιποθούντων should be read as a genitive absolute, or whether the dative δεήσει should be coupled to the two datives of v. 13 (τῇ ὑποταγῇ ... καὶ ἀπλότητι) which depend on the preposition ἐπί. In that case the genitive αὐτῶν would be possessive, modifying δεήσει. —This second alternative, although espoused by Bachmann in Zahn's Kommentar, is not very likely. It would state that the recipients of the gift will glorify God for the Corinthians' ὑποταγῇ and ἀπλότης and for their own δεήσις. —It seems best to take the first alternative. Bachmann objects that in that case καὶ would have to be translated as *also*—also they—which, according to him, would presuppose a ὑμεῖς in the previous sentence, to justify the strong contrast which is implied in *also they*. Yet the καὶ does not necessarily have to be joined to αὐτῶν alone, but may refer to the thought of the entire genitive absolute. Not two groups of persons are being compared, but two actions of the same group.

To sum up, the skeleton of the sentence might be presented something like this: because the collection will result in much thanksgiving, as the recipients glorify God particularly for two products of His grace on the Corinthians, while they also long for their benefactors in their prayers.

Some minor points of grammar will be considered in the course of our study.

9:12

In closing the previous section, where Paul compared the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem to a sowing for a harvest, he had mentioned as one of the important results the increase and strengthening of Christian ἀπλότης, their living in the truth that “One thing is needful,” which is of such a nature that it effects and multiplies thanksgiving to God. This truth he now unfolds in the present section by pointing to the intended purpose of the collection.

What is it? The obvious purpose, as every one could assume, was to bring relief to the brethren. There were many poor members in the Jerusalem congregation. It had been so from the beginning. Some of the better situated members had at that time sold their possessions and placed the money at the disposal of the apostles to procure food and clothing for the needy. This work soon became too burdensome for the apostles; it interfered with the main task for which our Savior had called them. The apostles pleaded with the congregation for a division of labor, and the congregation responded by electing seven almoners.

Poverty continued. When Paul and Barnabas, after their first mission journey, went to Jerusalem to discuss the question of circumcision and other Mosaic ceremonies, whether the Gentile Christians were

obligated to observe them, the Jerusalem apostles reminded the missionaries that they should not forget the poor and needy in the mother church. In this way things continued. When Paul in the year following the present epistle delivered the collection in Jerusalem, he found there four men who had a vow on them but were unable to pay for the required purification sacrifices. Paul took these expenses on himself.

Thus there were many poor people in Jerusalem, and the obvious purpose of the collection was relief. Yet that was really only a minor matter. Paul says, οὐ μόνον ἐστὶν προσαναπληροῦσα τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν ἁγίων, the collection is not only helping to replenish the things lacking the saints. —A few words and forms here demand our attention. The participle προσαναπληροῦσα is made up of three parts. There is the verb *plēroō*. To it is joined the reenforcing particle ἄνα. This compound ἀναπληρόω is used for the fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 13:14), for fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), for the Jews' fulfilling of their sins at all times (I Th. 2:16), for “occupying the room of the unlearned” (I Cor. 14:16), for supplying that which is lacking (I Cor. 16:17), etc. To this verb is prefixed a *προς*. The collection which Paul's congregations are gathering will not completely supply the wants of the needy brethren, but it will materially work toward that goal, it will help to supply their needs.

That is one of the purposes, but it is by far not the chief one.

Before we take up a study of Paul's chief aim it will help us to note under what category Paul includes the collection. In speaking of this ministry he calls it ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης, the administration of this service. The word “service” which the King James uses for λειτουργία is really a little too weak to convey the meaning of the Greek word. The new Greek-English Lexicon groups the various meanings of the word under two headings. First it is used of ritual and cultic services; then of other kinds of service to God. The word λειτουργία was originally used for a service which a citizen rendered to the community, and for which he bore the expenses; then in general for any public service. This meaning was then applied to religious services. The services which Zacharias, the priest, the father of John the Baptist, performed in the temple are called a λειτουργία (Luke 1:23). The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the tabernacle and its vessels of λειτουργία (ch. 9:21). Paul in speaking about his own ministry of the Gospel calls it θυσία καὶ λειτουργία (Phil. 2:17). Also the assistance which Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to render to Paul is called by this name (Phil. 2:30). By using this word λειτουργία in connection with the physical aid which the churches were sending to Jerusalem Paul elevates the collection to the level of spiritual, religious service. Do we always realize that the contributions which we solicit for congregational or synodical work pertain even more directly to the kingdom of God than did the collection which Paul raised to help feed and clothe the needy saints in Jerusalem? We should do that work, and speak about that work, with reverential awe. It is λειτουργία.

