

John Chrysostom's Commentary on the Collection for Jerusalem in Rom 15:25–32

AGUS WIDODO 

Sanata Dharma University, aguswidodo@usd.ac.id

ANTONIUS GALIH ARGA WIWIN ARYANTO 

Sanata Dharma University, galiharga@usd.ac.id

Abstract: John Chrysostom (349–407) provides the most comprehensive commentary on the Pauline epistles from the patristic era. During his priestly mission in Antioch (386–397) and his episcopate in Constantinople (398–403), he wrote over 200 homiletic commentaries on the entire Pauline epistolary body of work. This research attempts to analyze how Chrysostom interprets Paul's verses concerning the collection and uses them to organize and transform the ecclesial groups into communities of love, particularly paying attention to the poor. The study focuses on the works of John Chrysostom on Rom 15:25–29. Based on his interpretation, the status of debtors in the spiritual blessings is the main reason why the Romans had to be more earnest in almsgiving, imitating the Macedonians and the Achaean who had helped the community in Jerusalem. He also encourages them to reform their lives, cutting off the superfluities, luxurious lifestyles, and bad attitudes in squandering money on other selfish needs. At the same time, he stirs them up to meet their needs moderately, which meant using only the goods that are truly necessary for a healthy and dignified life so that they would always have something to share with the poor.

Keywords: John Chrysostom, collection, Romans, almsgiving, Jerusalem Church

John Chrysostom (349–407) is one of the remarkable ancient Greek ecclesiastical writers. The date of his birth is uncertain. Scholars propose dates between 344 and 354, but the one that seems to fit most of the known facts is 349.¹ He wrote numerous comments on the Epistles of Paul and his exegetical works provide the most comprehensive commentary on Pauline epistles in the patristic era. Moreover, they survived entirely in the original language.² During his priestly mission in Antioch (386–397) and his episcopate in Constantinople (398–403), he made homiletic commentary on the entire Pauline epistolary body of work.³ These comments, therefore, explain the meaning of scriptural texts to the living audiences in a liturgical context. Some were probably part of the preparation for preaching, and another person wrote the others while the preacher was speaking. The rest was written after being

¹ Baur, *John Chrysostom*, 3; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 4 and n. 12 (Appendix B, 296–298).

² Mitchel, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 5.

³ Maxwell, *Christianization*, 3; Zincone, “Giovanni Crisostomo,” 591.

delivered, either from memory or the notes, either a short or long time afterward.⁴ Moreover, it is notable that, in antiquity, the homilies of Christian exegetes and bishops, especially those of Origen and Chrysostom, are nothing but a running commentary, taken down in shorthand from oral delivery.⁵

The exact dates of the homilies on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* (*Hom. Rom.*) and the places in which they were proclaimed and composed are uncertain and difficult to determine. However, having studied the chronology of Chrysostom's life and works and also comparing it with the study of other scholars, Chrysostomus Baur, one of his modern biographers, suggests that, in all probability, Chrysostom began his preaching activity in 386 with the homilies on Genesis. In the same years and after, he composed many other homilies on the Gospel of Matthew in 390, then the Gospel of John in 391, and soon after, he may have directly begun writing the ones on the Pauline epistles.⁶ Regarding their place of composition, they were most likely delivered in Antioch because Chrysostom provided in it a clue that made it possible to identify him as a preacher at Antioch since he called himself ποιῆν, which means a shepherd.⁷ In fact, he says, "I have said of the best shepherd (περὶ ἀρίστων ποιμένων), not of myself and those of our days, but of any one that may be such as Paul was, such as Peter, such as Moses."⁸ This internal indication, then, is also confirmed and supported by scholarly studies. Charles Marriott, for example, affirmed that the elaborate composition of these homilies would indicate that they must have been delivered before Chrysostom was engaged in his episcopal responsibilities in Constantinople.⁹ Moreover, based on his speaking style, they seemed to be addressed to persons who suitably could be described as the Antiochians and certainly could not be referred to as the people of Constantinople. In addition, C. Baur also affirmed that Chrysostom most likely delivered the *Hom. Rom.* around 391 in Antioch as his first work on Paul's epistles.¹⁰

At the beginning of his *Hom. Rom.*, Chrysostom stated that there are two important questions in interpreting the Epistle to the Romans, i.e., clarifying the date of its composition and Paul's purposes in writing it. Regarding the date of when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he asserted:

⁴ Siegart, "Homily and Panegyric Sermon," 423; Baur, *John Chrysostom*, 220, 284; Mugridge, "Writing and Writers in Antiquity," 543–580.

⁵ Siegart, "Homily and Panegyric Sermon," 442.

⁶ Baur, *John Chrysostom*, 284–304.

⁷ Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon*, 370; LSJ, "ποιμνῆ," 1430; BDAG, "ποιμνῆ," 843.

⁸ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 29 (Field I, 460). The Greek texts are taken from the critical edition of Frederick Field (Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Divi Pauli Epistolam ad Romanos*), written as Field followed by the volume and page number.

⁹ Marriott, "Preface to Homilies on Romans," 331.

¹⁰ Baur, *John Chrysostom*, 284–304.

As we are going to enter fully into this Epistle, it is necessary to give the date also at which it was written. [...] For both those to the Corinthians were sent before this [...] But that to the Thessalonians also seems to me to be before the Epistle to the Corinthians [...] This Epistle then is later than those, but prior (πρώτη) to those from Rome [...] it was from Rome he wrote to the Philippians; [...] and to the Hebrews from thence likewise [...]. And the Epistle to Timothy he sent also from Rome, when in prison [...]. And that to Philemon is also very late, (for he wrote it in extreme old age [...]), yet previous to that to the Colossians. [...] And that to the Galatians seems to me to be before that to the Romans.¹¹

As can be seen here, Chrysostom places the Epistle to the Romans in chronological succession together with other epistles by Paul. Though he was aware that the Bible has a different order, the understanding of dates and the chronology of Paul's epistles is not aimless and superfluous. On the contrary, he was convinced that "The date of the Epistles (ὁ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν χρόνος) contributes no little to what we are seeking for."¹² This statement affirms that Chrysostom rightly attaches much importance to the time and circumstance of writing, which is not indifferent to understanding the content of epistles. For example, Paul's epistles to the Romans and those to the Galatians and Corinthians comprise the great doctrinal and moral discussions that are very important in the study of Pauline theology.¹³ Therefore, while interpreting the verses of Paul's collection, Chrysostom reveals – as this study shows – not only their practical implication but also their theological relevance.

