

Introduction

Have you ever boasted about someone, and then invited others to come see for themselves? I have done that many times. I have invited people to come hear a guest speaker, and then I have prayed hard about that service and the message to be given. I did not want my boast to be empty or proved wrong. I have boasted about a certain restaurant, and how good their food is. When we have taken someone to that restaurant, you don't want your boast to prove to be wrong, for your sake and also for the restaurant's sake. I think we have all done that and felt that before.

The apostle Paul had boasted to the Macedonians about a gift that they had begun to take a year earlier for the saints in Jerusalem. The section we have been studying is an appeal to the Corinthians to complete their gift. He did not want to show up with some saints from Macedonia and for his boast to have been empty. So, he is writing to encourage them to finish this gracious work, and to be ready when he gets there. The Corinthians had been the first church to begin taking an offering, but things came up and they had not stayed the course. Paul exhorted them, "But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so that there may be also the completion of it by your ability. In Part 1, Paul began by giving them the example of the churches in Macedonia. In Part 2, he gave his exhortation to finish the gracious work they had begun. He told them the purpose of the giving, and how it was going to be administered. In Part 3, we will look at the readiness of the gift, the principle of sowing and reaping, and the results of the gift.

Paul's Appeal to the Corinthians to Give – Part 3

1. Readiness of the Gift (2 Cor 9:1-5)
2. Principle of Sowing and Reaping (2 Cor 9:6-11)
3. Results of the Gift (2 Cor 9:12-15)

(2 Cor 9:1–5) "For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; {2} for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. {3} But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; {4} otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence. {5} So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness."

(2 Cor 9:6-11) "Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. {7} Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. {8} And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; {9} as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever." {10} Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; {11} you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God."

(2 Cor 9:12-15) "For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. {13} Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel

of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, {14} while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. {15} Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

1. Readiness of the Gift (2 Cor 9:1-5)

Paul was confident that the Corinthians would be ready, but he did not want to take any chances, so he wrote and exhorted them to go ahead and prepare the offering. He said it “is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints.” That means that writing them was exceedingly or abundantly beyond what was necessary. Then, he said, “for I know your readiness.” Paul was confident that the Corinthians would have their offering ready, but he still wrote them about it. Paul wanted to make sure that they were ready, and he did not want to assume that it would be ready. Paul did not assume things; he covered all the bases. He did not want a negative surprise when he got there. He wanted to make sure they were ready. The word ready or readiness is used twice, and prepared or unprepared is used three times. He did not want them to be unprepared; he wanted them to be prepared and ready for his visit.

(2 Co 9:1–2) “For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; {2} for I know your **readiness**, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been **prepared** since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.”

Paul was so confident in the Corinthians that he had boasted about them to the Macedonians. He had told them, “Achaia has been prepared since last year.” His boast of the Corinthians stirred up the churches in Macedonia to give. The Corinthians had been the first to begin this gracious offering to the churches in Judea, but they had not finished what they started. Paul now exhorts them to finish and to have the offering ready for when he arrived.

Paul wrote so that they would have the offering ready. He also wrote and told them that he had boasted in them, and he did not want his boast to made empty. He wrote so that both he and the Corinthians would not be put to shame by this confidence and boasting. Paul's reputation and the reputation of the Corinthians are at stake. He said that if any Macedonians come with him, he wants them to have the offering prepared and ready.

(2 Cor 9:3-4) “But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be **prepared**; {4} otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you **unprepared**, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.”

Even though Paul was confident, he thought it necessary to write and urge the brethren to arrange the previously promised bountiful gift, so that it would be ready. The Corinthians had made a promise to take this offering. They had made a commitment, and Paul is urging them to honor their commitment.

(2 Cor 9:5) “So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be **ready** as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”

I think being a people of your word is very important. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to let your yes be yes and your no be no. In Numbers 23:19, Moses wrote that God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. If God tells us something, He will do it.

We can count on God always doing what He says He will do. I believe that is how God wants you and I to be. He wants us to be a people of our word. If we tell someone that we will do something, we should do it.

(Matt 5:37) “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.”

(Num 23:19) “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

I have met many people that tell me that they are going to do something, and they don't do it. I have heard of many different excuses. Some say that they were just thinking out loud and had not made a firm commitment. Some say they got busy and forgot about it. God is not looking for excuses; He is looking for people who will fulfill their vows and do the things that they promise. If you make a commitment, write it down. Put it on your calendar. Write yourself a reminder to do it; keep a “To Do List”. A little organization can help you be a person of your word. When you keep your appointments and do the things that you say you will do, people gain trust in you. They gain confidence in you that you will do what you say. On the other hand, when you do not follow through and do the things that you say you will do, people lose their trust and respect for you. As a leader, I want to gain and maintain the confidence and trust of others, so doing the things that I say that I will do are important. Paul is urging the Corinthians to complete the offering that they promised to take for the saints in Jerusalem, and to be a people of their word.

