

## The Example Of The Corinthians

“For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our glorifying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect, that even as I said, ye may be prepared: lest by any means if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say no, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion” (2 Cor. 9:1-6).

Paul deals very gingerly with this Corinthian contribution they had promised for Jerusalem saints. He reminds brethren of the Macedonians' ready response to the needs of Jerusalem saints. In the previous chapter Paul commended the Macedonians because of the magnitude of their gift. Such was designed to urge the Corinthians to a joyful, sacrificial level of giving as well. But in chapter 9 another dimension is added to the Macedonians' gift: the early pledge of the Corinthians to give a generous gift to the needy saints had struck a vibrant, responsive chord with Macedonians: “Your zeal hath stirred up very many of them” (2 Cor. 9:2).

The power of examples! An example has such a compelling force for good! The example of doing versus simply saying leads to a far happier result than someone who just outlines the way of walk. In the words of a poet: “I'd rather see a sermon, than to hear one any day, I'd rather someone show me than to merely point the way.”

We see the examples of parents who teach but who also show their children how to live holy lives. We see the examples of elders who are instructed that they must not “lord it over the flock,” that they must make themselves ensamples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). We hear Peter's call that wives, whose husbands have not yet obeyed the gospel, lead their husbands to Christ by their example (1 Pet. 3:1-2). And preachers dare not forget their responsibility, as well. Paul urged Timothy “be thou an ensample to them that believe in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). The greatest example of all time was that of Jesus who showed what love truly is.

The Corinthians had, by their early promise, been a worthy example to all their brethren and it had had a positive effect upon many of them. But, a promise not kept is a promise broken; a disappointment to those who were stirred to action by that promise; a disappointment to God and to ourselves.

Obviously Mark “promised” he would go “all the way” with Barnabas and Paul when they started their first preaching journey among the Gentiles. We know not what reasons: discouragement, disappointment, homesickness, or fear was the overriding factor that made him turn back and abandon the party of gospel preachers. We do know that however “good” his reason for turning back seemed to be to himself, his turning back made a decidedly negative impact on Paul, who lost his trust in him. Furthermore, his

actions brought a rift between Paul and Barnabas: a wonderful, working partnership which had been productive of so much good. Yet the decision of Mark ruptured that partnership between Paul and Barnabas, never (so far as sacred Scriptures reveals) to function again (Acts 15:37-41). Yes, Paul and Barnabas were apparently later reconciled to each other, and yes, Paul did ultimately come to esteem and trust Mark again (2 Tim. 4:11). But the failure of Mark to keep his promise brought much sorrow and disappointment to all three of these faithful brethren.

Paul did not wish such to occur in the case of these Corinthians. Paul did bring Macedonians with him for he purposed to sail to Judaea from Achaia and thus Macedonian messengers would also have sailed with him from there. Those plans had to be aborted because of a plot against his life by Jews, making him reverse his plans and sail from another port (Acts 20:3). How embarrassing it would have been for Paul, the Corinthians, and the Macedonians had it been needful upon their arrival to have to make a hectic gathering of funds which had been promised a year earlier! But we are persuaded from the tone of Paul's Roman letter (written from Corinth) that such did not occur. The Corinthians were ready! In Paul's Roman letter he said, "For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonians and Achaia (Corinth) to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are in Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26).

Corinth's early promise to help needy saints had stirred others to a similar work. What might have happened had Paul not written this appeal to them we will never know. Their good example stands! Christ was glorified and saints were blessed.

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