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2 Corinthians

But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 2 Corinthians 8:16

Paul, always giving thanks where thanks is due, moves from his idea of Christian giving in order to relieve one another's burden, to the heartfelt care of Titus for those in Corinth. He thanks God for having directed Titus' heart in this way stating that He "puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus."

Some older translations say "put" as if it was something instilled in Titus in the past. This is not correct. The verb is in the present tense; it is an on-going action. God put, and continued to put, earnest care for those in Corinth into Titus' heart. This is important because it indicates that he still had that care for them and he continued to be burdened for them as Paul wrote the letter which would then be carried by Titus back to them.

In arriving, they would read this verse and know that among them stood a person who had not only cared for them in the past, but who continued to do so. Paul makes no direct connection to himself here, but the thought is to be implicitly understood. Just as Paul cared about them, and just as he continued to care about them, so Titus also cared about them.

In context, it needs to be remembered that Paul is speaking of the gift which is being collected for the saints in Jerusalem. Therefore, the care which is being referred to includes the fact that the Corinthians had promised to make a gift and that this promise needed to be fulfilled. If not, then there would be a stain upon them and upon their name. Therefore, the care of Paul and Titus is that this would

not occur, but rather that they would complete the task and receive thanks rather than disapproval.

Life application: If there is a need for God's people that He determines will be met, He will ensure that the need is met. It is He who stirs the hearts and directs the events in such times. Be assured that He is overseeing His church in an absolutely perfect way. If things don't turn out as we may hope or expect, we shouldn't become disheartened because the Lord already figured the matter out in accord with His greater plan.

For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. 2 Corinthians 8:17

It needs to be noted that Paul hasn't yet finished the letter he is writing, and it has not yet been received or read by the Corinthians. And yet, he is writing as if the thing mentioned is accomplished by using the words "accepted" and "went." This is known as an epistolary aorist. His words are intended to reflect the state of things as the letter is read, and thus his thoughts encompass what has not yet transpired.

In this, he says that Titus "not only accepted the exhortation..." This indicates that Paul had put forth the idea that Titus would be the one to return to Corinth with the letter. Titus heard Paul's words and responded to them, but there was more. He now says, "...but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord."

It is as if Titus heard Paul and then said, "I had already planned on going!" This explains the words of the previous verse which said, "...thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus." He wasn't just willing to go because he was asked. Instead, he was willing to go because his heart was turned towards the Corinthians in brotherly love.

The words in this verse then are intended to show the church at Corinth that Titus was both sanctioned by Paul and that he was already willing and eager to go. It is a touching note concerning Titus' zeal for the church there.

Life application: If someone is willing to accomplish a task for you or for your church, it is good to send along a note of approval which can say, "I vouch for the sincerity of this person. He wanted to help and I fully support him in this matter." In doing so, it may be just what is needed to ensure that the person is accepted by those he is going to visit.

And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches,... 2 Corinthians 8:18

Again Paul writes in the epistolary aorist style, stating that "we have sent" even though he is still writing the letter. When they receive the letter, they will also have with them "the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches." It is rather unusual that the brother is not named. Paul seems to rejoice over giving credit, right in his letters, for those who are willing to work for the sake of the gospel.

Scholars debate who this person is and the majority of them turn to Luke as the most likely. Others have suggested Titus' brother, Silas, Barnabas, Mark, and Epaphroditus. Some of those have been adamantly excluded by other scholars. In reasoning why Luke is the correct choice, long notes of explanation are given. None of these names can be ascertained with certainty and some of them make dubious connections.

One reason for selecting Luke is the phrase "in the gospel." As he was the author of one of the four gospels, the connection is made that he is being spoken of. But it is also generally understood that at this point, the term "gospel" did not refer to the written accounts we now call the "four gospels." Instead, it was a term speaking of the general plan of salvation spoken by those who spread it.

Vincent's Word Studies gives an impressive possibility for who is being referred to. They base it on "a supposed play upon the word praise, epainos; Epaenetus meaning praiseworthy." Paul makes use of the same type of wordplay in the book of Philemon where Onesimus is called "profitable" which is exactly what his name means. This is seen in Philemon 1:10, 11 -

"I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains,
¹¹ who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me."

Whoever it was that Paul sent along with Titus, he was a proper choice because of his praise "in the gospel" which permeated all the churches.

