

**LESSON 16**  
**2 Corinthians 9:1-5**

- 1) Preliminary matters.
  - i) Some commentators suggest that the first five verses of this chapter are a fragment of another letter that was placed here accidentally or intentionally.
    - (a) The suggestion is based on the fact that the “for” with which the chapter begins indicates a logical connection with the end of chapter 8, and that there appears to be no such connection.
    - (b) It is further suggested that this section, or the letter from which it came, is addressed to the whole district of Achaia (v. 2) rather than to the church in Corinth.
    - (c) Finally, we are told that the matters discussed in these verses are an unnecessary repetition of what had already been said in chapter 8.
  - ii) Once again we are confronted by a theory for which there is absolutely no external or traditional support and the reasons given are too weak to support the theory.
    - (a) There is in fact a very close connection between the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9.
    - (b) In fact, some suggest that if the division between the chapters had not been so misplaced (recall that they are not inspired), no one would ever have thought to separate 9:1-5 from 8:6-24.
      - (i) Paul is sending Titus and two others to oversee the collection at Corinth, and he requests that they be given an appropriate reception (8:16-24); for there is no need for him to write telling them to give of their means for the Christians in Jerusalem since he knows that they had already undertaken the initiative for this collection the previous year; accordingly he is sending on the three delegates to see that everything is in readiness for his arrival when he comes to receive the funds collected (9:1-5).
      - (ii) As for the mention of Achaia, some seem to have forgotten the manner in which this letter was addressed (1:1) included those in the whole of Achaia.
      - (iii) The repetitions are more apparent than real; Paul’s purpose in this chapter is to stress in a manner that he has not done before the blessings that flow from generous giving.
      - (iv) Finally, one commentator suggests that verses 3-5 of chapter nine would be unintelligible if they were not explained by 8:16-24.
- 2) **2 Corinthians 9:1-2** For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: <sup>2</sup> for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them.
  - i) The ministry that Paul has in mind, the care of needy and distressed Christians, may be traced back to Acts 6 and the selection of brethren to attend to the needs of the Grecian widows.

- (a) The appointment of these men did not remove or alleviate the responsibility of fellow-believers contributing to the needs of less fortunate Christians as this context and numerous other passages in the New Testament teach.
  - (b) It did remove the responsibility for the organization and supervision of distribution from the shoulders of the apostles.
  - (c) This duty of providing for the care of the needy belongs to every Christian who is materially able to participate, no matter how small.
  - (d) Paul, having lived among them for some 18 months (Acts 18:11) was very familiar with their ability.
    - (i) Their readiness and willingness was something of which Paul had boasted to the Macedonians.
      - (ii) The present tense indicates that his boasting was not something long past, but was continuing into the present..
        - a. Paul's glorying was not contrary to his assertion that he gloried only in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31), and his injunction to others to do the same (2 Cor. 10:17); Paul's glorying here is neither in men not in their accomplishments, but in the grace of God manifested in the lives of men.
        - b. He has already gloried in the liberality of the Macedonians, but in doing so he attributed everything to "the grace of God that hath been given in the churches of Macedonia."
        - c. True Christian giving flows from the prior giving of God's grace, and Paul's glorying concerning the Corinthians is essentially a glorying in the goodness of God.
    - ii) In Paul's telling the Macedonians of the Corinthians' preparation and the Corinthians of the Macedonians' liberality, he was not playing one against the other.
      - (a) Such would be contrary to everything for which Paul stood.
      - (b) The situation that had arisen had been determined by the course of events: the previous year the Corinthians had shown their enthusiasm by expressing their willingness, which acted as a spur to the Macedonians. However, unlike the Macedonians, they had not followed through to completion. The zeal of the Macedonians should now in turn be a spur to the Corinthians to complete that which they had begun before Paul arrived.
- 3) **2 Corinthians 9:3-4** <sup>3</sup> But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: <sup>4</sup> lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence.
- i) From what Paul now says, it is plain that he was assured that his boasting on behalf of the Corinthians would not be proved hollow, except possibly in one respect – the completion of the collection that they had planned and their consequent readiness for his arrival.
    - (a) He seems not to fear their failure to give as much as their being dilatory for lack of organization.

