

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“All”

(Jerry Fite)

Does “all” mean literally “everyone”? When the bride and groom greet “all”, did they greet literally everyone in the world? We know context limits “all”, and we correctly understand that the bride and groom greeted “all” who were guests at the wedding.

The context also limits and instructs us how we are to interpret “all” in Scripture. For example, the Pharisees proposed the self-imposed dilemma of a woman having seven husbands, with no children. Jesus is asked, “*In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her*” (Matthew 22:28). Here it is clear that we do not think “all” men in the world had her, but all belonging to the contextual seven husbands.

Sometimes the context distinguishes “all” from those comprising the church. Reacting to the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, “...*great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things*” (Acts 5:11). Our personal responsibility is not only to do good unto those who comprise the household of faith, but unto “all men” –

contextually those who are not Christians (*Galatians 6:10*).

Knowing the context determines how we are to interpret the word “all” in Scripture, how should we interpret the following passage: “*seeing that through the proving of you by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them and unto all*” (2 Corinthians 9:13)?

The ministration was the church’s benevolent work in giving liberally to help the needy saints in Judea. God was glorified and thanked by those who were being helped by the contribution of Christians; and it showed that the gospel’s message of Jew and Gentile being united in Christ was being carried out through the pocket book. Gentiles were helping Jews: “*For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yet it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to*

minister unto them in carnal things” (Romans 15:26-27).

The context is clear that money from the church was to help “needy saints” in Jerusalem. The purpose of giving to the treasury of the church was to help these “saints” (1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Cor. 8:4, 9:1). And as Paul plans to deliver the contribution, it is still for “*the poor among the saints*” (Romans 15:25, 31).

So, how should we interpret the contribution “*unto them and unto all*” in 2 Corinthians 9:13? The context of the contribution being for the saints, with no indication that money from the church’s treasury was used to help anyone else, we correctly interpret Paul saying that the contribution was presently to help the saints in Jerusalem, as such money is authorized to help “all” saints wherever they may be.

To say that the church’s money was to help all men (non-Christians) as distinguished from the saints violates the contextual context of this offering and other related Scripture. Paul did bring this contribution for his “*nation*” - the saints who were Jews being helped by Gentile Christians (Acts 24:17).