

Articles by R. V. Court

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Giving

2 Corinthians 8:9

“He who was rich, for our sakes became poor.” In this profound statement the apostle is not specifically drawing attention to the life of humility our Lord lived here among men. Possibly that life could be summed up in our Lord’s own words, “the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” But it is well to remember that in the highest sense, amid His material poverty, He enjoyed a richness beyond all others—at all times He knew perfect communion with His Father, and one who knows that is rich indeed. No—the poverty of which Paul is speaking, and which he said was “for your sakes,” was His dread experience at Calvary, when, for the first time in His experience, even from eternity, there was a break between His God and Himself, which forced from His lips the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46) That was the poverty—He was alone, as for our sakes He was “made sin.” (2 Cor. 5:21) He could bear being forsaken by His friends, although it caused Him sorrow, but this was something that was utterly devastating. Was it the anticipation of this which, Gethsemane caused Him to “sweat...as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”? (Luke 22:44) What lies behind the words, He “endured the cross? (Heb. 12:2) How great is the mystery, and the cost of our redemption “that we should, by His poverty, become rich.”

But as we look at the context in which these tremendous words are found, from 1 Corinthians 8:1-15, we discover that the Spirit of God is, through Paul, urging his

readers, fellow-Christians in the church at Corinth, to consider the needs of others, even the needy believers in Jerusalem. He speaks approvingly of the attitude of the Macedonian Christians to this problem, but is not impressed with the attitude of the Corinthians, who had talked much about giving, but were slow in doing it. It is worthy of note that in verse 8 the apostle disclaims any thought of “commanding” what they should do, and how they should give, apart from “the sincerity of your love.” Their giving was to be spontaneous, “not of necessity.”

He was not concerned with the amount given by the individuals—that was a matter between them and their Lord; he was concerned with the spirit in which it was given. How could he drive it home? The Spirit of God said, through him, “Look at Calvary, measure your giving by that.” The hymn writer caught the thought when he wrote words we so often sing, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” How can I look at Calvary, and allow the Spirit of God to “teach me what it meaneth,” and then be stingy, or even unmoved when considering the needs of other believers? Can we really see our Lord giving all, and then cling tightly to our all? Let this mind be in you.

Humility

When we use this word our mind instinctively goes to Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It is likely that very few verses of Scripture are more frequently that this one when we come together week by week to remember the Lord, and very rightly our minds are directed to that Blessed One who demonstrated, as none other could, a humble mind. It was His from eternity. But there is a danger of forgetting why Paul was led to write these words. This lovely letter, written by the apostle to a church which he loved reveals that the church had within it strife and contention. In 1:15-16, and in 2:3 he finds it necessary to urge that nothing should be done "through strife and vainglory." These expressions indicate that some in the church were seeking to exalt themselves at the expense of others. To counteract this manifestation of the old nature, he says, "Let this mind be in you." It is almost as though Paul would say, "Let me show you your Lord." He then speaks of the descent from the throne of the universe to the "death of the cross." He draws attention to the fact that "He made Himself of no reputation." He went lower than any other ever did or could. He is in effect saying, "How can you look at the cross and the humility demonstrated there, and then assert yourself above others?"

One paraphrase of this verse expresses it as follows, "let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be." The Amplified Version puts it, "Let this same attitude and purpose and humble mind be in you which

was in Christ Jesus. Let Him be your example of humility.”

Relations with Our Brethren

1 Cor. 8:9-12

In this passage we see Paul speaking to some in the Corinthian church who have “knowledge.” He was probably indicating by this word that their apprehension of the things of God and of the new liberty that has become theirs through Christ is greater than that of others with the same church, who possibly have not been saved so long, and are not so advanced spiritually as the others. They had all been brought up amidst idolatry, and knew that most of the meat sold in the marketplace had previously been offered to idols, and the recently saved were not sure what their attitude should be in relation to eating this meat as food. They still felt that in some way the meat was affected by its previous offering to idols, and their conscience was not clear about eating it. The better taught Christian had learned that the meat in the market place was simply meat and he could with a good conscience eat it. Now, says Paul to the ones with “knowledge,” be careful how you act in this matter—your weaker brother is watching you, and if he sees you eating that about which he is uncertain, he may be inclined to do the same, although his conscience is telling him that he ought not to do so. He is thereby stumbled.

Paul asks a very important question in verse 11,

“through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?” Surely he is saying, “be very careful how you act in relation to weaker believers—they are precious to Christ—how the Lord loved them!” He stresses the same point in Romans 14:15 and

reiterates, “Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.” In the background the apostle sees the cross and see the preciousness of all those who have been redeemed by blood. Surely, if I love the Lord, I shall not want to hurt others who also love Him. If I sin against them by my example, I am sinning against Christ. It may not be eating meat offered to idols; my example may be in relation to smoking, drinking, cinemas, gambling, etc.—how tragic if my example in relation to these things, or other doubtful things, led a younger believer to follow me and his spiritual life become a disaster. How can I look at Calvary and see the love of my Lord for my fellow-believer and then do that which will harm him? “Let this mind be in you.”