Life application: There are various mysteries in the Bible which can only be speculated on, but these also can help us to stretch our minds and possibly make other conclusions that may never have been made. It is good to not be overly zealous in defending that which cannot be defended, but there is nothing wrong with doing our best to try to explain these hidden mysteries.

What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. 2 Corinthians 8:19

This verse explains more about "the brother who is praised by all the churches" mentioned in the preceding verse. This brother "was chosen by the churches." The word for choosing him is *cheirotoneó* . It specifically means "election by a show of hands" or "chosen by a vote." It is only used one other time, in Acts 14:23, in the selection of elders in churches. This brother wasn't only praised by all the churches, but he was also trusted by them as well.

Paul notes that his selection was "to accompany us as we carry the offering." He was doing everything possible to ensure that the offering was not only collected without pressure, but also to make sure that it would be supervised and

safeguarded by a group of people who could ensure there was integrity concerning its handling every step of the way.

It needs to be remembered that he is still in the process of stirring the Corinthians into action concerning their promise of giving. His words concerning this person are probably twofold then. First, they would not have to worry if the gift could be mishandled in any way because of how it was being collected and conducted to Jerusalem. Secondly, this designated representative, and in fact all involved in the process, would be aware of exactly how much was given by each church. If they didn't meet what they promised, it would reflect negatively on them as a body.

As Paul continues, he says that the offering is one that "we administer in order to honor the Lord." This "we" is all-inclusive of every person and each church involved in the gathering. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles, and those he ministered to were the fruit of his labors. They were mostly Gentiles who were tending to the needs of the saints in Jerusalem. Could there be a better way to "honor the Lord" than to meet the needs of those who were there, even during His earthy ministry and who were now in need? Thus in giving, they would be able to "show our eagerness to help."

Life application: There are those who are older within the church. They may not be able to attend anymore because of infirmity. Wouldn't it be honoring to the Lord for us to make visits to them in gratitude for their service to the church during their own youth? If we can remember that we meet because of their faithfulness, then it should put our visits and care for them in the proper perspective. Each time we gather, it is partly a result of their commitment to the very place where we meet.

...avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us— 2 Corinthians 8:20

This verse explains why the person is going along with Titus "who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift." It was Paul's explicit intent to

avoid any hint of impropriety in the giving of this gift. The word for "avoiding this" is *stelló*. It is described by Vincent's Word Studies -

"The verb, which occurs only here and 2 Thessalonians 3:6, means to arrange or provide for. As preparation involves a getting together of things, it passes into the meaning of collect, gather: then contract, as the furling of sails; so, to draw back, draw one's self away."

Paul used this particular word to show that he wanted to avoid even the smallest hint that he or anyone else would dream of misusing what had been so faithfully entrusted into their care. The thing he most wanted to do in this was to avoid the chance that "anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us."

The word translated as "lavish gift" is a word unique to the New Testament, *hadrotés*. It comes from *hadros* meaning "plumpness." It then gives the idea of lavish generosity. What had already been prepared by those in Macedonia, and what was hoped for from those in Corinth, was to be a sizeable amount. Paul wanted everything concerning its handling to be done with the greatest care.

But Paul's word concerning the "lavish gift" may also be used to continue to encourage the Corinthians on to greater giving. Remember that he has not yet received anything but a promise from them. Now he is mentally preparing them for fulfilling that promise.

Life application: Gifts to a church or ministry must be handled with the highest care. Any hint of impropriety will cause those not in the church to question Christian honesty. Those in the church may become disheartened and even walk away from the fellowship as well. Pray that those who receive from you will be scrupulous in how they handle what they have received.

...providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 2 Corinthians 8:21

Paul's words here are also reflected in Romans 12:17 -

"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men."

Together, they find their source in the Greek translation of Proverbs 3:4 -

"*And* so find favor and high esteem
In the sight of God and man."

Paul knew his own conscience, and he was fully aware that God knew it as well. As he said in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "...we are well known to God." He could easily have collected all of the money, put it in a traveling bag, and headed to Jerusalem without any notion of taking a penny for himself. Upon arrival, he would have presented it to the saints there with a clear conscience within himself and before the Lord.

However, he was not the only person who was involved in the process. There were the many who gave, and there were those who would receive. If even one person had ill thoughts about how Paul would handle such a gift, then it would taint the entire process. Suppose he was robbed during the journey. Would those who had so faithfully given believe his story? Questions would surely arise in their minds as to what "really" happened to this immense gift.

