

**The Necessity of the Delegation**

**2 Corinthians 9:1-5**

**Part Two**

As you know we have for 20 years co-labored with Hamadera Bible Church in Osaka, Japan. So it should not be surprising to anyone in this congregation that in the midst of the recent humanitarian crisis that is continuing to unfold within Japan, we are once again joining with Hamadera Bible Church to do what we can to advance the cause of Christ.

And what specifically are we doing? We have over the past several weeks been asking you to consider what the Lord might have you to give, toward an offering that will be delivered to that church in the care of their elders, Shuji Kondo and Daisuke Okada.

And what would be our hope for this offering as it is distributed by them? Our hope is that God will use our offering, not only to relieve the physical suffering of the Japanese people, but most importantly that God might use our offering in partnership with Hamadera Bible Church to advance the cause of Christ within the great nation of Japan.

So how are we doing? I once again have the joy of announcing to you that the grace of giving that had been given to the churches of Macedonia according to **2 Corinthians 8:1-7** has been given to us. And the life of Christ, who is the giver according to **2 Corinthians 8:8-10**, is flowing through us. And how do I know this? I know this because you have been responsive to our request, which is exactly what we should expect when the grace of giving is present and the life of Christ is flowing according to **2 Corinthians 8:11-15**.

So how responsive have you been? As of last Sunday our congregation has now given \$45,000 dollars toward this offering. So how much longer will we continue this offering? This is the last Sunday that we will officially be collecting money.

So, what will be the total of this offering when it is completed? I have no idea. But I do know that God has worked among us in a similar way as He worked among the churches of Achaia and Macedonia when those churches, having received the grace of giving and having expressed the life of Christ,

responded to Paul's request to give toward a collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem.

And this once again brings us back to our study in 2 Corinthians and more specifically to Paul's ongoing discussion regarding that particular collection. And where are we specifically within this discussion?

We are now considering the delegation that was responsible for completing and transporting the collection from the churches of Achaia and Macedonia to the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. So, what did Paul spell out for the Corinthians about this delegation?

Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5 spelled out for the Corinthians why the delegation that he had sent to them that preceded his visit to them was necessary. And what was the first reason he gave?

The first reason he gave was that Paul believed that this delegation that he had sent was necessary because it would protect him from the accusation that he or one of his associates was planning to use the collection to line their own pockets (2 Corinthians 8:16-24). Or in other words, to protect them from the accusation they were planning to use the collection for some purpose other than the purpose for which it had been collected. We saw this last week as we examined **2 Corinthians 8:16-24**. But this was not only the reason why Paul considered this delegation necessary. There was a second reason.

And this brings us to **2 Corinthians 9:1-5** the passage that we will be considering this morning. So now let me read this passage for you and see if we can isolate this second reason.

**“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.”** So now having read these verses, what was the second reason why Paul felt that this delegation that he had sent to the Corinthians was necessary?

The second reason that Paul gave was that Paul believed that this delegation that he had sent was necessary to ensure that the previously promised gift would be collected before he arrived (2 Corinthians 9:1-5).

So let us now look at these verses more carefully to see if this is not so and we will begin with **verse 1**. And what did Paul say in **verse 1**? **“For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints.”** So, what did Paul mean by this?

When Paul told the Corinthians that it was superfluous for him to write them about “this ministry to the saints,” he meant it was unnecessary for him to write them about this collection. So now let me ask you this question. Why would Paul have said this?

Paul explained why he said what he said in **verse 1**, in **verse 2**. So let us now begin to look at **verse 2**.

So how did this verse begin? It began with these words, **“for I know your readiness.”** So why did Paul believe that it was superfluous for him to write to them about **“this ministry to the saints,”** or in other words to write to them about this collection for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem? It was because he knew of their **“readiness,”** and because he already knew of their readiness, writing anything more to them about this collection in his mind would have been superfluous.

So how convinced was he of their readiness? Let us continue to read **2 Corinthians 9:2**. And what did Paul say? **“For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians.”**

Paul was so convinced of the Corinthians’ readiness to give toward the collection that he told them that he had been boasting about their readiness to the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 9:2).

And what was the substance of Paul's boasting to the Macedonians concerning the Corinthians? The substance of Paul's boasting was that the Corinthians had been prepared to give to the collection for a year (2 Corinthians 9:2). This was made very clear at the end of **verse 2** when he specifically told the Corinthians this very thing.

But what did Paul mean by this? What did Paul mean when he told the Corinthians that he, in boasting of their readiness, had told the Macedonians that they (the Corinthians) had been prepared (to give toward the collection) since last year?