Regarding the second aspect, Chrysostom noted that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans for two purposes. First, he wanted to proclaim the grace he received from God as the minister of Christ and evangelist to the nations, including the Romans. Second, he wished to lead them to an orderly life through his praise, encouragement, and correction. Then, quoting several verses of the epistle itself, Chrysostom stated:

For one finds him bearing testimony to them that they are "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (Rom 15:14). Why then does he write to them? "Because of the grace of God," he says, "which is given unto me, that I should be the minister of Christ Jesus" (Rom 15:15.16). Wherefore also he says in the beginning: "I am under obligation, so I am eager to preach the Gospel to you also who are in Rome" (Rom 1:14.15). For what is said – as that they are "able to exhort others also" – and the like, rather belongs to encomium and encouragement and the correction afforded by means of a letter, was needful even for these. For since he had not yet been present, he brings the men to good order in two ways, both by the profitableness of his letter and by the expectation of his presence.¹⁴

¹¹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.*, Argument (Field I, 2–4).

¹² Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.*, Argument (Field I, 2–4).

¹³ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* (NPNF 1, 336–337).

¹⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.*, Argument (Field I, 5).

Moreover, another interesting observation about this epistle made by Chrysostom was that he showed the close connection between Paul and the Romans even though he had not yet met them in person. He expressed his admiration for Paul again, especially for his great paternal affection and love for the Romans, saying:

For such was that holy soul, it comprised the whole world and carried about all men in itself thinking the nearest relationship to be that in God. And he loved them so as if he had begotten them all, or rather showed a greater instinctive affection than any father's toward all. For such is the grace of the Spirit, it exceeds the pangs of the flesh, and displays a more ardent longing than theirs. And this one may see especially in the soul of Paul, who having as it were become winged through love, went continually round to all, abiding nowhere nor standing still. For, since he had heard Christ saying, "Peter, do you love me? Feed My lambs" (John 21:15), and setting forth this as the greatest test of love, he displayed it in a very high degree.¹⁵

This paper answers the following question: How did Chrysostom interpret the collection for Jerusalem in Rom 15:25–32 and use this collection to transform the Christian community to pay attention to the poor? Therefore, the paper may contribute to deepening the understanding of the teaching and practice of collection in the early Church through the account provided by John Chrysostom.

1. The Historical Aspect of Collection in Rom 15:25–32

Based on Paul's statement in Rom 15:25–27 and the quotation from Rom 15:23, Chrysostom, first of all, clarifies the actual situation of Paul at that time. He longed to visit the Romans but still intended to delay because he was making the journey to Jerusalem. He was then underway to minister unto the saints, i.e., deliver the contribution collected with pleasure by the Macedonians and the Achaean. According to Chrysostom, this situation was the most reasonable and acceptable excuse for the delay in coming to Rome. Indeed, he stated:

"At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem; they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them" (Rom 15:25–27). Since he had said that "I have no longer any room for work in these regions," and, "I have longed for many years to come to you" (Rom 15:23) but he still intended to delay, lest it should be thought that he was making a jest of them. He mentions the cause also why

¹⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.*, Argument (Field I, 5).

he still puts it off, and he says, that "I am going unto Jerusalem," and is apparently giving the excuse for the delay.¹⁶

After having completed (ἐπιτελέσας) his ministry to the saints in Jerusalem, Paul planned to visit Rome during his journey to Spain (Rom 15:28). Chrysostom, indeed, furnished a literal interpretation of that "completion" of Paul's ministry to the saints, speaking about "royal treasuries" as a secure place in which the collection should be laid up. In other words, Paul's ministry to the saints would be completed only upon bringing the collection to the "royal treasuries" of the church in Jerusalem. Chrysostom explained the meaning of Paul's expression, "When therefore I have completed this, and have sealed unto them this fruit" (Rom 15:28), employing the adverb τούτέστιν (that is to say), and asserted, "When I have laid it up as it were in the royal treasuries (βασιλικά ταμεία), as in a place secure from robbers and danger."¹⁷

Moreover, Chrysostom's thoughts on the "royal treasures" can be drawn from his discourse on almsgiving as follows:

Let us comply, and, likewise, let us collect money in the home for the explicit purpose of almsgiving; and let there be established firmly in our homes sacred money laid away together with our private property, so that our personal possessions may be protected by it. For just as in royal treasuries, if it is revealed that in there, there is reserved the money of the ruled, and these through the money laid aside for the needy enjoy great security, likewise, in your own home if you lay aside money for the poor and on every Day of the Lord you collect it, the alms for the destitute will be insurance for the general funds. In this manner, you will become ordained by Paul a steward of your own money.¹⁸

According to the study by Floyd V. Filson, the royal treasuries "were in the north, west and south sides of the temple building. They were used as a kind of bank or safety deposit vault, protected not locks and steel, but chiefly by the awe inspired by the sacred surroundings."¹⁹ In antiquity, "Temples quickly accumulated large amounts of coined money offered to the gods. Being the property of the gods, these temple funds enjoyed the unique security of divine protection, with the result that temples were considered the safest places for money," as Michael Rostovtzeff and Neill Q. Hamilton observed it.²⁰ However, based on the information of Josephus, "The temple of Jerusalem continued to be the place where Jews, both rich and poor,

¹⁶ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 460).

¹⁷ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

¹⁸ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Eleem.*, 4, 15.

¹⁹ Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," 82.

