



CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

EXHORTATION

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SECTION LEADER:

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Readings: **2 Kings 11**, **Ezekiel 2**, **2 Corinthians 8, 9**

Giving and Receiving

“God loveth a cheerful giver”. These words are taken from the end of **2 Corinthians 9:7** (AV) and set the theme which links our daily Bible readings together. I want to use them as a foundation for our exhortation today, before we remember our Lord and the sacrifice he made for us, through partaking of the emblems of bread and wine. The first part of **v.7** quoted above says: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity”*. So we ask ourselves what are our motives when it comes to giving, particularly, in or to, the Lord’s service. Do we give with some reluctance, only because we feel obligated to, or even compelled to, or because we can’t really get out of doing so, or is it from a willing heart?

In the previous verse (**2 Corinthians 9:6**) we are also told by the Lord through the apostle: *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”*.

It is then, that which is in our hearts that matters to the Lord, as that is reflected in the way we give as well as the motive and manner of our giving. The apostle Paul was speaking to the first century ecclesia at Corinth and we will return again to his letter later in order to appreciate more fully the context.

But for now let us go to the first of our readings, **2 Kings 11**. Here we are taken back to dark and sad days in Israel’s history, to the time of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab. In **2 Kings 11:1**, she destroyed the royal family of Judah, reducing it to a remnant. She gave nothing but idolatry to the people and consequently was slain: *“... by the way by which the horses came into the Kings house.”* (**2 Kings 11:16**).

However, we are told that the infant Joash or Jehoash was saved from death, having been hidden away with his nurse in the temple for six years by Jehosheba (**2 Kings 11:2**), later being proclaimed King by Jehoiada the priest and so fulfilling God’s promises made in **1 Kings 2:4** and **1 Kings 8:25**: *“...there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel”*.

True to God’s purpose Athaliah was removed from the throne and replaced with Jehoash, the boy King (**2 Kings 12:1-2**). By contrast he did that which was right in God’s eyes. Jehoash began by arranging for restoration work to be carried out to the temple which had been badly neglected. He instructed the priests that all the money collected from the people be used for this purpose. In **2 Kings 12:4** we read: *“And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man’s heart to bring into the house of the LORD...”*

We note that it is the motive behind the giving that the Lord loves, not the amount. The priests however were not diligent and were reprimanded for not using the money for the purpose it was given. Twenty-three years later a different arrangement would be made. This time Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in it and all money received was paid directly to the tradesman working on the temple. The people responded generously, as we are told in **2 Kings 12:10** for: *“there was much money in the chest.”*

So we move on to **Ezekiel 2**, the second of our readings. Ezekiel the prophet was amongst 10,000 captives taken to Babylon in the reign of King Jehoiachin (**2 Kings 24:12-14, Ezekiel. 1:2**). It was here that Ezekiel (a priest v.3) began his prophesying to the Jews in exile. His name means 'God will strengthen'. The task before him was difficult and he was strengthened for it by the visions he saw in **Ezekiel 1:1** when: *"...the heavens opened."*

Here we find Ezekiel, as Jesus was, sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel but the sheep were now in captivity. The almighty was not expecting Ezekiel to strengthen their resolve in his own strength, but equipped him with what was necessary to do the work. Neither did God guarantee total success, far from it. Chapter 3 begins with Ezekiel being told to eat the roll of a book. Eat those God given words and faithfully deliver them, that was the task given to him and he responds with the words: *"...it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."* (**Ezekiel 3:3**).

Jeremiah and the Psalmist also spoke of eating God's word: *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."* (**Jeremiah 15:16**) and: *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* (**Psalm 119:103**).

Like Ezekiel, Jeremiah and the Psalmist, we are to take God's word into our hearts so that we may speak those words when the opportunity arises. As we receive our daily bread, so we are also given spiritual bread to daily feed upon. When Jesus sent out his disciples to proclaim the gospel message he said to them: *"Freely ye have received, freely give."* (**Matthew 10:8**). The Lord has graciously given us the knowledge of his word, concerning those things which are eternal and we should be prepared to pass that knowledge on.

Paul says: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* (**2 Corinthians 4:6-7**).

In **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**, we find Paul showing concern for the poor Jewish brethren in Jerusalem and arranging collections for them and again in his letter to the Galatians he reports of similar circumstances existing (**Galatians 2:10**). Here he exhorts the brethren, and us also to: *"...do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."* (**Galatians 6:10**).

Their example to us reflects the example of our Lord: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."* (**2 Corinthians 8:9**).

Jesus is our example in all things, being obedient to His Father's will. God said at his baptism, *"this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."* (**Matthew 3:17**). In the spirit of self-giving, he gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Let us now remember him in bread and wine, emblems that remind us of the giving of his body and the pouring out of his blood in order to gain the victory over sin and death and give us hope of life in the kingdom to come

As Jesus held nothing back, may it be that our hearts will be a little more in tune with his and by his example be inclined to give back to the Lord of the abundance that he has blessed us with. May we give with a cheerful heart; *"...not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."* (**2 Corinthians 9:7**).