



Taking Some Time to Reconnect with God

May 28, 2020

Prayer:

O Christ, You have indeed, been raised from the dead. Therefore, let us live as though death no longer holds us hostage, putting our hope in the One who goes before us, both in death and in eternal life, our Savior, Christ. Amen.

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 New International Version (NIV)

8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

¹⁰And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. ¹¹Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. ¹²For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

¹³Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

Reflect:

So exactly how far does this 'One in Christ' stuff go?

That's a question that seems to stand behind this discussion. Paul rushes in where most preachers fear to tread—or at least, most don't like to go—as he squarely tackles 'the collection for the saints' in Jerusalem. The church at Corinth had started to gather up gifts to go to the church in Jerusalem, which was in dreadful need. As time passed, however, the collection never got completed—all the donations were not gathered and the gifts that had been gathered had not been passed on to the believers who so desperately needed them.

After sharing with them the example of the Christians in Macedonia, Paul gives thanks for the spirit that led the Corinthian Christians to start this project. And he prods them to finish what they had started. As Paul had written to them before, when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. ¹

So how far does this 'Body of Christ' thing go? Paul shows us that he thinks of the body of Christ as not only a local church, but as the Universal Church, with local churches being parts of the body. He doesn't use that language here, but you can hear that thought clearly in the background. Like the Teacher of the Law who, wanting to justify himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?," there seems to be a background rumble in Corinth about why they had to do this for the folks in Jerusalem.

So how far does this 'One in Christ' thing go? This far: Paul urges the Corinthians to give as the Macedonian Christian had given: To give as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability, and to give themselves first of all to the Lord. Paul urges the Corinthians to give as Christ had given: that though Christ was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. Paul urged the Corinthians to give as the Body of Christ: as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."²

So, How far does this 'One in Christ' stuff go? All the way. All the way with each other. All the way in Christ Jesus.

How is God asking you to give today?

Be Blessed:

May you find hope and peace that death has been swallowed up in victory.
Amen.

¹ I Corinthians 12:26

² Exodus 16:18