²⁰ Rostovtzeff, *The Social*, 622, n. 46; Hamilton, "Temple Cleansing," 366.

kept their money on deposit” and “there were some deposits belonging to widows and orphans (2 Mac. 3, 10).”²¹

2. Paul’s Way of Encouraging Works of Almsgiving

Dwelling on Paul’s expression, “διακονῶν τοῖς ἀγίοις,” by which Paul clarified the intention of his journey to Jerusalem (Rom 15:25), Chrysostom then noted another important object, i.e., the exhortation to ἐλεημοσύνη. The word ἐλεημοσύνη semantically is related to ἔλεος, that is, acting out of mercy, that is, kindness or concern expressed for someone in need.²² For Chrysostom, therefore, such an expression indicates that Paul does not only recount his intention to go to Jerusalem but also exhorts the Romans to take part earnestly in almsgiving.²³ He noted: “By means of this he [Paul] also makes good another object, which is the exhorting of them to alms (τὸ προτρέψαι ἐκείνους εἰς ἐλεημοσύνην), and making them more in earnest about it. Since if he had not been minded to effect this, it had sufficed to say, ‘I am going unto Jerusalem.’ But now, he adds the reason of his journey. ‘For I go,’ he says, ‘to minister to the saints.’”²⁴

Furthermore, in Rom 15:29, where Paul states his hope to come to the Romans “in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ” (ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐλεύσομαι), Chrysostom did not interpret this expression as such. For him, the statement of Paul expresses his hope that when he would come to the Romans, he would find them abounding in blessing. Moreover, quoting Paul’s expression in 2 Cor 9:5, Chrysostom clarifies that the term εὐλογία is “a name that [Paul] very commonly gives to ἐλεημοσύνη.” Meanwhile, the additional words τοῦ εὐαγγελίου allow him to assert that Paul was speaking not only of χρημάτων but “of all other things” (περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων) or better “of all other good deeds” (περὶ πάντων ἀπλῶς τῶν κατορθωμάτων).²⁵ Here, it is very likely that Chrysostom was talking about money for the explicit purpose of almsgiving since when directing more attention to almsgiving, he usually urges everyone to collect a small sum

²¹ Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, V, 5, 1–7; VI, 5, 2.

²² BDAG, “ἔλεος,” 316.

²³ Cf. Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43, 1: “And this also he did when writing to the Romans. For to them also while appearing to narrate the reason why he was going away to Jerusalem, he introduces thereupon his discourse about alms: ‘At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to for the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints’ (Rom 15:25–26).”

²⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 460–461).

²⁵ BDAG, “χρῆμα,” 1089; Lampe, “κατόρθωμα,” 735–736.

of money each day.²⁶ For that reason, Chrysostom further states that Paul hopes to find among the Romans “with the honor and freshness of all good deeds” and “worthy of countless praises in the Gospel.” According to Paul’s exhortation, the “good deeds” that make him worthy of receiving the “countless praises in the Gospel” include abundant money they collected for alms. For Chrysostom, however, almsgiving is “τὴν μητέρα τῶν ἀγαθῶν” (the mother of good deeds) or “τὸ κεφάλαιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν” (the chief of good things).²⁷ Indeed, Chrysostom declared:

What is the force of, “In the fullness of the blessing?” He speaks either of money (χρημάτων) or of all good deeds in general. For blessing (εὐλογίαν) is a name he very commonly gives to alms. As when he says, “As a blessing and not as an exaction” (2 Cor 9:5). And it was customary of old for the thing to be so called. But as he has here added “of the Gospel,” on this ground we assert that he speaks not of money only, but of all other things. As if he had said, “I know that when I come I shall find you with the honor and freshness of all good deeds about you, and worthy of countless praises in the Gospel.”²⁸

As previously mentioned, the expression “διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις,” for Chrysostom, does not only reveal the purpose of Paul’s journey to Jerusalem but also his appeal to the Romans for almsgiving. Furthermore, he works on other Paul’s expressions to present his ways for such exhortation. First of all, he quotes Paul’s statement in Rom 15:27 that the Macedonians and the Achaeans are “debtors” to invite the Romans to imitate them, saying: “He dwells over the subject, and enters into reasoning, and says that they are ‘debtors,’ (ὀφειλέται) and that, ‘if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings,’ that they might learn to imitate these.”²⁹

2.1. Discreet Encouragement for Imitation

Chrysostom understands that, for Paul, the status of spiritual debtors is the main reason why the Romans have to be more earnest in almsgiving, imitating the Macedonians and the Achaeans pleased to serve the saints in Jerusalem in material things. This style of speaking, according to Chrysostom, should be more acceptable and bearable to the Romans since Paul did not deliver his appeal directly and “in the form of exhortation.” If Paul only mentioned the contribution of the Macedonians and Achaeans, without emphasizing that “they are debtors,” and then directly incited the Romans to imitate them, they might feel insulted. For that reason, Paul gave his

²⁶ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Eleem.* 4, 15; Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43, 2–4. Cf. Maxwell, *Christianization*, 163; Pizzolato, *Basilio di Cesarea*, 68, n. 233.

²⁷ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 7 (Field I, 96); Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43, 1 (Field II, 534).

²⁸ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 463).

²⁹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 461).

exhortation “in a more covert way,” a way that arouses Chrysostom’s admiration for Paul’s wisdom. Therefore, he said:

Wherefore, also there is much reason to admire his wisdom for devising this way of giving the advice. For they were more likely to bear it in this way than if he had said it in the form of exhortation; as then he would have seemed to be insulting them, if, with a view to incite them, he had brought before them Corinthians and Macedonians. Indeed, this is the ground on which he does incite the others as follows, saying, “I want you to know about the grace of God which has been given in the Churches of Macedonia” (2 Cor 8:1). And again he incites the Macedonians by these: “For your zeal,” he says, “has stirred up most of them” (2 Cor 9:2). And by the Galatians in like manner he does this, as when he says, “As I directed the Churches of Galatia, so you also are to do” (1 Cor 16:1). But in the case of the Romans he does not do so, but in a more covert way (ὕπεσταλμένως). And he does this also in regard to the preaching, as when he says, “What? Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (1 Cor 14:36). For there is nothing so powerful as emulation (ζῆλος).³⁰

