

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Chapter 9

The Collection for Christians in Jerusalem

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

9:1 ministry for the saints. A reference to the Judean relief fund (cf. 8:4). This is not the “Word and Sacrament” ministry conducted by presbyters (pastors) but “social ministry” as determined in Antioch (Ac 11:29), sanctioned by the apostles, and supported by the churches. (TLSB)

9:2 Achaia. Paul did not write this Letter for the Corinthians alone (1:1). Other churches in this province will be joining in the relief effort. (CSB)

last year. The Corinthians had earlier shown such readiness to participate in the relief effort that he had been using their willingness to spur on the Macedonians. (TLSB)

9:3 brothers. Certainly the two brothers mentioned in 8:18, 22 and likely also Titus. (TLSB)

9:4 humiliated. If no generous collection is ready for Paul on his next visit, he will be exposed as a bearer of false witness to any Macedonians who may accompany him. (TLSB)

9:5 the gift you have promised. Lit, “the blessing you pledged ahead of time.” (TLSB)

willing gift, not as an exaction. Let the Corinthians’ gift be like God’s own blessing that wells up freely from His heart, not something wrung from them by Paul’s vanity to avoid loss of face. (TLSB)

exaction. Lit, “covetousness.” (TLSB)

9:1–5 Because good intentions sometimes do not get acted on, Paul sends three representatives to Corinth to offer gentle encouragement to deliver what was promised. The Lord has representatives to encourage us today as well. E.g., we should listen to those who gently remind us to keep our baptismal vows. • We offer thanks to You, Lord, that You did not count the cost when You sent Your Son. For His sake, You watch over Your promises to keep them. Lord, drown my old self in the waters of Baptism day by day, that my new self may truly please You in all things. Amen. (TLSB)

The Cheerful Giver

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” 10 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 every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

9:6 Probably a well-known proverb—but not taken from the OT book of Proverbs. (CSB)

Paul quotes and applies folk wisdom to disclose another facet of God's bountiful grace. Not only does He freely pardon our sins and adopt us as sons and daughters, but He also promises rich reward as we keep His commands, however imperfectly, and echo His own generosity, however faintly (with what C. S. Lewis called "gift-love" to God in *The Four Loves*). "Works and troubles do not merit justification, but other payments.... The fulfilling of the Law earns a reward, for a reward properly relates to the Law. Yet we should be mindful of the Gospel, which freely offers justification for Christ's sake. We neither obey the Law, nor can obey it, before we have been reconciled to God, justified, and reborn. Nor would fulfilling the Law please God, unless we were accepted because of faith. People are accepted because of faith" (Ap V 246–47). (TLSB)

Men will be rewarded in proportion to what, from love to Christ, they do for His cause. (CB)

9:7 See Lk 6:38. (CSB)

God loves a cheerful giver. Through generosity, God's adopted children give joy to their heavenly Father by displaying His image and likeness. "Truly good works should be done willingly, or from a voluntary spirit, by those whom God's Son has made free" (FC SD IV 18). (TLSB)

9:8 all grace abound. This bounteous God can and will richly bestow on the Corinthians the capacity for generosity in surplus measure. (TLSB)

abound ... abound. In Jesus, it is always more and never less. Even when in reduced circumstances, Christians will always be given opportunity for doing good. (TLSB)

sufficiency. Gk *autarcheia*, lit, "self rule." As the Gospel comes to Greek culture and starts to transform it, Paul picks up this familiar Stoic word and fills it with new content. Stoics acquired sufficiency from their own inner resources, but Christians receive sufficiency as a pure gift of God. (TLSB)

all things ... all times ... all that you need. Through his abounding grace, God can enable each Christian to abound in generous deeds (see v. 11). (CSB)

9:9 He has distributed ... forever. Ps 112:9 praises one who fears the Lord, who practices lavish generosity toward needy neighbors, and who is among those pronounced blessed "for their deeds follow follow them" (Rv 14:13). This righteous person of the OT is a preview of the giver described in 8:9. (TLSB)

9:10 harvest. God, who enables farmers to sow and reap, will enable His children to do good works and will prosper their efforts. (TLSB)

your righteousness. Not the basis of your good standing before God, but the consequence of exercising the status you now have in His eyes. (TLSB)

9:11 You ... enriched in every way. Cf Ac 20:35; Rv 19:8. (TLSB)

generous ... will produce thanksgiving to God. Relief is given and fellowship between Gentile and Jew is strengthened, leading to the further good of abundant thanksgiving to God at the Lord's Supper and elsewhere. (TLSB)

9:12 *service.* Lit, "liturgy," i.e., public work, done for the common good. "The term *leitourgia* agrees well with the ministry. For it is an old word, ordinarily used in public civil administrations. To the Greeks it meant public burdens, such as tribute, the expense of equipping a fleet, or similar things" (Ap XXIV 81) (TLSB)

saints. The impoverished believers in Judea. (TLSB)

not only supplying the needs of the saints. The effect of generous giving on the part of the Corinthians will extend beyond Jerusalem, the destination of their gift, to the church as a whole, causing widespread prayer and praise to be offered (see vv. 13–14). (CSB)

thanksgivings to God. Grace circles back to God's throne as our gift to Him. (TLSB)

9:13 Paul pictures the Jewish Christians in Judea rejoicing over God's action to reconcile Jew and Gentile in Christ. They glorify God for relieving their needs through the generosity of the Corinthians (and other Gentile believers) and for this expression of fellowship in the worldwide Church. (TLSB)

9:14 *the surpassing grace God has given you.* Displayed in this unselfish demonstration of their loving concern for fellow believers who are in desperate need. (CSB)

In 2Co, Paul uses all the nuances of the word "grace": God's favor for Christ's sake, His gifts-in-grace to them, their generosity to others, and the churches' gracious thanks. God's favor returns full circle to the One who first sowed it (cf v 6). (TLSB)

9:15 *indescribable gift.* His own Son (Jn 3:16). God is the first giver; he first selflessly gives himself to us in the person of his Son, and all true Christian giving is our response of gratitude for this gift that is beyond description (cf. 8:9; 1Jn 4:9–11). (CSB)

Paul bursts into doxology for the whole range of God's generous provision, including the content of v 14 and esp the fountainhead of it all (8:9). (TLSB)

9:6–15 Paul urges the Corinthians to go with the flow of God's self-giving in Christ by giving themselves to others, so that the downward and outward movement of grace comes full circle in an ascending symphony of thanksgiving. Seeing things in an earthly, me-first way is miserly and petty. Instead, we should open our hands to receive from God and extend them to give to our neighbor. We marvel that in Jesus it is always more and never less and rejoice that God's gifts multiply as we receive and share them. • Lord, open and widen our narrow hearts to You, to Your children, and to all. Amen. (TLSB)