And so it was his intent to always be "providing honorable things." It is a lesson each one of us should carry with us at all times. Others are evaluating us, even if we have a clear conscience towards God. For a list of other verses which carry this or a similar idea by Paul, you can refer to Romans 14:6; 2 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Timothy 5:14; 1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:8.

Life application: If we believe that God is watching us and will hold us accountable for our actions, and if we actually care that this will occur, then we will tend to act in a morally proper manner. But those around us cannot get inside our heads and discern what God can. Therefore, it is right that our external actions are guided by safeguarding principles which will keep others from making unfounded, negative deductions about our actions.

And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you. 2 Corinthians 8:22

Again we have an unnamed brother who is being sent along with Titus and the other unnamed brother of verse 18. It is impossible to definitively identify who this is. The long list of those who have been named by past scholars shows the futility of being dogmatic about it. Some suggested names have been Tychicus, Apollos, Silas, Timothy, Trophimus, Clement, Epaenetus, Luke, Zenas, and Sosthenes. Maybe others have been named as well, but this long list shows that it really could be one of a number of people.

Regardless of who it is, he "often proved diligent in many things." As he was known for this, he would certainly be a good choice for such a delicate mission. And he certainly wanted to go as well. The note that he was "now much more diligent" shows that he was actually excited about the challenge and was ready to get on with it. And the reason for his diligence was "because of the great confidence which we have in you."

The confidence of Paul and the others concerning the Corinthians to step up and fulfill the promise they previously made spurred this brother on to joining in the task. He was ready to travel there and then all the way to Jerusalem, carrying this precious gift to the saints in need.

In this verse are two of only three times that the word *spoudaios*, or diligent, is used in the Bible. The other use was in verse 17. Charles Ellicott notes that, "It

implies what we might almost call the 'business-like' side of the Christian type of character, and is therefore employed with special fitness here."

Life application: Some people's names are left out of the biblical record, and yet they have had a great impact on what occurred in the narrative. The words about them are also inspiring and praiseworthy. If you are doing a service for the Lord and yet have been unnamed and not recognized, don't be disheartened. The same Lord who withheld the names of these faithful people from His superior word knows everything you have done and are doing for him.

If *anyone inquires* about Titus, *he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you.* Or if our brethren *are inquired about*, *they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.* 2 Corinthians 8:23

The words "anyone inquires" are inserted by the translators and they may or may not convey the proper sense of what is being intended. In Greek, the idea here could more clearly be stated "As to Titus" or "Regarding Titus." In other words, as there were factions at Corinth (which is addressed in detail in 1 Corinthians), some of the church might question Titus' authority to conduct the affairs that he will carry on. It also could be that Paul had heaped such praise upon the others that are going with Titus (as noted in verses 18 and 22), that he felt it was necessary to also show that Titus has the same level of approval and is just as trustworthy as he noted they are.

And so to bolster Titus in the eyes of those in Corinth, he says that "*he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you.*" As a "partner," Titus is placed on an equal footing with Paul at least in the labors which they conduct. As a "fellow worker," Titus is shown to have the same end goal for the labors with which they labored. They are, in essence, a harmonious team concerning the church in Corinth.

Continuing on, he says, "Or if our brethren *are inquired about*, *they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.*" If questions were to arise

concerning the other brethren, Paul lets them know that they are speaking on behalf of the churches and are not working independently of them.

The word here for "messengers" is from the Greek word meaning "apostles." In this case, it is used in the non-technical sense of "delegates." As there is no article in front of the word "apostles," it indicates that they are not of the chosen "apostles" who are delegates of Christ, but are rather "apostles" in the lower sense of those who are "delegates for the churches."

Paul's final words, "the glory of Christ," show that these men had such favorable reputations, and were to be considered so trustworthy, that they actually displayed in themselves the glory of Christ. They brought such honor to the churches that they reflected His glory in every way.

Life application: As Paul has shown consistently in his words, it is right and proper to acknowledge those who minister on behalf of others, not just in words of praise, but in words of trust. We can say, "This person is a really nice guy," and yet not tell the entire story that needs to be told. By adding in, "This person can be fully trusted," they are elevated to an entirely new level in the eyes of the recipients of those words. Be ready to support those who have shown themselves faithful in this way.

Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf. 2 Corinthians 8:24

Paul finishes this chapter with his appeal to the Corinthians to put their words into action. He begins with "therefore." This actually covers the entire discourse on the matter to this point as he weaves together his words for them to consider.

His words, "show to them" are speaking specifically of Titus and the other two who will be coming to them for the very purpose of gathering up the gift that had been promised by the Corinthians. Next he says, "...and before the churches"

which probably is referring specifically to the Macedonian churches he has mentioned in detail during this chapter. This would include Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica. It may also include other churches that Paul had boasted to concerning the promised gift from those in Corinth.

In these two separate appeals, it is clearly evident that Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to save themselves from an embarrassing situation. If their actions didn't meet their words, there would only be a sense of dishonor concerning them in the eyes of those who gave so willingly, even out of their poverty. In order for this not to happen, he mentions to them that this gift would show "the proof of your love."

This thought takes us back to verse 8 which said -

"I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others." 2 Corinthians 8:8

Verse 8 was placed between the verses concerning the Macedonians and the verse concerning what Christ did in the giving of Himself. These were diligent in proving their love through action. Now it was the Corinthian's chance to do the same. Along with that, there was the matter which was "our boasting on your behalf."

They had spoken, Paul and the others had accepted their words at face value, and boasting of what was coming from them went out. In the case of boasting to Titus, it was something that would now become either proven true or proven false. If false, he would be embarrassed to return with such a paltry gift. His boasting to Titus is recorded in verse 7:14.

In his boasting to the Macedonians, it led to their giving in an immense way. If his words proved false, then those in Macedonia would naturally feel used and hurt. This boasting to the Macedonians was mentioned in verse 8:2.

Life application: We use the term, "This is where the rubber meets the road" to indicate that specific moment when something which should happen actually comes about. If it doesn't, then there will be negative consequences. In the case of a car, it may lose traction, or it may get stalled out. Either way, disaster could result. When we make promises, they are only realized when the rubber meets the road. And so let us have plenty of tread on our tires as we fulfill what we have spoken with our lips.

Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 Corinthians 9:1

Paul, after having brought up the subject of Titus and his traveling companions, returns to the subject of the collection of the gift which he had been speaking of. His words, "Now concerning the ministering to the saints," are speaking of this very thing. "The saints" are those saints in Jerusalem who are in need.

Concerning this gift, he says that "it is superfluous for me to write to you." He is tactfully avoiding a possibility of hurting their feelings by directly reminding them of their obligation. Instead, the word "superfluous" is used to let them feel that he knows they have committed to give and will also fulfill in the collection of the gift. Should he not say that his words were superfluous, they may feel he doubted their intent to fulfill the promise previously made.

This will become evident in the next verse. Paul is masterfully writing them to remind them of what they have promised, and yet he is claiming that no reminder is necessary. He understands this type of approach is both wise and necessary. The promise has faded in the minds of the Corinthians and he is bringing it back to a prominent place now that the time for the collection has arrived.

Life application: To make a vow and not fulfill it is to lie concerning the vow. Lying is not just a command found in the Law of Moses which has now been set aside in Christ. Lying is forbidden in the New Testament as well (see Colossians 3:9 for example). Think your words through carefully at all times and be sure to perform

what your lips have spoken, if you cannot, then be sure to fully explain to the one whom you have made the promise to why you must retract your words.

...for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.

2 Corinthians 9:2

Continuing with his thought on the gathering and final collection of the gift from those in Corinth, Paul says first that "I know your willingness." He was there personally and had heard the words of promise which the Corinthians had made, their desire to give, and the excitement about doing so. Because of this, when he was in Macedonia he boasted on behalf of those in Corinth concerning their zeal.

His words, "...about which I boast of you" are in the present tense and it shows that he was still in Macedonia and still making the boast to inspire them on in their giving as well. It is likely that this letter is being written from Philippi. The boast of which he speaks is found in verse 24 of the previous chapter. It is a boast which Paul is praying is still applicable, hoping that their zeal has not died down.

Of interest is that he says, "Achaia was ready a year ago." His words to those in Macedonia show that those in Achaia had already begun preparing for this gift. In his first epistle, he even gave instructions on how best to do it -

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ²On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. ³And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me." 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

The term "Achaia" encompasses the region of Greece where Corinth was the capital. Therefore, this is indicating that there were more churches than just the

one in Corinth that had promised to give. Romans 16:1 shows that there was a church in Cenchrea. Paul's boasting included any and all of the churches, of which Corinth would have been the most prominent.