Paul uses two words that are worth looking at. The first word is bountiful, and this is a segue into his next point, which is the principle of sowing and reaping. Paul is wrapping up his exhortation to prepare their gift, and he is introducing them to his next point. Paul wanted them to prepare a bountiful gift. The Greek word is eulogia (Strong's G2129), which is a compound word. Eu (Strong's G2095) means good or well, and logos (Strong's G3056) means word. Together, it means a good word or a blessing, which is how it is translated twelve of the sixteen occurrences. In this verse, the NASB and KJV translate it as bountiful, and it was a blessing that they had spoken or promised.

(2 Cor 9:5) “So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”

What would prevent them from giving a bountiful gift? One thing that would hinder them would be covetousness. Greed is something that can hinder our generosity towards other. The Greek word is pleonexia (Strong's G4124), and it means to be greedy or covetousness. The two root words are pleion (Strong's G4119), which means much, and echo (Strong's G2192), which means to hold. A person's desire to hoard or hold on to too much can affect their generosity.

In one church that we planted, there was a person that had a problem with hoarding. This person leased storage space to keep extra things. This person's house was so stuffed with things that it was hard to navigate around. Even though the person made good income, this person gave very little to the church. There is a correlation between this greedy desire to hold on to too much and a person's willingness to sow bountifully. God wants us to be good stewards, but He also wants us to keep things in an open hand, and to be willing to give generously.

A quick search on the internet will bring up many articles about the keys to being prepared. Some will give three or four keys, and some give as many as eight keys. There are a few things that they have in agreement. They say that you need a clear goal or objective. Every week I have a clear goal of being prepared for worship and for the message. Karen has a clear goal of being prepared to lead us in prayer, and to have a fellowship meal prepared. Tom has a goal of being ready for the opening. To be ready, you should have an idea of what you are preparing for. Paul had a clear idea of what he was asking them to be prepared for; it was the offering that they were going to give to the saints in Jerusalem.

A second important factor is a plan. I spend time planning the worship. I pray and plan the themes and find songs that flow together. My plan is to have the worship list and songs picked out by Monday so that I can pull song sheets for Chad and I, prepare the bulletin, and practice all week. Karen's plan for prayer is to pray during the week for direction, and for scriptures about the topic we will be praying about. Her plan includes communicating that to me so that I can prepare the bulletin, and to also communicate to everyone so that people can come prepared to pray about the topic. Her plan for the fellowship meal includes planning the menu, buying any foods that we will need, and then preparing those foods. Usually, she will start cooking and preparing one or two days in advance. It takes planning to come prepared. Paul gave the Corinthians a plan. He had written to them in 1 Corinthians 16 to put aside money towards the offering on the first day of the week, which is when they met. He wanted them to have the gift ready for when he arrived. His plan also included who would deliver the gift to Jerusalem.

(1 Co 16:1–4) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. {2} On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. {3} When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; {4} and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.”

A third ingredient to being prepared is time. It takes time to prepare, and every goal is different. We must allot sufficient time to prepare. Most sermons take between twenty and thirty hours to prepare, so if I want to be properly prepared, I should not start on Thursday. I need to spend the necessary time to be prepared. Paul wrote in advance and told the Corinthians to start putting aside money so that it would be ready when he got there. He was giving them plenty of time to get the offering prepared.

Another common element in being prepared is to consider any obstacles or difficulties that might be encountered and to deal with them. Paul encouraged the Corinthians not to allow covetousness to prevent them from being ready. He had considered the things that could affect the goal of having this bountiful gift ready, and he was addressing it.

(2 Cor 9:5) “So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”

Experts give a number of other things to being prepared. These include having the right tools. Anyone involved in construction knows the importance of having the right tools with you when you go to a jobsite. Another one is having a cheerleader or person to encourage you. Paul was the encourager for the Corinthians. I am sure that Titus was also an encourager. Another common ingredient is prioritizing the things that need to be done. I would lump this in with planning. God wants us to be people of our word, and to be prepared for the things that He has called us to do.

2. Principle of Sowing and Reaping (2 Cor 9:6-11)

Paul wants their gift to be bountiful, and he does not want their gift to be affected by covetousness. He wants it to be a generous offering. Then, he shared the principle of sowing and reaping with them. He said, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” This is a spiritual principle that God established, and it is first mentioned in Genesis 8:22. After the flood, Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. It was a soothing aroma to the Lord, and the Lord said, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.” Then, He said, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” As long as the earth remains, there will be seasons, days, and seedtime and harvest. At seedtime, we sow into the fields, and at harvest, we reap what we have sown.