Based on Paul’s style of speaking from the different epistles, Chrysostom was able to differentiate the ways used by the apostle to preach almsgiving to different Christian communities. In fact, before exhorting the Romans to almsdeeds, Paul preached the same to the faithful in Corinth (2 Cor 8:1), Macedonia (2 Cor 9:2), and Galatia (1 Cor 16:1). To them, he gave direct exhortation in the form of incitation. On the contrary, to the Romans, he delivered his exhortation “in a more covert way,” explaining that they were “debtors” in the same way as the Macedonians and the Achaeans.³¹

Chrysostom, then, declares that by this “covert way,” Paul aroused among the Romans the spirit of ζῆλος (emulation), that is, a spirit of being rival or equal or surpassing someone.³² Therefore, it can be said that Chrysostom understood Paul’s expression in Rom 15:26–27 as a sign of Paul’s interest and enthusiasm that made the Romans very eager or determined to do alms. Paul aroused in them a desire to equal or outperform the Macedonians and Achaeans in giving alms. However, the Greek term ζῆλος commonly is used in its negative sense, which means “jealousy.”³³ Chrysostom used it here in its positive sense, denoting an “eager rivalry” or “emulation” in good deeds.

Moreover, convinced that “there is nothing so powerful as ζῆλος,” Chrysostom then multiplies its references, quoting several of Paul’s expressions from different

³⁰ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 461).

³¹ Cf. Origenes, *Comm. Rom.* X, 14.

³² Corbett, “The Theory,” 243–250.

³³ *1 Clem.* 1, 1; 4, 7–13 (LCL 24, 34–35.42–43).

epistles: "For elsewhere too he says, 'And so I ordain in all the Churches' (1 Cor 7:17); and again, 'As I teach them everywhere in every Church' (1 Cor 4:17). And to the Colossians he says, 'the Gospel is growing and bearing fruit in the whole world' (Col 1:6). This then he does here also in the case of alms."³⁴

2.2. Paul's Terminology Interpreted by Chrysostom

Furthermore, dwelling on various expressions of Paul in the passage under discussion, Chrysostom invited his congregation to "consider what dignity there is in his expressions."³⁵ He, then, noted and clarified eight expressions of Paul: 1) διακονῶν, 2) εὐδόκησαν, 3) κοινωνίαν (τινά), 4) εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων, 5) ὀφειλέται, 6) λειτουργῆσαι and καρπός, 7) ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς, and 8) εὐλογίας. Paying attention to these expressions, Chrysostom did not only admire Paul's wisdom but also was able to present the ways of Paul in encouraging the Romans to become more zealous in doing alms.

First, Chrysostom notices and elucidates the verb διακονῶν used by Paul to express the intention of his journey to Jerusalem (Rom 15:25). For him, the fact that Paul does not merely say that he is going to Jerusalem "to carry alms" (ἐλεημοσύνην ἀποφέρων) but "to minister to the saints" (διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις), reveals "how great a thing [he] is doing." Moreover, the almsgiving is a great thing since Paul, who was "the teacher of the world" (ὁ διδάσκαλος τῆς οἰκουμένης), decided to "be the bearer" of that alms.³⁶ As "the teacher of the world," of course, he had many fellow workers and disciples who could be sent to carry and hand over that alms.³⁷ However, he did not ask them to take over that ministry, but Paul himself undertook it. In addition, even though he "longed for many years" to visit Rome (Rom 15:23), he decided to delay and preferred to go to Jerusalem first to accomplish that ministry. All these facts are evidence to Chrysostom that such a gesture of almsgiving is a great thing, and making them aware of how great almsgiving is, is an effective way of making the Romans more zealous about it. Therefore, he declared: "For he does not say, I go to carry alms, but 'to minister' (διακονῶν). But if Paul ministers, just consider how great a thing is doing, when the Teacher of the world undertakes to be the bearer,

³⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30.

³⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30.

³⁶ For the epithet ὁ διδάσκαλος τῆς οἰκουμένης attributed to Paul in Chrysostom's writing, see Mitchel, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 75, n. 29.

³⁷ In 1 Cor 16:3–4, however, Paul declared that he will not carry the collection by himself but will accompany those whom they accredit to carry the gift to Jerusalem by letter, only when it seems advisable that he should go also, he will also go with them (Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43, 4). Meanwhile, in 2 Cor 8:6.16–24, he delegated such work to Titus and the brethren he sent to the Corinthians (Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 18, 1).

and when on the point of traveling to Rome, and so greatly desiring them too, he yet prefers this to that.”³⁸

Second, dwelling on Paul’s expression when he talks about the Macedonians and the Achaeans, who “were pleased to make a contribution for the poor” saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:27), Chrysostom then clarifies the verb εὐδόκησαν, saying, “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased’ (εὐδόκησαν), that is (τουτέστιν), it meets their approbation (ἐδοκίμασαν), their desire (ἐπεθύμησαν).”³⁹ Here, Chrysostom used two verbs, ἐδοκίμασαν (approved) and ἐπεθύμησαν (desired), to clarify the meaning of the term εὐδόκησαν (be pleased) used by Paul. It means, therefore, that the Macedonians and the Achaeans collected the contributions for the saints with pleasure because they indeed approved and desired to do it without any compulsion. In other words, Chrysostom indicates that Paul showed the Romans the inner spirit of the Macedonians and the Achaeans in doing alms and, at the same time, urged them to have the same spirit, approving and desiring to give charity with pleasure.

