

A CHEERFUL GIVING!

We are definitely told how we are to give—willingly and cheerfully. If it is only reasonable that we give ourselves entirely to God, why would it dampen one's mood to give only a portion of himself to God?

What is the secret to cheerful giving? Perhaps the Macedonian Christians could tell us something in this regard. When the aforementioned contribution for the Christians in Judea was collected, the churches in Macedonia enthusiastically gave: *"In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality"* (2 Corinthians 8:2). These were poor Christians themselves, yet they eagerly jumped at the chance to help their brethren in greater need. Paul said that they gave *"beyond their power . . . praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift"* (verses 3-4).

One can clearly see that the Macedonians were marked by gratitude. They were thankful for what they had received, and thankful for the opportunity to help their brethren in need. But one who lacks gratitude can never be a cheerful giver. Also, before the Macedonians gave to the collection, they *"first gave their own selves to the Lord"* (verse 5). Being committed wholly to Him, they trusted their welfare to His providence; a most reasonable trust (compare with Matthew 6:25-34; 7:7-12; Hebrews 13:5-6). If one combines his gratitude with trust in God, the ingredients are in place to make a cheerful giver.

One who gives himself wholly to God will find his disposition cheered in ways unimaginable to those outside of Christ. Even writing from prison, Paul exulted, *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice"*; fully enjoying *"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"* (Philippians 4:4, 7; cf. John 10:10). Some apparently believe that God is a tyrant, seeking whimsically to impose His will in such a way as to rob mankind of any joy in life. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3; compare with Deuteronomy 10:12-13). May each of us realize the joy of giving, and "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).