(2 Cor 9:6) “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

(Ge 8:22) “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

There are a number of different principles that affect our ability to harvest. In the New Testament, Jesus taught the parable of the soils. The seeds sown on the road, in the rocky soil, and in the thorny soil, did not bear much. The seed sown on good soil produced a bountiful crop. We know that there must be good soil. We know that the crops need to be watered, and in the droughts, there is not much harvest. The principle of sowing and reaping is just another principle about harvesting. All of these principles are true and are interrelated. In the principle of sowing and reaping, the amount of seeds that you sow is directly proportional to the amount of crops that you harvest. If I plant one tomato seed, I will get tomatoes from one plant. For illustration purposes, let's say that we will get thirty tomatoes per plant. My research shows me that between twenty and two hundred are possible per plant, depending on the variety and other conditions. For this example, we will use thirty tomatoes per plant. If I plant one tomato seed, I can expect thirty tomatoes. If I plant ten tomato plants, I can expect to get three hundred tomatoes. We will reap proportionately to what we sow. If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly, and if we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully.

People have an easy time understanding the physical principle, however, people have a far more difficult time applying this to other areas of our lives. This principle is not just an agricultural principle, it is a principle that affects every area of our lives. If you sow peace, you will reap peace. If you sow grace and forgiveness, you will reap grace and forgiveness. If you sow bitterness, you will reap bitterness. If you sow financially into the kingdom of God, you will reap financially. If you sow bountifully into the kingdom, you will reap bountifully from the kingdom of God. It is a spiritual principle and God vowed that this principle would be in place while the earth remains.

In one church I planted there were a number of poor people, and they did not give. There was a mindset that people should give to them because they did not have anything, and that they were exempt from giving. I taught them that everything belongs to God, and we are merely stewards. God wants us to take a portion of what we have and sow it into the kingdom of God. We are to give according to our ability, and from a cheerful heart. I taught that if we sow bountifully, we

will reap bountifully. I believe that teaching people to give bountifully is important so that we can reap bountifully. We do not give so that we can get more. Our motivation should be to honor God with our offerings. But God makes it very clear that when we honor God with our wealth, he fills our barns with plenty and our vats with new wine. When we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully. And if we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly.

(Pr 3:9–10) “Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; {10} so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to sow bountifully, but he also balanced this with three other principles of giving. First, we need to give as we have purposed in our hearts. We should not give because of outside pressure. The Greek word is *proaireo*, which means to choose for oneself. Every person needs to give by their own choice or purpose. Their giving should not be done because of compulsion. And, their giving should not be done grudgingly. The Greek word is *lype* (Strong's G3077), which means with sorrow, heaviness, or grief. God does not want us to give grudgingly, or with a heavy heart, but with a cheerful heart.

(2 Cor 9:7) “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Next, Paul told the Corinthians that God was able to make all grace abound to them, so that they would have sufficiency in everything, and that they would have an abundance for every good deed.

(2 Co 9:8–9) “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; {9} as it is written, “He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever.”

In chapter 8, Paul shared the example of the Macedonians. They gave by the grace of God, and Paul is now reminding the Corinthians that God is able to make all grace abound to them also. The Macedonians gave with an abundance of joy; they were cheerful givers, which is how Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to be. The Macedonians gave out of their poverty, and Paul is now telling the Corinthians that God scatters abroad and gives to the poor. The Macedonians gave according to their ability. They gave by faith, even beyond their ability. They gave on their own accord. They did not give under compulsion, grudgingly, or being pressured. They gave as they had purposed with their own hearts. Seventh, they took advantage of the opportunity to sow into the kingdom. The Macedonians had a good understanding of giving, and their giving is an example to all of us today.

Paul reminded the Corinthians where our supply comes from. He wrote, “Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality.” If they will sow bountifully, God will multiply their seed for sowing, or their ability to give even more. If they will sow bountifully, they will be enriched in everything for all liberality. The end result of their giving will produce thanksgivings to God.

(2 Cor 9:10-11) “Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; {11} you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”

The mindset of many today is to get more so that they can spend more on themselves. They want to get more so that they can have more earthly possessions. Notice what Paul said, “He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” God would multiply their seed for sowing, or giving more. God was not multiplying their seed so that they could spend more on themselves. God was going to multiply their seed for sowing.

Jesus taught that we should not be trying to store up treasures here on earth, but in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal. Then, He made a very important statement, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Too many of our hearts are set on earthly treasures rather than on eternal treasures.

(Matt 6:19–21) “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. {20} “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; {21} for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The apostle Paul told Timothy to instruct the rich people in Ephesus not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God. He instructed the rich to do good, be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. Again, the emphasis is not to fix our eyes on the things of the world, but on God, and to lay up treasures in heaven.

