

Sharing Nature

Background of the longest passage about sharing, 2 Corinthians 8 - 9:

- Acts 11:28 - 30 Agabus prophesied that a great famine would spread across the world during the reign of Claudius Caesar (41 – 54 AD). Herod Agrippa died (12:23) in 44 AD. Saul and Barnabas labored in Antioch a full year before taking the money to Jerusalem (11:26), which was three years after Saul's conversion (Galatians 1:18). Therefore, the prophecy was given in 42 or 43 AD. The Christians in Antioch collected money for famine relief before the famine began, even though they themselves would be affected.
- 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 4 Paul encouraged the congregations of Turkey and Greece to participate in this famine relief effort. Since the letter was written right at the end of the reign of Claudius (53 – 54 AD), the famine was already in progress. Although many use this passage to teach that the weekly collection is commanded, this is not the case. The first verse of this passage appears to be a command, but Paul denies that interpretation in 2 Corinthians 8:8. Secondly, since he told them to save (not necessarily collect into one place) the money weekly, this probably was not their usual practice. So, if this is a command for all Christians in all ages, then it was added to the gospel more than 20 years after the gospel was first preached. Thirdly, it is unlikely that these congregations continued to store up famine relief funds after Paul had departed with their gift.

Points of interest in 2 Corinthians 8 – 9:

- The Macedonian congregations shared liberally despite their present affliction because they wanted to be spiritually connected to Christians they had never met. (8:2 – 5)
- Sharing is a test of sincerity of love. (8:8)
- Sharing is acceptable according to what one has, not what one does not have, for equality. (8:12 – 15)
- Sharing is cheerful not grudgingly or of necessity. (9:7)
- God promises that we will have an abundance for every good work. (9:8)
- God promises that we will be enriched in everything for all liberality. (9:11)
- Sharing not only meets physical needs, but also results in thanksgiving to God. (9:12)

Other passages about sharing:

- Acts 2:44 – 45, 4:34 – 35 The earliest Christians took care of each other. To those who place great importance on the examples of the early church, has this been repealed?
- Romans 12:8 Some were particularly gifted in liberality, perhaps miraculously (12:6).
- Ephesians 4:28 Former thieves are commanded to hard work for the purpose of sharing.
- Philippians 4:10 – 19 The church at Philippi shared with Paul on several occasions. Paul likens their gifts to a sacrifice (a celebration of forgiveness with family and friends in the presence of God).
- James 2:16 James attributed a lack of sharing to dead faith.
- 1 John 3:17 John attributed a lack of sharing to a hard heart.