Because of this boasting, he notes that "your zeal has stirred up the majority." It would be a shame if the boast proved to be unfounded. As a way of hinting at this, the word for "stirred up" is used in a good sense. In essence, it means "to motivate." However, it could be used in a negative sense, such as in Colossians 3:21 -

"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

As the word could go either way, he is probably using it to show that at this time their zeal had a positive effect. However, if they were to delay further, or fail to come through, with their promise, it would turn from a happy stirring to a negative one.

Life application: Delaying a promise can turn into an unhappy thing. We should keep from making promises that we cannot fulfill, or we should explain that the promise will be fulfilled by a certain time. Don't let things fester in the heart of the one who received the promise.

Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 2 Corinthians 9:3

Paul begins this verse with the word "yet." This is a subtle hint of what he will say next. He had just mentioned his boasting concerning the church at Corinth to the Macedonians, telling them about the zeal he witnessed there in regards to the gift. Despite this zeal, he felt it prudent to ensure follow up to the promise by saying, "I have sent the brethren."

These are Titus and the two other unnamed brothers mentioned in verses 8:22, 23. The intent, at least in part, is to avoid the personal embarrassment of Paul as well as of those in Corinth. It was his plan that gift's presentation not fall short of the promise "lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect."

We can imagine the embarrassed stares all around should those in Corinth not provide as he had said they would. Each party would have secret thoughts of being duped or of having failed in their commitment. In the end, nobody would be left untouched by the failure. Because of this, he was doing his very best to ensure that those in Corinth would "be ready."

Life application: Which is more embarrassing - to fail to meet a promise or to be the one who reminds the person of the promise they made? Both can be cumbersome and difficult, but if a promise is made which will affect numerous parties, it is certainly best to ensure that the promise is fulfilled. In such a case, we can come to this passage in 2 Corinthians and see how Paul has handled this very delicate matter.

...lest if *some* Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 2 Corinthians 9:4

Paul continues the thought of the previous verse concerning his boasting in what the Corinthians were going to do in their gift giving. The term "Macedonians" leaves off any article and therefore it is as if Paul is conducting a competition between the two groups of people - pitting them against one another to spur them on to the greatest gift possible.

Charles Ellicott and others think that this may mean that the two unnamed brothers of chapter 8 are Macedonians. Thus they would be able to report on this competition between the two. However, if they are coming with Titus, who is carrying Paul's letter, then this doesn't fit. Paul will only travel to Corinth after the letter is received. It is whoever travels with Paul, not with Titus, who is being

referred to. As he says, they were to come with him. When they traveled together, he didn't want them to find those in Corinth "unprepared."

Paul will be traveling with Macedonians who will be evaluating the words he spoke to them. If the gift at Corinth didn't match his boasting, it would be embarrassing. This is exactly what he has been trying to avoid. This would be particularly so with the Corinthians who had done the boasting. In order to get them on the ball he says, "...not to mention you!"

Together, all parties would find some sort of shame in the events which had transpired. The words "confident boasting" indicate that which is below something else, like a foundation, or the ground. It is what provides stability and steadfastness. If the gift wasn't ready, the sure words of those in Corinth, and the boasting of Paul concerning them, would seem as if they lacked any true foundation.

Life application: Words without a firm foundation and something to back them up are just wasted breath. Be sure to follow up on what you speak (as Paul is doing in this letter) to ensure that your words are found true and reliable.

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be ready as *a matter of generosity* and not as a grudging obligation. 2 Corinthians 9:5

In this verse, Paul uses the idea of "before" three times - "go to you ahead of time;" "your generous gift beforehand;" and "previously promised." This triple repetition demonstrates that he was considerably involved in this process in order to avoid any hint that he had embellished his words to the Macedonians, or that he could not trust the previous promises of the Corinthians. His intent was to have everything ready before those from Macedonia arrived. Should they find things were not as promised, everyone involved in the process would have some sort of bad feelings towards the collection of this gift.

For this reason, Paul "thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time." Actually, Titus was more than willing to go, even eager. But Paul also wanted the others to go with him to ensure that everything was handled in a proper manner. This is obviously a large gift and so more than one delegate was proper.