Bearing this in mind we shall feel more vividly what Paul has to say about the deeper meaning and the higher purpose of his collection. Paul continues, ἀλλὰ καὶ περισσεύουσα διὰ πολλῶν εὐχαριστιῶν τῷ θεῷ, but (is) also extremely abundant (overflowing) through thanksgiving of many to God. —We note that in this part of the statement, as well as in the first, we have a periphrastic present. Instead of the plain προσαναπληροῖ and περισσεύει we have the respective participles with the copula ἐστὶν. This gives greater prominence to the action as such. Our attention is focused on the supplying in the first half and on the superabundance in the second. The administration of our sacred service achieves this double purpose.

Our whole life of sanctification can be summed up under the concept of thanksgiving. Taking part in the collection is in itself an expression of gratitude, but it is of such a nature that it causes also other Christians to increase their thanksgiving.

A question of minor importance is the understanding of πολλῶν. The King James takes it as an adjective modifier of εὐχαριστιῶν, many thanksgivings; so do also other translations, only they try to find some smoother expression, e.g., Moffat: “many a cry of thanks;” Goodspeed: “a wealth of thanksgiving.” I prefer to follow Luther's lead who translated: *dass viele Gott danken*. This shows that he took πολλῶν in the sense of a masculine indefinite pronoun: the thanksgiving of many.

In the previous verse Paul spoke about the collection as a διακονία, an administration, of a sacred service, a λειτουργία. In the present verse he still retains the concept of διακονία; but here he treats it as a test, successfully passed, with a resultant approval. In the matter of the collection the quality of the Corinthians' Christianity, their ἀπλότης, their εὐχαριστία, their κοινωνία, etc. are being put to a test, and they themselves are thereby given an opportunity to demonstrate their genuineness of them? That is the δοκιμη, τῆς διακονίας.

With this aspect of the collection Patti begins the next part of his statement: διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης δοξάζοντες τὸν θεὸν, (many will give thanks to God) as they are glorifying God (being moved) by the test of this service. —We discussed the construction of the participle δοξάζοντες above, we need not repeat. It is of utmost importance to consider what characteristics in particular of the Corinthians' faith the saints in Jerusalem will find established through this test which the collection afforded. Paul mentions two things. The first is: ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, (glorifying God) on the submission of your confession in (respect to) the Gospel of Christ.

Τῇ ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας ὑμῶν. Here we have a noun with a genitive modifier plus a possessive pronoun. We find similar combinations quite frequently in Paul's letters. We take an illustration from Col. 1:13: τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, which the King James translates, "the kingdom of his dear Son" (Luther: *das Reich seines lieben Sohnes*). Τῆς ἀγάπης is thus treated as a qualifying genitive modifying τοῦ υἱοῦ. And the possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ is taken, not as modifying the noun immediately preceding it (τῆς ἀγάπης), but the compound expression τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης: His dear Son (not: the Son of His love). Apply this observation to the expression now under investigation, and we get: your confessional submission in respect to the Gospel, i.e., your submission to the Gospel as it becomes manifest in your confession. The Gr.-Engl. Lex. paraphrases: "Your confessing the Gospel finds expression in obedient subjection to its requirements." This is a good statement except for the last word, *requirements*, which may create the impression of law rules and commandments (Bauer's German original is even worse: *Euer Bekenntnis zum Evangelium aeussert sich in gehorsamer Unterwerfung unter dessen Forderungen*).

Ὁμολογία points to a confession in words. Yet such confession alone is not sufficient in the case of the Gospel. The Gospel is a power of God which creates a new spiritual life in its hearers. The birth of this new life is a revolutionary process. A few chapters back (5:17) Paul described it in these words: "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." What does a confession imply in a case of this nature? To laud the Gospel in words while continuing in the former life of sin would be rank hypocrisy: "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:5). Ὁμολογία in this case includes an expression of the new life within the heart by a new mode of living in the world. Participating wholeheartedly in the collection for the needy saints is a method of ὁμολογία. It shows that the Gospel is living and ruling in the hearts of the Corinthians, producing an active brotherly love.

A second reason for the increased thanksgiving of the saints Paul expresses in these words: καὶ (ἐπὶ τῇ) ἀπλότητι τῆς κοινωνίας εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰς πάντας, and (on the) singleness of (your) fellowship to them and to all.—This phrase effectively disposes of the idea that by ἀπλότης Paul understands "liberality." The Corinthians took up a collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem, and they likely contributed liberally; but they did not take up a collection *for all*, which the addition of εἰς πάντας would imply if ἀπλότης is understood to mean "liberality." The meaning of "singleness of mind" or "singleheartedness" must be retained.

We note that Paul does not repeat the preposition and the definite article (ἐπὶ τῇ) with the second member of the phrase. Omitting these serves to unite the two datives most closely. The ὑποταγῇ τῆς ὁμολογίας and the ἀπλότης τῆς κοινωνίας may not be separated. Just as Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8), so is also His Gospel. And again, just as God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29), so also the Gospel of Christ is a power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel does not create different kinds of believers, different types of Christians: e.g., Jewish and Gentile, but one Church in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all are one in (the same) Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). This is the κοινωνία created by the Gospel. Thus submission to the Gospel and joining this

fellowship are inseparably tied together. You cannot submit to the Gospel and at the same time deny the fellowship; just as you cannot join the fellowship while rejecting the Gospel. Paul combines the two concepts under one article.

