

His words behind them cannot offer acceptable sacrifice. This principle is fundamental, but is constantly violated. When we set out to get money, it is often without regard to the way we get it, the source from which it comes, or the effect upon the giver. We go forward to collect money even for great Christian enterprises without reference to faith in God, to His approval of our methods, or to the encouragement of self-righteousness in the wicked man who thinks his gifts atone for his neglect of God. Paul calls attention to Macedonian consecration as the triumph of the grace of God, and so he gives us the first great principle: the grace of God *given* becomes the grace of God *giving*.

2. The condition of acceptable giving. (See 2 Cor. viii: 12.) This condition embraces two things:

(a) It must be with a willing mind. (b) It must be in proportion to ability.

Here it will be seen that the principle suggests a motive; for we are asked only to give what the heart prompts and the ability justifies; hence, it is no exacting demand which God makes of us, or yoke of bondage which He lays upon us.

3. The law of equality. (2 Cor. viii: 13-15.) This embraces four particulars:

(a) Individuality; every man is to be a giver; not even the poorest is excepted.

(b) There is to be equality by participation in burden-bearing, and for the obvious reason that the burden which all bear ceases to be a burden. "Many shoulders make a light load."

(c) There is to be equality, again, in mutual dependence. Those who are in need of help to-day may be helpers of the needy to-morrow. (See verse 14.) There is a strange law of circularity; the big wheel of fortune keeps turning, and those who are at the top to-day are at the bottom by and by. Hence, he who refuses to be almoner when he has means to give forfeits his claim on the gifts of others when the circumstances have been reversed.

(d) This law of equality contemplates a kind of brotherhood of believers, in which there shall be neither monopoly of wealth on the one hand nor extreme destitution on the other. This is beautifully illustrated by the reference to the manna, in the fifteenth verse. (Compare Exodus xvi: 16-18.) No man in gathering the manna found that he had either more or less than the omer to which he was entitled.

4. The law of bounty. (2 Cor. ix: 5-8.) This means that when our gifts are contributed, it shall be without unwillingness, regret, or a disposition to recall what we have given. It includes five things:

(a) It should be made up beforehand, or laid by in store. (Compare 1 Cor. xvi: 2.) Then our bounty is always ready against the appeal of need. (b) It should be a matter of principle, not of impulse or