

"Investing in Eternity"

Part 6

2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

Introduction: Tonight in our study of 2 Corinthians we are stepping into chapter 9. Now the last time we were in our study we looked at 8:16-24 and it was in these verses that Paul pointed to the integrity of the 3 men whom he would send to gather the money which was being given to help the saints at Jerusalem. Two of the men were unnamed and they would accompany Titus on the journey to collect the finances. In those verses we also looked at how the finances are to be handled within the church and this was seen in 2 verses.

2 Corinthians 8:20-21

²⁰ *Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:*

²¹ *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Paul was very careful to never give anyone the opportunity to bring an accusation against him or those who would gather the money. That is why he chose to send 3 men to gather the collection.

Now as we step into chapter 9 tonight Paul will get back to the subject of giving and the promise which the Corinthians had made.

I. **The Preparations**

Notice 2 Corinthians 9:1

Here in this verse Paul reminds the Corinthians of the confidence which he had in them. He tells them it was not really necessary to write to them about this subject of giving. Why was it not necessary?

Notice 2 Corinthians 9:2

The word "forwardness" here means "eagerness". When Paul was with the Corinthians a year before this letter was written he was able to see within them the eagerness to give. He knew it was real and so for that reason he was confident that they would do what they had promised to do.

Their eagerness was so strong that Paul boasted of it to those of Macedonia by telling them the saints at Corinth were enthusiastic about giving to the need at Jerusalem. The zeal of the Corinthians had stirred up an excitement within the Macedonians and they also desired to give to the need.

Application:

When I read these 2 verses I cannot help but see the importance of a positive attitude. The zeal in the Corinthians was contagious and it sparked other saints to give to the cause. This is why it is so important for us to have a positive attitude in all that we do. There are some believers who give the impression that they have been baptized in vinegar.

Years ago I met a believer who, when he went to church, always desired to come away feeling miserable. He wanted the preacher to deliver a message that made him feel really low. This man's personality reflected his desire. I still see him once in a while and he is never cheerful or positive. He may not realize but this harms the man's testimony.

1 Peter 3:14-15

¹⁴ But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Peter wrote to those who were under great persecution and they were expected to have a joyful attitude. We know this because they were to be ready to give an answer for the hope that others could see within them. Let me show you what a negative attitude can do combined with a lack of faith.

Numbers 13:30-14:4

³⁰ And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

³¹ But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

³² And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

³³ And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

² And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

³ And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

⁴ And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Notice 2 Corinthians 9:3-4

Paul made the decision to send Titus and the 2 other disciples to Corinth to collect the money before he went. Paul was concerned that someone from Macedonia may desire to travel with him and if they arrived and the collection was not pulled together then there would be embarrassment all around. He had already boasted of their zeal and therefore he wanted to make sure they backed up their zeal with action. The early arrival of Titus and the others would give them opportunity to pull everything together. Now I need to show you the instructions which Paul gave them a year earlier and then we will better understand what he is saying here.

1 Corinthians 16:1-5

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

² Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

³ And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

⁴ And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

⁵ Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

Here in these verses we can better understand what it is that Paul is writing about in 2 Corinthians 9. Now the point I want you to see is that he suggested that they were to lay the money aside the first day of the week every week. He instructed them in this way because he knew that if they waited to give when he came they would not give as much. There would be things which would come up that would absorb the money. But if they gave it weekly then it would be there when Paul showed up.

Looking at what is written in 2 Corinthians 9 it appears that some of them had neglected to lay up the money the first day of the week every week. That is why Paul is sending the 3 men ahead. Let me show you something else.

2 Corinthians 8:11-12

¹¹ *Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

¹² *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Looking at these verses also gives the appearance that the Corinthians had neglected to follow the instructions which Paul had given.

Application:

Let me just say that when a need comes before us or an opportunity to serve God in some way and we know that God is moving our hearts to step into the opportunity, then let us be quick to move. We must not delay for a couple of reasons:

1. The opportunity will not always be there.
2. The zeal that we have at the moment will not always be there.

Something else will come up in life and the opportunity will pass us by and the zeal will diminish.

