

toach the springs of human action ; and therefore, dear brother, attention to the suggestions of divine truth on this subject will give vigour to this Christian grace ; and perhaps in no equal compass, even in this blessed book, have we a happier compression of argument, suggestion, and appeal than in the 8th and 9th chapters of the second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

A devout and earnest study of these chapters will happily check a censorious spirit, and prevent us from offering to dictate to our brother the amount which he should give. It will at the same time make us concerned that every Christian's heart be deeply inoculated with their benign principles : the measure of donation may be safely left to the dictates of such principles. It will bear a juster proportion to the prosperity which God affords, than any stint which we might propose to one another—" Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity ; for God loveth a cheerful giver." Two things may now occupy our attention, as it regards the promotion of this grace, viz.—Its Author ; and the order of means by which it is cherished.

I. Its Author—" I would have you to know the *grace of God bestowed* on the churches of Macedonia." Had it sprung from a felicity of disposition, and not from the grace of God, we might yield to the chill of despair ; but a conviction that it was the *gift of God* inspires hope. He who shewed such kindness to these Macedonians is declared " rich in mercy to all who call upon him." " Ask and ye shall receive." Property is the gift of God ; but the disposition to use that property to lawful purposes is a gift of a more enriching character. The grateful wonder of David turned less on the immense riches which God had bestowed on him and his people, than on the

ability which he had conferred on them to offer it to his service. " But who am I," said the happy, grateful, and delighted Monarch, " and what is my people that *we should be able* to offer so willingly after this sort ?" And Solomon, the son of David, views the matter in nearly the same light : " Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour ; this is the gift of God." Yea, brother, it belongs to God as much to give the power to enjoy, as it does to give the blessings themselves ; and how smoothly and joyfully move on the days of the man whom God thus favours :—" For he shall not much remember the days of his life ; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart." But how different the state of the man afflicted with the ulcerous bone of accumulation : " All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness."

II. While we gladly cherish the conviction that a liberal disposition is the gift of God, we must not overlook the means by which it is restored to, or kept in, a healthy state. It is an evil which all people should seriously deprecate when their teachers feel little inclined to lead them in this green pasture. They are in danger of " withholding more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty," injurious to others, he is not likely to go unscathed himself. I have generally seen that the man who feared his people would give away too much to others, had much to do to obtain his own salary. Is it a blessing from God when a man has a heart to use the bounties of a kind providence ? It is not less a blessing to any people where God inclines the heart of any Pastor to turn the attention of the people of their charge to this interesting subject. How does Paul feel on the subject ? " But