Third, paying attention, then, to the vocabulary of Paul regarding the alms, in which “he does not say ἐλεημοσύνην, but κοινωνίαν” (Rom 15:26), Chrysostom reveals that the apostle was not talking about a simple collection of money but a contribution. Paul also used the term κοινωνία to name the same deed of Macedonian and Achaean generosity toward the saint in Jerusalem when he stated in 2 Cor 8:4, “With much entreaty, begging us to receive the gift (χάρις) and fellowship (κοινωνία) of the ministration to the saints.”⁴⁰ Chrysostom also clarified that Paul used the term κοινωνία as a proper name to exalt their deed of generosity when he said in another context of his homily: “See you, how he again exalts the deed, calling it by venerable names. For, since they were ambitious of a spiritual gift, he calls it by the name grace that they might eagerly pursue it; and again, by that of fellowship, that they might learn that they receive, not give only.”⁴¹

Moreover, Chrysostom affirms that the pronoun τίς used by Paul in κοινωνίαν τινά “is not used without a meaning.” This adjective commonly functions as “an indefinite quantity that is nevertheless not without importance” and could be translated as “some, considerable.”⁴² The expression κοινωνίαν τινά, therefore, must be understood as “considerable contribution.” It means, even though their contribution is quantitatively indefinite, or at least Paul did not have in mind its exact amount, it should reach a considerable amount, sufficiently generous to merit attention and greater than the average. They indeed “overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, [...] and beyond their means, of their

38 Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 461).

39 Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

40 Ogereau, “The Jerusalem Collection as Κοινωνία,” 360–378.

41 Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 16, 3.

42 BDAG, “τίς,” 1008.

own free will" (2 Cor 8:2–3).⁴³ For that reason, Chrysostom asserted that the *τίς* is intentionally used by Paul "to prevent his seeming to reproach these."⁴⁴

Fourth, focusing on the phrase *εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων*, Chrysostom clarifies that at this point, Paul showed the twofold character of the beneficiaries (the poor saints in Jerusalem) of the contribution. They did not only suffer from poverty but also possessed the virtue of sanctity. Naturally, such character of the beneficiaries confirms even more how great almsgiving is. As previously discussed, the Macedonians and Achaean were pleased to do it, and Paul preferred to hand it over by himself, delaying his journey to Rome. Chrysostom declared that "[Paul] does not say for the poor, merely, but 'for the poor saints,' (*εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων*) so making his recommendation twofold, both that from their virtue (*τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς*) and that from their poverty (*τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς πενίας*)."⁴⁵

In the other context of his homily, Chrysostom also brought to light their virtue of sanctity manifested by the way they gave thanks to God not only for what they received but also for what was received by others (2 Cor 9:13). Even though they were in direst poverty and therefore in desperate need of help, they rejoiced greatly when the Corinthians not only provided assistance to them but also to others. For that reason, the apostle praised them, as Chrysostom asserted:

They glorify God that you are so generous, not unto them only, but also unto all. And this again is made praise unto them that they gave thanks even for that which is bestowed upon others. For, says he, they do honor, not to their own concerns only, but also to those of others, and this although they are in the extremest poverty; which is an evidence of their great virtue. For nothing is so full of envy as the whole race of such as are in poverty. But they are pure from this passion; being so far from feeling pained because of the things you impart to others that they even rejoice over it no less than over the things themselves receive.⁴⁶

Furthermore, while interpreting Rom 15:31, "That I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea," Chrysostom clarifies that by this statement, Paul added the ground why he took the office of ministering to the saints by himself and prioritized it. He was ardent to go to Jerusalem because the saints in Jerusalem were in danger due to many enemies and famine. Therefore, he stated:

In saying this he showed, that certain evil wolves would attack them, and those who were wild beasts rather than men. And out of this he also found grounds for another thing, namely, for showing that he with good reason took the office of ministering to the saints,

⁴³ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 16, 2–3.

⁴⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

⁴⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

⁴⁶ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 20, 2.

if, that is, the unbelievers were in such force that he even prayed to be delivered from them. For they who were amongst so many enemies (πολεμίων), were in danger of perishing by famine (λιμῶ) also. And therefore, there was absolute need of aid coming from other quarters to them.⁴⁷

Here, Chrysostom probably refers to the great famine (AD 45–63) that swept the Roman Empire, including Jerusalem under Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54), as reported by a certain Agabus in Acts 11:27–30. This famine must have coincided with the incidents of the great Judaeian famine, which occurred during the rule of the procurator Tiberius Alexander, that is, either in 46 or 47, as recorded by ancient historians, such as Josephus, Eusebius, Orosius, and Bede.⁴⁸

Fifth, turning back to the term ὀφειλέται, Chrysostom explained this expression of Paul referring to the Macedonians and the Achaeans as “debtors.” Quoting several scriptural verses, either indirectly or directly, he was able to explain its Christological and soteriological sense because both the Gospels and the epistles of Paul testify that neither the word of God nor the promise of salvation, nor the prophets, nor the apostles, nor even Christ, come originally from them. On the contrary, they were originally from the Jews and were only for their sake at first. Only then, due to the rejection of some of them and the testimonies of others who believe in Christ, did other nations also come to faith in Christ and receive the promise of salvation. Chrysostom spoke about the Christian Jews with whom the Romans were indebted. For, when he talked about the unbeliever Jews, he considered that the order of salvation was reversed, attributing the primacy not to the Jews but the Gentiles, saying: “They should be the first to come in, and then those of the Gentiles; but since they disbelieved, the order was reversed, and their unbelief and fall caused these to be brought in first. [...] they ought to have been first admitted, and then we. [...]. But as they had started off, we the last became first (οἱ δεῦτεροι πρῶτοι γεγόναμεν).”⁴⁹

As a consequence of the “debtor” status, the whole nations, including the Romans, were made partakers in all these spiritual things. They were debtors in their spiritual things, so they ought to serve them in material things. Chrysostom declared that Paul:

Says, “What? Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (1 Cor 14:36). [...] And even with this alone he was not satisfied, but he adds, “they are debtors (ὀφειλέται εἰσίν).” Then he shows how they are debtors. For if, he says, “the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual things, they also ought to minister

⁴⁷ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 463–464).

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Antiq.* XX, 1.5; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* II, 3.8.12; Orosius, *Hist.* VII, 6.9; Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* I, 3. Cf. Gapp, “The Universal Famine,” 258–265; Graham, “The Genesis,” 58–73.