Many years ago when blacksmiths were working with red hot metal they developed a statement. They used to say, "STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT". This meant that when the red hot steel was pulled from the forge it had to be hammered immediately because once it cooled it also hardened. While it was hot it was shapeable and pliable. It is the very same way within our hearts. When opportunity comes by and our hearts are set on fire by God we must move. If we delay our hearts will grow cold and hard toward the situation. When God lights a fire within our hearts we must act to keep it burning.

Let me show you what happens when a heart grows cold.

Mark 14:53-54, 66-68

⁵³ *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.*

⁵⁴ *And **Peter followed him afar off**, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and **warmed himself** at the fire.*

⁶⁶ *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:*

⁶⁷ *And when she saw **Peter warming himself**, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.*

⁶⁸ *But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.*

Peter followed Christ afar off and he grew cold and when the opportunity came to stand for Jesus he could not do it but instead he denied the Lord.

Notice 2 Corinthians 9:5

Here in this verse Paul makes it very clear that he did not want the Corinthians to be pressured into giving. He wants their gift to be a matter of willingness not pressure from the outside. He wanted the money collected before he arrived because he did not want the money to be given because he was there. Let me give you some lessons from these verses:

1. **To give because someone pressures you is not a reason to give.**

People should never be pressured to give. No one should try to entice you to give. If we were to give because someone is applying pressure then we are giving for the wrong reason. Our gifts are to be given willingly. If our giving is not willingly then it is not an investment in eternity.

2. **When God's people make a promise we must do our best to follow through with it.**

The Corinthians had made the promise over a year before and Paul was really counting on their gift to not only help the saints at Jerusalem but to also be an encouragement to others.

When we sign up to do something for the Lord we must do our best to see it through. When we sign up to serve in the church and we do not hold up our end it does several things:

- a. **It makes someone carry more of the load.**

When we say we are going to do something then there are people counting on us to do what we promised. If we quit then it place more of the load on someone else. It has been said

that 10% of the people do 100% of the work within the church. This is often true but it should not be that way. We should be concerned enough for our church and the others here to do all we can to help out.

In the day which we live in it is very difficult to find a solid church which stands for the Truth and has love and unity as is found here at Claysburg. We should all desire to do all we can to preserve what we have here. This is our safe haven and it is the place where we come to be taught and trained in the Word. For this reason all of us should be willing to be committed to serving. Let me ask you some questions, "IF THIS CHURCH CEASED TO EXIST WHERE WOULD YOU GO?" Here is another question, "IF YOU DID NOT HAVE THIS CHURCH FAMILY WHERE WOULD YOU TURN WHEN FACED WITH A TRIAL?"

The point I want you to see is that what we have here is priceless and it is rare in our day and so when we have an opportunity to serve and we promise to fill a position we should do it with zeal and be willing to come along side of others and help them carry the load.

b. **It discourages others.**

When people do not keep their promises to serve it is a discouragement to others who are watching. When others see you sign up and then with a joyful heart do your best as you serve that encourages others to get involved and it encourages others who are already involved to do their best. I have seen people quit for one reason or another right in the middle of their service and it is a huge let down.

c. **It teaches the young people that commitment is not important.**

We live in a day when a person's promise means nothing. People have little respect for promises and therefore we have a generation of children that are growing up with very few examples of commitment to follow. The Bible is very clear that we are to be true to our word.

James 5:12

¹² *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: **but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay;** lest ye fall into condemnation.*

To stay true to our promises is one of the ways in which we teach our children the value of commitment. To work through the difficulties and the trials which often accompany our commitments teaches our young people the importance of staying true to your promises.

d. **It robs you of eternal reward.**

Someday we shall stand before the Lord and we will be held accountable for the promises which we have made.

Matthew 12:36

³⁶ *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, **they shall give account** thereof in the day of judgment.*

As we follow through with our commitments there will be rewards in heaven.

Conclusion:

The Corinthians had promised to give to the need in Jerusalem and there were people who were depending upon their gift. If they did not give God would provide another way but they would miss out on a blessing. Let me leave you with a thought. There are opportunities which come before us to serve and we must not take them lightly.

Esther 4:13-14

¹³ *Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.*

¹⁴ *For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*