- (b) He limits his concern to this fact.
  - ii) Paul sees the possibility that some of the Macedonians might accompany him to Corinth, most likely designated to travel with the money collected by the Macedonians.
    - (a) This may in fact be a Semitic idiom actually meaning that a number of the Macedonians would in fact arrive with him. See John 12:32; 1 John 2:28.
    - (b) If so, Paul's tarrying by sending an emissary ahead of his arrival may also have been to permit the Macedonians to complete the arrangements for their gift, specifically the selection of those who would accompany their gift.
  - iii) It would be most unfortunate, and a source of embarrassment to Paul and to the Corinthians, if the Macedonians who had earlier been inspired by the planning and purposing of the Corinthians should now arrive and find the collection in a state of disorganization.
  - iv) It was this concern, as Paul tells us in v. 5, that led him to send the two brethren in advance so that the collection might be effectively supervised.
    - (a) Likely neither of the brethren were Macedonians which would have rendered pointless any fear of Paul that the Macedonians who came with him to Corinth would discover unpreparedness on the part of the Corinthians.
    - (b) It is plain that Paul intended to visit Corinth, and, from other passages that this was to be his third visit (cf. 10:2; 12:14; 13:1f).
- 4) **2 Corinthians 9:5** <sup>5</sup> I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.
- i) We have already learned (8:20) that prudence dictated that Paul should not organize the collection at Corinth in person in order that his slanderers might be silenced.
  - ii) Paul now explains another important reason for his being preceded by Titus and the two brethren who accompanied him.
    - (a) The brethren were sent ahead so that all would be settled and in good order in anticipation of Paul's arrival.
    - (b) In this way the boasts that he had made on behalf of the Corinthians would be seen, especially by the Macedonians, to be justified.
    - (c) The Corinthians would prove themselves to be both equal to their reputation and faithful to their promises, having completed the enterprise to which they had set their hands during the previous year.
  - iii) By saying that the gift is to characteristic of a blessing (bounty) and not of covetousness (extortion), Paul means that it is to come from an expansive and not a grudging spirit: their giving is to be expressive of a desire to be a blessing to others and not of stinginess which is preoccupied with selfish grasping and gain rather than with the needs of the unfortunate.
  - iv) There are at least four ways in which a man can give a gift.
    - (a) He may give as a duty.

- (i) He gives in the same manner in which he settles an account or pays his taxes.
- (ii) He gives with such bad grace as such a grim duty that it would almost be better had he not done it at all.
- (b) He may give to find self-satisfaction.
  - (i) He thinks far more of the pleasant feeling that he has when he gives the gift than he does of the feelings of the person who receives it.
  - (ii) They have no desire to help the unfortunate; they desire to have the warm glow that they receive.
  - (iii) Such giving is in essence selfish; such people give to themselves rather than to the recipient.
- (c) He may give from motives of prestige.
  - (i) The real source of such giving is not love, but pride.
  - (ii) The gift is not given to help, but to glorify the giver.
  - (iii) The chances are that it would not be given at all if it were not seen and praised.
  - (iv) It may even be that it is given to accumulate credit with God, as if that were possible. Matt. 6:1.
- (d) None of these ways is wholly bad because the gift is at least made.
  - (i) But the real way to give is under love's compulsion, to give because one cannot help giving, to give because the sight of a soul in need wakens a desire that cannot be stilled.
  - (ii) This is in fact to give in God's way; it was because he so loved the world that he gave His son.
- v) Paul desires that the Corinthians give in this manner, and in the next section provides eloquent description of the blessedness of Christian liberality.