

2nd Corinthians Chapters 9-10

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Introduction:

Burton Coffman writes:

These verses are an intensification of Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to make good on their promises of a year ago and to make up a bountiful contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

AN APPEAL TO THE CORINTHIANS TO MATCH PAUL'S BOASTING ABOUT THEM.

(9:1) I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. (2) For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving.

- Paul now commends his Corinthian readers for their willingness to give to the needs of **believers in Jerusalem**. In fact, he has been using their example as a bragging point with Macedonian believers and this has **stirred up** some of them to **begin giving** also.
- It also may be the Corinthian believers had talked and planned, but an actual offering was not under way from the Corinthians yet. *Planning* is more fun and less demanding than *giving!*



(3) But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you.

- **These brothers** were mentioned in the previous chapter as Titus and two unnamed believers.
- There is nothing indecisive about Paul's wording: Not "I have considered sending," but **I am sending**. "Let's get our plans beyond the planning stages!"
- The purpose of the three would be to assure the collection was ready by the time that Paul got there.

(4) We would be embarrassed -- not to mention your own embarrassment -- if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them!

- Paul was thinking about the embarrassment, both for himself and them, if he was to bring along a messenger

from Macedonia and he would find that nothing but a plan existed. There had been no action.

(5) So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly.

- This is why Paul thought it necessary to urge these Corinthians to get the actual offering underway before he arrived in person.



HOW TO BE GENEROUS

(6) Remember this -- a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. (7) You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

- **God's** law of the harvest serves to illustrate **giving** at its best. It is necessary to sow **seed** generously in order to receive a **generous crop**.
- Using the law of the harvest, each person **must decide** just how much he or she can afford to **give**. **Giving** while we wish we hadn't **given** is not what God wants. Social **pressure** should not make the decision, either.

- That **God loves a person who gives cheerfully** is a characterization of **God** from many Old Testament and New Testament passages, it is not a direct quotation from Scripture, but more of an understood truism. Examples are in Exodus 25:2; 35:5; 1 Chronicles 29:17; Proverbs 11:25; 22:9.
- **Cheerful giving.** The word **cheerful** comes from the Greek word *hilaros* where we get the word *hilarious*. **God** wants His people to give from the right motive and to be happy about it

(8) And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. (9) As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever."

- If a believer wants to be generous, **God** will make it possible by providing the means. Our bookkeeper won't understand it because **God** is behind it making it work.
- Paul quotes from a Psalm to make his point:

They share freely and give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will be remembered forever. They will have influence and honor. Psalms 112:9

- **TIME OUT:** This is Charles writing about my personal practice in giving in 2023. Mine is not a special offering like Paul is discussing, but instead is a month-in and month-out experience.
 - I give 1/10 of my income to the local church. This enables the yearly budget to be met. No pressure is put on any member to give, but an odd things happens: The average giving remains above the budgeted amount.

- I'm concerned about feeding the poor, so I designate a payment each month for that special purpose. It does not go through the church treasury and so cannot be removed in a future budgeting process.
- I'm also concerned about providing the Scriptures to new, but poor, believers. I designate funds to a mission field where the church is growing fast and then pray each day that the Scriptures that I finance will be effectively placed for a maximum of reading.
- Occasionally a one-time special need arises and I have funds to meet that need, too.
- Humanly speaking, it seems that I should go broke, but instead, God keeps providing, either by reduced expenses or unexpected income. END OF TIME OUT.

THE CASE OF THE SOWER IN CONTINUED

(10) For God is the One who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

- There's one factor that doesn't work on a spreadsheet: the **provisions** of **God**. **God** enabled the farmer to have a return on his **seed** used for planting, yet was still able to feed his family while waiting for the crop. The giver never impoverishes himself by giving to the Lord who simply increases our ability to give.

(11) Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

- Not only will the Corinthians who give be blessed for their **generosity**, but the Jerusalem brethren will **thank** the Lord also, bringing even more glory to **God**.