His sending of them then was to "prepare your generous gift beforehand." As noted, having it ready before his arrival with the Macedonians was of the highest importance to him. His stress in this verse cannot be underestimated, especially with the next words "which *you had* previously promised." They had spoken in promise and Paul was reminding them of this. If this were not true, then he could not have written that they had promised. And so his words are a reminder to them of this.

Having said that, the reminder is necessary because of his final words which say, "...that it may be ready as a *matter* of generosity and not as a grudging obligation." Should he arrive and the gift not be ready, he could rightly state in front of all of the visiting guests, "You promised this gift and others were motivated by your promise. Now you are renegeing on the very promise which prompted them to give, even beyond their means." Should he speak in such a manner, they would be shamed into giving out of "grudging obligation." When he and the money departed for Jerusalem, there would be shame rather than honor left behind for them to wallow in.

The specificity in this verse is a clear and evident indication of Paul's true heart for every part of the process to be smooth, honorable, and edifying for all involved.

Life application: Hindsight is 20/20, but with careful thought and contemplation, it is not always necessary to say, "Oh I wish I had...." Instead, by taking the time to think important issues through, pitfalls can be avoided through tact and diplomacy.

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Corinthians 9:6

This verse closely matches Galatians 6:7, 8 -

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

However, there are marked differences in the intent behind the two as well. In this verse, Paul gives a push for graciously abundant giving. It is a thought which builds upon the entire discourse concerning giving. Not only were they to not give grudgingly (verse 5), but they should give in an exceptional way.

In explanation then, he says, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly." Sowing is when one puts seed in the ground in the planting of crops. If someone puts a handful of grain into the ground on a large field, they won't be reaping very much at harvest time. However, if one takes the chance, sows a large amount of grain (which could be otherwise eaten or sold for money), and tends to the field, they will probably have a far different result. As noted, "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

John Chrysostom says, "He calls it sowing in order that we may learn by the figure of the harvest that in giving we receive more than we give." This is generally true. There is, of course, no guarantee that a field will yield a thing. Drought, infestations, etc, may destroy the entire crop. But one cannot reap bountifully unless they first sow bountifully. And the word translated here as "bountifully" literally means "with blessings."

In this, we can see that there is more than just a material reaping at the harvest. There is also the satisfaction which accompanies the reaping. Blessings are what come to us in that which we find satisfaction. A person may simply be blessed by

working in the cool breeze under the blue sky. But unless one goes out to reap, this part of the blessing will be missed.

However, the general principle here is a return on an investment by an increase of the same thing which was invested. A couple proverbs follow this same broad thought -

"There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more;
And there is *one* who withholds more than is right,
But it *leads* to poverty.

²⁵ The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself." Proverbs 11:24, 25

&

"He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD,
And He will pay back what he has given." Proverbs 18:11

Without taking this to an unintended extreme, which modern "word of faith" preachers do, this is a general principle of increase. If a preacher promises that you will reap a hundred-fold if you send him \$100.00, don't waste your time. God is not a cosmic ATM. He tends to our needs, and He rewards each of us according to His wisdom, not our greed.

Further, it needs to be remembered that "sowing bountifully" is something that can only be determined by the individual in relation to what they already possess. If a millionaire sews \$500.00, it really isn't that much. In fact, it would be nothing compared to a cash-strapped blue collar worker who gave the same amount. Just because it is the same amount, the proportion is one which can't truly be compared. To Proverbs again -

"He who has a generous eye will be blessed,
For he gives of his bread to the poor." Proverbs 22:9

Life application: You cannot reap unless you sow. One cannot reap a great amount unless they sow enough to produce a great amount. This general principle applies in giving. All will be rewarded for their faithful sowing, but some of that reaping may not be realized in this life. If you're giving in order to receive, you have missed the joy of giving and the reward may not be what you had hoped for.

***So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.* 2 Corinthians 9:7**

The law is fulfilled in Christ and it is annulled. There is no longer a requirement to tithe in the New Testament Church. Not only that, this verse is the most explicit one in all of Paul's writings concerning what to give and when. Only Galatians 6:6 adds anything substantially more for us to follow -

"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches."

Understanding this, we should take this verse to heart and carry it with us always. New Testament Christians are to "each one *give* as he purposes in his heart." That is it. We are not to allow ourselves to be forced to tithe by a pastor who reinserts the law which is now done away with. (Run, don't walk from there!) We are also not to be coerced into giving apart from how our heart directs us, willingly and freely.