The preparation that Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 9:2 was a preparation of purpose (2 Corinthians 8:10-11). I believe Paul made this clear in **2 Corinthians 8:10-11.**

So now let me read these verses for you. **"I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. (11) But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability."**

When the Corinthians first heard about the opportunity to give to a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem they enthusiastically purposed to give a large sum of money, and it appears that Paul had boasted to the Macedonians concerning that purposed intent and not only had he boasted but in light of their recent repentance Paul had continued to boast to the Macedonians.

So, what was the impact of Paul's boasting on the Macedonians? The impact of Paul's boasting concerning the Corinthians' zeal and their purposed intent to give such large sums of money to the collection stirred up the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 9:2 cf. 8:1-5). Isn't that exactly what Paul said at the end of **2 Corinthians 9:2?**

So now let us once again read **2 Corinthians 9:2** and see if this is not so. **"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."**

So how had Paul's boasting concerning the Corinthians stirred up the Macedonians? We know exactly how it stirred them up. It stirred them to extraordinary expressions of giving, which was spelled for the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 8:1-5**.

How ironic! The readiness of the Corinthians had been used by God to stir up the Macedonians, and Paul in **2 Corinthians 8:1-5** was using the example of the Macedonians to reinvigorate the giving of the Corinthians so that their earlier purposed intent to complete offering they had promised would be realized.

So did Paul believe in the readiness of the Corinthians to complete what they had purposed in respect to the large sum of money they had promised? Yes, he believed in their readiness to do exactly that, and he also believed that their readiness had been instrumental in stirring up the Macedonians.

But in spite of what Paul believed about their readiness and purposed intent both past and present, he still believed it was necessary to send the delegation to ensure that his boast not be made empty (2 Corinthians 9:3).

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 9:3** and see if this is not so. And what did Paul say? **“But I have sent the brethren [or in other words the delegation], 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.”**

Though Paul had chosen to believe in their readiness and ongoing purposed intent to complete what they had promised, Paul felt it was still necessary to send this highly respected delegation to the Corinthians to make sure of it, hoping that the presence of such a group of respected men, could counter any lingering hesitations.

And why was this so important to Paul? It was important to Paul because he did not want his boasting on behalf of the Corinthians to be made empty. So what is the significance of this word “empty?”

The word “empty” (KENOO) belongs to the same stem as the noun in 2 Corinthians 6:1 to refer to the danger of the Corinthians accepting the grace of God “in vain” (KENOS). This parallel is not accidental. As we have seen, the genuine nature of the Corinthians' repentance is at stake in completing

the collection as we have seen in **2 Corinthians 8:8**, in other words repentance must bear fruit.

This means that the character of the Corinthians will soon be evident to all, or perhaps more precisely the Macedonians. And why do I say more precisely the Macedonians? I would say this because Paul makes it clear in **2 Corinthians 9:4** that there will be a group of Macedonians who will be with him when he returns to Corinth on his way back to Jerusalem.

And how do we know this? Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 9:4**. **“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.”**

So will there very likely be a group of Macedonians with Paul when he returns to Corinth on his way back to Jerusalem? Yes! And what did Paul tell the Corinthians that both he and Corinthians would feel if they were unprepared when the Macedonians came to them? Paul told the Corinthians that both he and they would feel shame if when he arrived with the Macedonians found them unprepared (2 Corinthians 9:4).

So not wanting that his boast be made an empty one according to 2 Corinthians 9:3, and not wanting for the Corinthians or himself to be put to shame according to 2 Corinthians 9:4, he concludes with this in **2 Corinthians 9:5**. **“So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren [or in other words the delegation that he had assembled] that they would go on ahead to you and arrange before hand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”**

The sin of covetousness is the greatest hindrance to giving (2 Corinthians 9:5). Since the Corinthians knew that the collection for the Jerusalem saints was God’s work having been through the Apostle Paul, and since they had previously committed to be involved in it, to fail to keep that commitment when they were able would have manifested their sin of covetousness.

Few sins are as ugly as covetousness; few sins manifest selfishness and pride so graphically as grasping for more at the expense of others. Covetousness is built into the very fabric of the depraved human nature. What does **Mark 7:21-22** tell us? It tells us this, **“For from within, out of the heart of men,**

**proceed... deeds of coveting.” Sinners covet because they have a “heart trained in greed” according to 2 Peter 2:14. Those who habitually practice it will not inherit the kingdom of God according to 1 Corinthians 6:10, and Ephesians 5:5. Obviously, covetousness is a big deal.**

Therefore we must vigilant always seeking through prayer to stay on the alert against this horrific sin and seeking in every possible way to protect ourselves against it. And in this case, in 2 Corinthians 9:5, this is exactly what Paul was seeking to do on behalf of the Corinthians in sending them this delegation of men. He was sending this delegation in order to do what he could to protect them from the sin of covetousness so that they to the glory of Christ might complete the offering that they had promised.

May we by the grace of God be protected from covetousness so that we might experience the blessings giving to praise of His glory.