The collection also in this respect evidences the single-heartedness of the Corinthians. There were many things that separated them from the saints in Jerusalem, not only distance, and economical conditions, but also nationality, and historical and religious background. But while these differences continued outwardly, they could not affect the *κοινωνία* created by the Gospel. And the participation of the Corinthians in the collection gave expression to their singleheartedness also in this respect.

The collection which the Corinthians helped to raise for their needy fellow Christians in Jerusalem pointed out their *κοινωνία* with them. It did more. The Corinthians were not the only ones who contributed to the collection. Rather, in this collection they were joining hands with the Christians in Macedonia, with those in Asia and in Galatia. It was a joint endeavor of the mission congregations, which Paul did not consider as mere cooperation in externals. He considered it as a truly spiritual undertaking: the collection as a conscious act of confessing proclaimed to the saints in Jerusalem the faith of the Corinthians in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and their wholehearted realization of the fellowship which this common faith entailed. This then would induce them to glorify God for His grace which He had granted to the Corinthians as well as to them of Jerusalem. The solidarity of the Church would stand out in bold relief, and would be strengthened in the hearts of all concerned. A rich spiritual harvest.

But that is only one side of the picture.

9:14

In v. 14 Paul adds another point. He does so, as we have analyzed the construction above, by means of a genitive absolute: *καὶ αὐτῶν δεήσει ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐπιποθούντων ὑμᾶς*, while they also with intercession for you give vent to their longing for you.

Ἐπιποθέω denotes an anxious desire, a warm-hearted longing or yearning. Such feelings will be the reaction on the part of the saints in Jerusalem to the interest which the Corinthians showed for their well being in their collection. The collection will thus help to bring the hearts of both churches closer together. The interest of the Corinthians was purely spiritual, no external or temporal benefits accruing to them. Likewise the response on the part of the recipients, their longing for the Corinthians, would be purely spiritual, again without any outward advantages in sight.

Ἐπιποθεῖν is a process going on in the heart. As such it is not perceptible to human senses. It cannot be seen nor measured. Yet it is a powerful force, driving the Christians to fervent prayer and intercession. They will long for their benefactors *δεήσει ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*, with prayer for you.

To be sure, the Christians in Jerusalem had offered up prayers for the Corinthians before this. They were constantly praying for the whole Church on earth. They were praying for the success of the Gospel. The Lord Himself had taught them to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” And as early as at the election of almoners we are told that the apostles would give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

These general prayers for the Church certainly included also the Corinthians. Yet from now on there would be a change. The longing of the saints would not stop at such a general, all-inclusive supplication. It would urge them to single out the Corinthians and to mention them by name in their petitions.

What a rich blessing that would mean for the Corinthians! God promises to hear and answer prayer, and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (Jas. 5:16). What then if the members of a whole congregation unite to bring their requests before the throne of God for another of His congregations? Jesus is in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in His name, and promises that what the two or three may agree to ask shall be done for them by His Father in heaven (Mt. 18:19–20).

A rich harvest! Who will receive the credit for it? Will the Corinthians for their willingness? Will the saints in Jerusalem for their ready response? —Who made the Corinthians willing? and who prompted the Jerusalem Christians to respond? All honor belongs to God. Paul states this in a *διὰ* phrase: *διὰ τῆν*

υπερβάλλουσιν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφ' ὑμῖν, on account of the superabundant grace of God to you. Ἐφ' ὑμῖν expresses the dative idea in an intensified degree: to you, on you, upon you. The Corinthians must realize that their participation in the collection was nothing but an act of God's grace. If it had not been for the grace of God they never would have thought of joining in the collection. If they had heard about the collection at all, it would have seemed as undiluted foolishness to them. It was grace that brought them the Gospel in the first place. It was grace that led them to accept the Gospel. Again it was grace that had led them out of their recent self-incurred difficulties. Grace, yes it was pure grace, without any merit or worthiness on their part. It was rich grace, super-abundant grace Paul calls it, a grace that overcame the strongest resistance and did not rest till it had gained its point.

The saints in Jerusalem thank God and glorify His name because He granted His grace to the Corinthians; and they pray to Him to continue and to increase HIS grace on them.

Paul concludes the entire part on the collection with the brief but powerful shout of thanksgiving: χάρις τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ, Thanks to God for His indescribable gift.

Gift from beginning to end, free gift! Indescribable, unfounded, unlimited: nothing on earth to compare with it, not even a mother's self-sacrificing devotion. She may forget, but God will never. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, His ways are higher than ours. God can and will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Yes, thanks be to God for His indescribable gift of grace.