⁴⁹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 19 (Field I, 332). Cf. Cohen, “The Mystery,” 263–265.

unto them in material things.” But what he means is this. It was for their sakes that Christ came (Matt 15:24). To them it was that all the promises were made, to them of the Jews (Rom 9:4–5; 11:26–32). Of them Christ came. Wherefore also it said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). From them were the Apostles, from them the Prophets, from them all good things. In all these things then the world was made a partaker (ἐκοινωνήσεν).⁵⁰

Moreover, quoting the parable of Jesus about the great banquet (Matt 22:9) as if Paul was speaking to the Romans, Chrysostom asserted that they were also debtors since they were called to enter into the Kingdom of God and to take part in that banquet of salvation. While interpreting that verse, he declared:

It proclaims beforehand both the casting out of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. [...] Before the crucifixion, He said to them [the disciples], “Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:6) and after the crucifixion, [...] when on the point of ascending into heaven, He declared, “When the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁵¹

In other words, Paul reminded the Romans that they were made partakers in the banquet of salvation, which first was only prepared for the Jews, and they were brought in to enjoy the eschatological feast. For that reason, they were debtors and therefore ought to serve them in material things by means of almsgiving. Indeed, he stated: “If then, he says, you have been made partakers in that which is greater, and when it was for them that the banquet was prepared, you have been brought in to enjoy the feast that was spread (Matt 22:9), according to the Parable of the Gospel, you are debtors also to share your carnal things with them, and to impart to them.”⁵²

Sixth, continuing to dwell on verse 27 and focusing on the term λειτουργῆσαι, Chrysostom reveals very well an important aspect of giving alms: it is not merely to share (κοινωνῆσαι) material things with the poor but rather to serve (λειτουργῆσαι) them. The almsgivers were ranked as ministers (διάκονοι), that is, those who serve, and “those who pay the taxes to kings.” A taxpayer does not lose money when he pays the taxes but gains more as these guarantee public service from the authorities considered as the ministers of God who used to manage these taxes, as he underlined in the other context of his homily:

“For the same reason you also pay taxes,” he says, “for they are ministers of God, attending to this very thing” (Rom 13:6). [...] Observe the wisdom and judgment of the blessed Paul.

⁵⁰ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 461, 462).

⁵¹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Matt.* 69, 1.

⁵² Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30.

For that which seemed to be burdensome and annoying – the system of imposts – this he turns into a proof of their care for men. What is the reason, he means, that we pay taxes to a king? Is it not as providing for us? And yet we should not have paid it unless we had known in the first instance that we were gainers from this superintendence.⁵³

Thus, Chrysostom brought to light not only the importance of almsgiving for the beneficiaries but also for the almsgiver.⁵⁴ Just like those who pay taxes receive the benefits from this payment, those who give alms also benefit from doing it. He declared that “[Paul] does not say to share, but ‘to minister’ (λειτουργῆσαι), so ranking them with ministers (διακόνων), and those that pay the taxes to kings.”⁵⁵ Later, while interpreting the term καρπός used by Paul in verse 28, Chrysostom underlined the benefits of doing alms again. For him, the fact that Paul calls alms καρπός reveals again that the almsgivers benefit from doing it.⁵⁶ Therefore, he declared, “When therefore I have completed this, and have sealed unto them this fruit’ [...] And he does not say alms (ἐλεημοσύνην), but ‘fruit’ (καρπὸν) again, to show that those who gave it were gainers by it.”⁵⁷

Seventh, paying attention to the expression of Paul, “For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings” (Rom 15:27), Chrysostom noted and further clarified Paul’s different vocabulary referring to carnal and spiritual things. For spiritual things, he adds a possessive pronoun αὐτός (their) and says, “ἐν τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν.” On the contrary to carnal things, he does not say “ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς ὑμῶν,” but merely “ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς,” without any possessive pronoun. Based on those different expressions, Chrysostom was able to ground another argument about the importance of alms. He used the fact that Paul does not add any possessive pronoun for material things as the ground to declare that material things are not private property but common to all. Chrysostom also underlined that material wealth is not personal possession but must be available and common to all in other contexts of his homilies.⁵⁸ Moreover, other ancient Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome, also confirmed that material things are common to all. However, they did not reject private property or at least did not condemn individual ownership to be against the natural law.⁵⁹

⁵³ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 23.

⁵⁴ Leyerle, “John Chrysostom on Almsgiving,” 29–47; Sitzler, “The Indigent,” 468–479; Meyer, *John Chrysostom*, 88–101.

⁵⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

⁵⁶ BDAG, “καρπός,” 509–510.

⁵⁷ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

⁵⁸ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Stat.* 2, 19; Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Tim.* 11; 12; Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 10, 7; Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Eleem.* 10, 25.

⁵⁹ Avila, *Ownership*, 33–170.

Chrysostom, then, gave money as an example by saying that it belongs to all, not only to its possessors. However, he further stated that reality shows that money and other possessions are not common, i.e., some people are rich and others poor. Therefore, through alms, the wealthy have a responsibility and an obligation to share their money and goods with those in need. Thus, they belong to all, not only to their possessors. In other words, almsgiving is a way to make money, and other goods, which previously were not common and equal for all, become available to all. Chrysostom further declared: “[Paul] does not say in your carnal things (ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς ὑμῶν), as he did in ‘their spiritual things’ (ἐν τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν). For the spiritual things were theirs. But the material things belonged not to these alone, but were the common property of all. For he bade money to be held to belong to all, not to those who were its possessors only.”⁶⁰

Moreover, in the other context of his homily, Chrysostom distinguished two levels of material things. Where one is:

The greater and more necessary blessings and those which maintain our life” such as the sunbeams and the air “that God has made common.” The other is “the smaller and less valuable – I speak of money – are not thus common [...] In order that our life might be disciplined, and that we might have a training ground for virtue. [...] If money was also a universal possession and were offered in the same manner to all, the occasion for almsgiving, and the opportunity for benevolence, would be taken away. [...] He has made you rich that you may assist the needy; that you may have a release of your own sins, by liberality to others.”⁶¹

Eighth, arriving at verse 29, “And I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ,” Chrysostom dwelt on Paul’s other vocabulary referring to alms, i.e., εὐλογία. He then clarified it by quoting another Paul’s expression in 2 Cor 9:5, “So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on before unto you, and arrange in advance for your previously promised gift, so that it may be ready as a blessing (εὐλογίαν) and not as an exaction,” asserting that “Blessing is a name he very commonly gives to alms. As when he says, ‘As a blessing and not as an exaction’ (2 Cor 9:5). And it was customary of old for the thing to be so called.”⁶²

In general, the Greek word εὐλογία means “praise” and “blessing.” However, “since the concept of blessing connotes the idea of bounty, εὐλογία also means *generous gift, bounty*.”⁶³ It was observed that ancient writers, such as Philo, in an exposition

⁶⁰ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 462).

