

1Jn.3:17- *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

There are few texts of Scripture that set before us in a more plain way the obligation that believers bear one to another. The apostle John tells us that in light of God's blessings to us we must seek to be a source of blessing to others. If we have this world's goods it is because the Lord has provided these things to us. Now He does so first and foremost that we might enjoy the wonders of His bounty.

1Tim.6:17- *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*

The Lord provides to us the things of this earth that we might derive enjoyment from that provision. Yet, we discover in our text that how we handle the blessings that our Lord dispenses to us reveals much concerning our character as His people. In short, our God is a giving God. We see this most clearly in the manger and the cross. We marvel that God Almighty would give fallen creatures His own dear Son, not just to heal our sick and minister to our wants, but to die in our place. This God did for those who could never repay His kindness, those who had nothing to offer Him. For people who could only come to Him as beggars seeking from Him what they could not do for themselves. He showed us His compassion in the face of our desperate need.

When we consider what the Lord has done for us, we are challenged as to our activity towards others. We are made to measure our hearts against what God has shown us of His. When He alone had that which could minister to our need, He, without hesitation, acted in the sending of His Son. When we have in our possession that which others need do we hesitate to meet that need? Do we find ourselves aloof from their plight, perhaps making excuses to justify our inaction? Do we find that our hearts are unmoved and that we can turn our eyes away as we close our hands? All of this would be a picture of one who has closed up their hearts in terms of compassion towards the needs of others. This would signify that the love of the Living God is not residing in our hearts as it ought to be.

What we are taught by these things is that our meeting the needs of the needy is not just a social activity. It is the result of God's love in our hearts. If we lack that love then it will be easy to see others in need and not act to bring them relief. These things are not issues of culture but of the heart. In them we prove ourselves as to our nearness to God. If we are His children then it should stand the reason that we would resemble Him in the way that we treat others. This was precisely the point Jesus was making when He challenged us with regards to our enemies and those who persecute us and so on. He would say: **Mt.5:45-** *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. V48-* *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

As Paul deals with the various social responsibilities of the believer, we are left to consider the implications of those obligations. We are forced by the Scriptures themselves to see all things in light of our relationship to God. Can we see the marks of our near fellowship with Him? Are our hearts being conformed to His? These are weighty questions and demand serious consideration. They drive us to our knees to seek strength and grace from God, to be made more like Him. Let us use these things to our advantage. Let us be sure that having contemplated our own hearts we then draw near to the throne of His grace that we might find grace for our need.