(1 Tim 6:17–19) “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. {18} *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, {19} storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

3. Results of the Gift (2 Cor 9:12-15)

Paul finishes his exhortation on finishing this offering for the poor in Jerusalem by telling what the end results will be if they do it. The first and immediate result will be that the needs of the saints in Jerusalem will be fully supplied. That is important and very practical. It has nothing to do with their seed by increased, and storing up treasures in heaven. Sometimes, our focus just simply needs to be on meeting the needs of others.

(2 Co 9:12) “For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.”

The church in Jerusalem shared with one another. They sold property and possessions and met one another's needs. Luke records that they were sharing them all, as anyone might have need.

(Ac 2:44–45) “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; {45} and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

In Acts 6, the church was feeding the widows in the church. They were meeting practical needs. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he instructs family members to take care of the widows in their family, and those that do not have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

(1 Ti 5:3–8) “Honor widows who are widows indeed; {4} but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.... {8} But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

John wrote that one of the signs of a true believer is that he loves his brother. Then, he wrote that if you have the world's good and see a brother in need and close our hearts against him, we are not abiding in God's love. The church should take care of the needy, particularly the needy in the church. The first result of the Corinthians finishing this offering will be that the needs of the saints will be met, and that is a very important thing in God's eyes.

(1 Jn 3:17) “But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

The second result of this offering will be many thanksgivings to God. Because of the proof given by this ministry, God will be glorified. God will be glorified through their obedience to their confession of the gospel and for their liberality.

(2 Co 9:12-13) “For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. {13} Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,”

The third result of this offering would be a bonding between the believers in Corinth and the saints in Jerusalem. Paul said that the saints in Jerusalem would be praying on their behalf and yearning for them because of the surpassing grace of God in them. Why would someone pray or yearn for others? It is because they have a bond. The gift that Corinth was going to send was going to connect them together.

(2 Cor 9:14) “while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.”

In Proverbs 18, God tells us that a man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men. In this case, the gift that the church of Corinth was sending was going to make room for them in the hearts of the saints in Jerusalem. Their gift of love was going to bond them together.

(Pr 18:16) “A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.”

Paul concludes this exhortation by thanking God for His indescribable gift. The Corinthians were going to give a generous offering to the saints in Judea. Paul is reminding them that they recipients of God's indescribable gift, which is Jesus. Through Jesus' sacrifice, our sins have been forgiven, and our fellowship with God has been restored. Through the indescribable gift of Jesus, we have a future and a hope. Through this indescribable gift, we have an inheritance reserved for us in heaven that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away (1 Pet 1:4). Through this indescribable gift, we have the grace to give to others, knowing that our own needs will also be provided for by God. We should all give thanks for this indescribable gift.

(2 Cor 9:15) “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

Conclusion and Applications

God wants us to be finishers of the things that we do. The Corinthians began a giving campaign to send an offering to the saints in Judea, but things had come up and they had not completed the gracious work. Paul had told other churches, particularly in Macedonia, that the Corinthians were taking an offering, and the other churches followed their example. Paul did not want his boasting of the Corinthians to be empty, particularly if brethren from the Macedonia churches accompanied him to Corinth. To prevent any embarrassment and to make sure that they finished what they started, he wrote them a long exhortation. He shared with them the example of the Macedonians, and we learn a lot about giving from their example. We learn that giving should be from the heart, not something that is forced on people. Giving is possible because of God's grace. Giving should be done with a cheerful heart, not grudgingly. Giving should be done according to our ability. Giving should be done by faith. Giving is an opportunity that we should take advantage of.

Paul wrote the Corinthians about the purpose of the gift. It was not to afflict them or cause them hardship; it was to meet the needs of the saints in Jerusalem who were in need. Paul and the early church were very careful about how they handled money. They took precautions so that no one could discredit them in their administration. There was not one person handling the money, but a team of people, who were led by Titus. The churches appointed someone to go with Titus, and Paul also chose someone. Everything was to be done in a way that glorified God.

Paul also taught about the principle of sowing and reaping. He wanted them to reap bountifully, so he encouraged them to sow bountifully. Our giving is like a crop that we plant. If we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully, and God will increase our seed for sowing.

The end result of this offering that Paul was exhorting them to complete was that God would be glorified. The saints in Jerusalem would give thanks to God. They would have a yearning for the saints in Corinth, and it would help connect them to one another.

Closing Prayer

Father God, help us to be a generous people. Help us to have the right attitudes about giving. May we sow bountifully into your kingdom, so that we can reap bountifully. May we show our concern for others by meeting their needs. Help us to take advantage of opportunities that come our way. Help us to take precautions so that no one can ever discredit us about our administration of money. Help us to be good stewards of Your money. Father God, may You be honored and glorified in all that we do, including our giving and handling of money. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

