

2 Corinthians 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Analysis

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not—Paul establishes a crucial principle: *ei gar hē prothumia prokeitai* ('if the readiness/willingness is present'), giving is *euprosdektos* (εὐπρόσδεκτος, 'well-received/acceptable/welcome') *kath' ho ean echē* (καθ' ὃ ἐὰν ἔχῃ, 'according to whatever one has'), not *kath' ho ouk echei* ('according to what one does not have'). This verse liberates both rich and poor: God judges generosity proportionally, not absolutely.

The phrase *hē prothumia* (ἡ προθυμία, 'eagerness/readiness/willingness') appears first—disposition matters more than amount. A widow's two mites (Mark 12:41-44) can exceed a millionaire's surplus because God weighs heart alongside gift. Simultaneously, Paul prevents Corinthian excuse-making: those with resources can't claim they have nothing. The principle *kath' ho echei* ('according to what one has') requires honest assessment of capacity. This balanced approach avoids two errors: demanding impossible sacrifice, or accepting token generosity from the wealthy. Proportionate giving reflects both grace (it's God-enabled) and responsibility (it requires honest stewardship).

Historical Context

This principle addressed economic inequality in Corinthian house churches where slaves and day-laborers worshiped alongside shop-owners and wealthy patrons. Paul teaches that both groups can give acceptably—slaves through small offerings

given gladly, wealthy through substantial gifts still proportionate to their resources. This leveled traditional Roman patronage systems where only elite generosity received public honor.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does proportionate giving free you from both pride (if wealthy) and shame (if poor)?
2. What would honest assessment of 'what you have' reveal about your giving capacity?
3. How does God evaluate your generosity: by amount given or percentage sacrificed?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	ἢ	προθυμία	πρόκειται	καθὸ	ἐὰν	ἔχει
if there	For	G3588	a willing mind	be first	according to	that	hath
G1487	G1063		G4288	G4295	G2526	G1437	G2192

τις	εὐπρόσδεκτος	οὐκ	καθὸ	οὐκ	ἔχει
a man	it is accepted	and not	according to	and not	hath
G5100	G2144	G3756	G2526	G3756	G2192

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 35:29 (Parallel theme): The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (Parallel theme): Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Exodus 25:2 (Parallel theme): Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

Exodus 35:5 (Parallel theme): Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,

1 Peter 4:10 (Parallel theme): As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

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