⁶¹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Stat.* 2, 19–20.

⁶² Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 463).

⁶³ BDAG, “εὐλογία,” 408–409.

on the “blessing” of Abraham, and also Paul, in this passage quoted here by Chrysostom, used both significations.⁶⁴ For that reason, Chrysostom declared that it is an old custom for alms to be called εὐλογία as it was known originally as a willing gift or a bounty.

2.3. Praise as Encouragement

Going back to verse 29, Chrysostom explained another of Paul’s ways of actively exhorting the Romans to participate in almsgiving. Moreover, he interpreted Paul’s expression in that verse: “As if [he] had said, ‘I know that when I come I shall find you with the honor and freshness of all good deeds about you, and worthy of countless praises in the Gospel.’ And this is a wonderful form of counsel, that is, holding beforehand their attention by encomiums. For, when he entreats them in the way of advice, this is the mode of setting them right that he adopts.”⁶⁵

It should be noted that Chrysostom interpreted this expression of Paul not only as a sign of hope that he would come to them and should find in them “the honor and freshness of all good deeds” and “countless praises in the Gospel” but also as a form of encomium by which Paul holds beforehand their attention for almsgiving. Chrysostom believed that “this was a wonderful form of counsel” used by Paul to make the Romans more zealous about their alms. In fact, according to the study of Laurent Pernot, the encomium conveys a message of exhortation and advice. He observed that the ancient writers, such as Aristotle and Quintilian, note that principally there is a similarity between praise and advice: one is often advised to seek out for the future the very same that are praised in those who already have them.⁶⁶ Moreover, Pernot also asserted that praise is often used in support of advice: the speech is principally a request, but it uses the form of praise to make the listener yield to the request. For example, Isocrates offers an encomium of Athens in order to support the city’s request for hegemony.⁶⁷ On the contrary, advice may appear in the extension of praise: the speech is principally an encomium but begins with a request or entreaties. An encomium, therefore, is not a simple matter of insincere praise but intelligent persuasion. Behind sweet words of praise, the listeners are invited to embody the aspects earnestly they are praised.⁶⁸ In this case, Paul’s encomium to the Romans for their “all good deeds” and their “worthy of countless praises in the Gospel” means advice and exhortation for them to be earnest in good deeds to be worthy to receive such praise.

⁶⁴ Philo, *Migr.*, 13, 70–73 (LCL 261, 170–173). Cf. Safrai – Tomson, “Paul’s Collection,” 147.

⁶⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 463).

⁶⁶ Aristoteles, *Rhet.* I, 9, 35; Quintilianus, *Inst.* III, 7, 28 (LCL 124, 479).

⁶⁷ Isocrates, *Paneg.* (LCL 209, 116–241).

⁶⁸ Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, 93–94; Pepe, “(Re)discovering a Rhetorical Genre,” 17–31; Ware, “Panegyric,” 291–304.

2.4. Almsgiving as Sacrifice

Interpreting verses 30 and 31, in which Paul asks the Romans to pray for him (Rom 15:30) so that the saints would accept his ministry, Chrysostom clarifies three important things. First, he identifies the service (διακονία) to the saints with the sacrifice (θυσία).⁶⁹ Second, Paul's statement described, "That my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Rom 15:31b) as, "my sacrifice may be accepted, with cheerfulness they may receive what is given them."⁷⁰

Identifying Paul's ministry to the saints as the sacrifice shows a great probability that Chrysostom intentionally placed the collection or the contribution of the Macedonians and the Achaean in the context of the liturgy. For Chrysostom and the other ecclesiastical writers, the term "sacrifice," in addition to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and in the Eucharist, also refers to the offering of charity that Christians bring as their participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice.⁷¹ Paul himself also places the collection "on the first day of every week" (1 Cor 16:2), and while interpreting this verse, Chrysostom clarified:

"What then, I ask, did you give order about?" 'On the first day of the week,' that is, the Lord's day (Κυριακήν) 'let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper' (1 Cor 16:2). Mark how he exhorts them even from the time: for indeed the day was enough to lead them to almsgiving. Wherefore 'call to mind,' he says, 'what you attained to on this day: how all the unutterable blessings, and that which is the root and the beginning of our life took place on this day.'⁷²

Moreover, in his ecclesiological doctrine, Chrysostom declared that the Church is one body with many and various members, including the poor who, for Chrysostom, have a particular place and role in the Church. They are "the very members of Christ and the body of the Lord," who constitute the most worthy part of the so-called "third altar."⁷³ The first altar is Christ's sacrifice culminated in His cross and resurrection. This altar "is refracted, as it were, into two closely altars," namely the stone altar and the ecclesial living-body altar.⁷⁴ The stone altar, which is the second altar, is the Eucharist altar, in which the memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is celebrated. This celebration creates the ecclesial body of Christ, which is the third altar. For Chrysostom, the poor are the most sacred and worthy part of the third altar, in which the same sacrifice of Christ celebrated on the second altar must also be observed there. For that reason, the third altar can be identified with the altar of the poor,

⁶⁹ BDAG, "θυσία," 462.

⁷⁰ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 464).

⁷¹ Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas*, 97–138.

⁷² Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 43, 2 (Field II, 535–536).

⁷³ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 20, 3.

