

2 Corinthians 9: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 26 July 2020

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians chapter 9 2 Corinthians chapter 9 2 Corinthians chapter 9 2 Corinthians chapter 9 continues Paul's discussion of the gift to the saints in Jerusalem from the previous chapter. Paul makes a well-calculated rhetorical appeal to the Corinthians here. He is quite invested in their response because he has boasted about them to the Macedonians much as he boasted about the Macedonians to them in the previous chapter.

The Macedonians' positive response he described in the previous chapter was spurred in part by the Corinthians' own initial zeal for the collection. The Macedonians had gotten the impression that the Corinthians had surpassed them in their zeal in this matter but now the Macedonians, who had caught the zeal for the collection from Paul's report about the Corinthians, might find out that the Corinthians had grown sluggish. Paul is concerned that if some Macedonians accompany him when he visits the Corinthians and finds their collection incomplete, both he and the Corinthians would lose face. For this reason, Paul has sent on an advance party to prepare the Corinthians for his visit, so that they have the collection that they have promised ready in time.

Paul is concerned that it be a willing gift, not a sort of tax. It should be an overflow of grace and love. The willingness of the gift is extremely important and determines its nature and the blessing associated with it. Paul isn't commanding the Corinthians to give.

To command them to give willingly would be to undermine the character that their gift must have. The gift should be an expression of their hearts and a communication of their love and gratitude. However, he is very strongly exhorting them to do so.

An appropriate gift will be self-determined, without reluctance, without external compulsion, and cheerful. There is something about the ideal character of Christian obedience revealed here. Such loving action from the heart is the character of true gift and service. And this is all integral to the logic of grace. God causes his grace to abound to us to the end of our fruitfulness in good works. These good works are works of gratitude, works that flow from the heart. God makes all grace abound to us so that we may have all sufficiency in all things at all times. The repeated alls underline the fullness and the comprehensive character of the grace of God, as do the terms of bound and sufficiency and these sorts of expressions of completeness. God addresses all of our needs in every situation. And this is all so that we might abound in every good work. The fullness and extensiveness of God's grace is answered by the fullness and extensiveness of our freely given good works. These good works are not ways that we earn God's grace, but are ways that we respond to and live out of God's grace. They are the appropriate gratitude that answers to God's prior gift. Good works are necessary for the

[4 : 45] Christian, as they are the very way that we live out of the reality of God's grace and goodness to us. God is scattering his righteousness abroad, providing what the poor need. His righteousness is his covenant-keeping justice, his goodness to his people. And this distribution is what supplies seed to us and the harvest that results. We become the righteousness of God as we become fellow workers with him in this manner. God provides us with what we need to do the good works that he has prepared for us. Grace produces grace.

God's gift of grace to us is a scattering of seed to sowers, involving us in a cycle of grace ourselves. We must become participants in the spread and the growth of grace ourselves, and then we will enjoy the bountiful fruits. Paul argues that the gift of the Corinthians, which arises from the gifts that they themselves have received, will produce a rich and bountiful harvest. Not only will they be providing for the needs of the Jerusalem Christians, they will also be proving themselves fertile soil for the seed of God's grace, as the seed of his grace in themselves produces a bumper crop of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving and the giving of glory to God is what it is all intended to lead to. As a consequence of the Corinthians' generosity, an expression of their thanksgiving for what they have