(12) So two good things will result from this ministry of giving -- the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. (13) As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. (14) And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. (15) Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

● *To summarize:*

- When the Corinthians give, the needs of **believers in Jerusalem** will be met and **God** will receive **thanks** from them. *Verse 12.*
- When the Corinthians give, the **believers at Jerusalem** will give **glory** to **God** because of the amazing change in their Gentile counterparts. Only God could accomplish this about face. *Verse 13.*
- This remarkable change will cause the **Jerusalem** brothers to **pray** for their friends at Corinth when they see what God is doing among you. *Verse 14.*
- This **wonderful** advancement is too difficult to put into **words**.

PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY

(10:1) Now I, Paul, appeal to you with the gentleness and kindness of Christ -- though I realize you think I am timid in person and bold only when I write from far away. (2) Well, I am begging you now so that when I come I won't have to be bold with those who think we act from human motives.

- Paul himself had critics among the believers at Corinth. They challenged Paul by saying the he was **timid** while present, but **bold** when he was somewhere else and **writing** back to them. Actually, Paul was being **bold** now on paper (parchment) so he would not need be **bold** with his critics when he arrives among them.
- Note that Paul was not confrontational or challenging about this criticism. These are no Christian responses.

(3) We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. (4) We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.

- Paul easily agreed that he was **human**, but he didn't handle his critics with **human**-based responses. He used **God's mighty weapons** and didn't do battle from a **human** vantage point.

(5) We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

- Verbal battle was not Paul's conscious choice, but **obedience to Christ** was where he gained his strength. He taught the rebellious critics **to obey Christ**. This helped distinguish the obedient from those who were determined to stay disobedient. He says this in verse 6.

(6) And after you have become fully obedient, we will punish everyone who remains disobedient. (7) Look at the obvious facts. Those who say they belong to Christ must recognize that we belong to Christ as much as they do.

- The majority of Paul's critics would become fully obedient to the ways of **Christ**, leaving a few who refused. They claim they **belong to Christ** and ignore Paul's God-given authority. Let's review one of Paul's claims to be an apostle:

Galatians 1:

(11) Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. (12) I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

(13) You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion -- how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. (14) I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

(15) But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by His marvelous grace. Then it pleased Him (16) to reveal His Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being. (17) Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

(18) Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.

Paul had authority directly from the Lord, not through the Twelve Apostles.

(8) I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But our authority builds

you up; it doesn't tear you down. So I will not be ashamed of using my authority.

- **The authority** used by Paul was to the advantage of the Corinthian believers. He had used it to **build** the church, never **tear** it **down**. In fact, it was Paul's use of this **authority** that had brought the church into being.

(9) I'm not trying to frighten you by my letters. (10) For some say, "Paul's letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!" (11) Those people should realize that our actions when we arrive in person will be as forceful as what we say in our letters from far away.

- Paul repeats the charges against him from verse 1. They bothered him. But his critics will be in for a surprise because he will be as **forceful** as necessary when he **arrives**.

(12) Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!

- Sarcasm warning. Sarcasm is the caustic use of words to mock someone or something. Sarcasm is not normally a useful communication tool and those who use it routinely will have to face its isolating consequences. But here, Paul handles it masterfully. He charges that his critics are **ignorant**.

PAUL'S GUIDING PRINCIPLE: TO BREAK NEW GROUND FOR CHRIST

(13) We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you.

- Paul now uses the actual history of the Corinthian believers to make his case. He was working within the boundaries of his assignment when he went to Corinth in the first place.
- Some commentators see this as a reference to his constant critics: the Judiazers. They didn't develop new fields of service like Paul, but slipped into existing groups with their claims.

(14) We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.

- Paul was operating within his assigned area when he preached **the Good News of Christ** in Corinth and established a church of believers.

(15) Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended.

- Also Paul did not claim the work that others had done as his own. This is what Judiazers were doing.

(16) Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is

working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else's territory.

- Paul was still working under his Galatians 1 instructions and he has the freedom to plant other churches. No one can complain about his targets for church planting.

(17) As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD." (18) When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.

- **J.W McGarvey** believes that Paul is quoting a condensed version of Jeremiah 9:23-24.

This is what the LORD says: "Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. Jeremiah 9:23

William MacDonald sees this:

Apparently the false teachers had engaged in a great deal of boasting. They doubtless gave glowing accounts of their service and of their spectacular successes. Paul had never done this. He had preached Christ and not himself.