⁷⁴ Tillard, *Flesh of the Church*, 69.

on which Christ must be served and honored with the “good deeds (εὐποιῖαι) and generosity (κοινωνίαι), for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”⁷⁵

Second, while identifying the service to the saints with a sacrifice, Chrysostom also revealed Paul’s profound and great appreciation for the recipients of his ministry. As previously shown that “the poor among the saints” (Rom 15:26) were the beneficiaries of this service, Chrysostom further illustrated that Paul has exalted them on the level of “both that from their virtue and that from their poverty.”⁷⁶ Now, showing his need for the community’s prayer for the positive response to the collection that Paul was going to hand over to them, Chrysostom emphasized that Paul carefully exalted again the dignity of those who will receive it, saying, “See how he again exalts the dignity of those who were to receive it. Then he asks for the prayer of so great a people in order to what was sent being received.”⁷⁷

Third, as a consequence of identifying almsgiving with sacrifice, Chrysostom had to explicate the acceptable and fruitful almsgiving criteria. Previously, while elucidating the expression of Paul as regards the terms λειτουργῆσαι and καρπὸν, he discussed the benefits of alms for the givers. Now, he clarified that not all alms are safe to be accepted and could bring advantages for the almsgiver, underlining that Paul, “By this, he shows also another point, that to have given alms does not secure it being accepted. For when anyone gives it constrainedly, or out of unjust gains, or for vanity, the fruit of it is gone.”⁷⁸

Notably, for Chrysostom, there are more conditions for alms to become an acceptable and fruitful sacrifice, which brings benefits for the almsgiver. At this point, let us point out three conditions for good almsgiving, more often emphasized by Chrysostom. First, it must be given unconstrainedly, that is, as a willing gift, as he also asserted in the other context of his homily, saying, “Our alms being judged not by the measure of our gifts, but by the largeness of our mind.”⁷⁹ It means someone who gives alms must have a good disposition so that he gives not reluctantly or under compulsion but gives freely and with a cheerful heart (2 Cor 9:1.7), as he underlined, “I mean cheerful is intended as generous. However, [Paul] has taken it as giving with readiness. Since the example of the Macedonians and all those other things were enough to produce sumptuousness, he does not say many things on that, except about giving without reluctance.”⁸⁰

Second, what is given for alms, money, and other material goods must be gained justly, not the fruit of injustice. For example, in the other context of his homily, Chrysostom stated, “Let us make a little chest for the poor at home; [...] let nothing

⁷⁵ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Matt.* 50, 4.

⁷⁶ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 20, 2.

⁷⁷ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 464).

⁷⁸ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Rom.* 30 (Field I, 464).

⁷⁹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Matt.* 52, 4.

⁸⁰ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 19, 2.

be cast into it, which is the fruit of injustice. For this is charity, and it cannot be that the charity should ever spring out of hardheartedness.”⁸¹ Then, “Do not put a slander on almsgiving. Do not cause it to be evil spoken of by all. If you commit robbery for this, that you may give alms, nothing is more wicked than your almsgiving. For when it is produced by rapine, it is not almsgiving, it is inhumanity, it is cruelty, it is an insult to God.”⁸²

Third, the intention of giving alms is not for vainglory because it is very dangerous, damaging the good deeds and eliminating its reward, as he asserted in another context of his homilies as follows:

Let us flee vainglory, for this passion is more despotic than all the others. [...] If we cut off this passion, we shall destroy the other limbs of the evil as well, [...] even insinuates itself into the virtues; and when it is not able to dislodge us from there it wrecks much damage on our very virtue, forcing us to perform virtuous acts and depriving us of their fruits. For he who looks to vainglory, whether fasting or praying or giving alms, loses the reward of the good action. [...] Therefore, if we wish to attain to glory, let us flee from the praise of men and desire only that coming from God.⁸³

Vainglory again damages tens of thousands of good deeds, and near this too again the rich man hath his dwelling.⁸⁴

Conclusions

For Chrysostom, Rom 15:25–32, in which Paul recounts his planning to go to Jerusalem to hand over the money collected by the Macedonians and the Achaean, is nothing but the discourse concerning almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) and good deeds in general. First of all, he discusses the historical aspect of the collection that was about to be delivered to the saints in Jerusalem and clarifies Paul's reason for delaying his visit to Rome. Then, he brings to light Paul's exhortation for alms and other good deeds to the Romans, paying attention, especially to his style of speaking, expressions, and vocabulary, showing the ways of Paul in encouraging them to become more earnest about it. Finally, identifying Paul's ministry to the saints as a sacrifice, Chrysostom was able to show, though briefly, the criteria of good and fruitful almsgiving.

⁸¹ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43, 7.

⁸² Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Tim.* 6.

⁸³ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. Jo.* 28.

⁸⁴ Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 13, 4.

Regarding Paul's ways of encouraging the Romans to become more earnest in almsgiving, Chrysostom indicated four crucial things. First, realizing that "mankind is emulous" and "there is nothing so powerful as emulation," Chrysostom claimed that the apostle employed this way covertly. Chrysostom understands that, for Paul, the status of debtors in spiritual blessings is the main reason why the Romans have to be more zealous in almsgiving, imitating the Macedonians and the Achaeanes pleased to serve the saints in Jerusalem in material things. Second, paying attention to and clarifying eight expressions of Paul, i.e., διακονῶν, εὐδόκησαν, κοινωνίαν (τινά), εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων, ὀφειλέται, λειτουργῆσαι and καρπός, ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς, and εὐλογίας, Chrysostom invited his congregation to "consider what dignity there is in his expressions" and showed that all of these expressions were nothing but his ways in encouraging the Romans to become more earnest in doing alms.

Third, Chrysostom saw that Paul also used encomiums, a powerful message of exhortation and advice to hold beforehand the Romans' attention for munificent almsgiving. Fourth, Chrysostom explained that almsgiving is a sacrifice (θυσία), which brings benefits for the almsgivers. However, he also clarified that not all alms are safe to be accepted and could bring benefits, underlining three criteria of acceptable and fruitful alms that must be: 1) given willingly and cheerfully; 2) bestowed from the just resources, and not as a fruit of injustice; 3) free from vainglory.

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