The word for "purposes" is *proaireó*. This is its only use in the New Testament and it "is used in its full ethical significance as indicating, not a passing impulse nor a vague wish, but a deliberate resolve, deciding both on the end and on the means for its attainment" (Charles Ellicott).

When we give, it is not to be as a passing fancy, under feelings of compulsion, nor in a manner which will later be stewed over. Instead, we are to give willingly, freely, and with a heart that is content that giving the gift was the right thing to do.

Paul continues in his thought by saying, "...not grudgingly or of necessity." The Greek word for "grudgingly" literally means "from grief" or "out of sorrow." Rather than being coerced into parting with our money and later feeling remorse over having given, we are to be joyous that we have helped out in a way which blessed us while also blessing the recipient of the gift. It should be voluntary rather than out of necessity as well. If we give out of necessity, then it is less a gift and more of a need.

Paul finishes this marvelous verse with the words, "...for God loves a cheerful giver." Again, he introduces a word here that is only used this one time in the New Testament, *hilaros*, or "cheerful." Our giving should be such that we are actually happy when we part with the money. We should be able to say, "I worked XX hours to make that and I am so pleased that those hours were spent in order to give this gift."

The verse we are looking at closely follows the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) from Proverbs 22. The Hebrew version reads -

"He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow,
And the rod of his anger will fail.

⁹ He who has a generous eye will be blessed,
For he gives of his bread to the poor." Proverbs 22:8, 9

The Hebrew version cited here is close enough to get a resemblance of Paul's words, but it is clear from him citing Proverbs elsewhere in this letter that he had recently been reading that book and it was fresh on his mind. Further, it is apparent that he had been reading not the Hebrew version, but the Greek version. Finally, as a point that this type of giving was even considered appropriate in the Old Testament, we read this from Exodus 25 -

"Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering." Exodus 25:2

Understanding that this offering was taken voluntarily from the people of Israel, and that it was intended for the building of the tabernacle, it follows that our gifts for the building of the church should likewise be voluntary, not forced. Again, this precept is found in the building of Solomon's temple as well -

"Then the leaders of the fathers' *houses*, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. ⁷ They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸ And whoever had *precious* stones gave *them* to the treasury of the house of the LORD, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the LORD; and King David also rejoiced greatly." 1 Chronicles 29:6-9

This is the type of giving that is looked for in the New Testament believer. Let us take this to heart and not let the law be reinserted by mandating tithing, nor allow ourselves to be compelled to give against our will.

Life application: Take time today to memorize this verse and Galatians 6:6. After that, follow through with your giving in accord with those verses.

And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

This verse explains verse 6 which said that "he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." However, it is also qualified by verse 7 which said that we should give as our heart purposes and not grudgingly or of necessity. If we give in the right spirit and in a way which is intended to glorify Him, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you."

This means that all good things that are necessary to fill up any void made from our giving will in fact be provided. There will be no lack. It is a note of assurance that people are not made poor by being generous. Instead, they will always have "all sufficiency in all things."

The word translated as "sufficiency" is only found here and in 1 Timothy 6:6. In that verse, Paul notes that "godliness with contentment is great gain." Our sufficiency will ensure our contentment. But again in that verse, Paul notes godliness. These verses of Paul cannot be separated from a connection to God.

The person who gives with the expectancy that they will profit off their giving is deluded. Giving is not intended to increase worldly wealth. Instead, it is intended to provide contentment in what one receives from the Lord, which will always provide all sufficiency. So much so is this, that Paul says they "may have an abundance for every good work."

There will never be a lack for the intended good work which is on one's heart. Rather, God will provide a suitable amount to ensure that the need is met. These words are promises and therefore we are being asked to trust that they are true when we give. But remember the key points. We are to give - 1) willingly, and 2) with a heart which acknowledges the Lord in our giving. If our giving is self-directed, why would the Lord reward that?

Life application: Name it and claim it preachers should be ignored. Sow it and grow it preachers should be ignored. These people will get rich at your expense. They have appealed to the greed of your own heart. Ignore them! Focus on the Lord, not yourselves when you give.

As it is written:

**“He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”**

2 Corinthians 9:9

Paul returns to Scripture to make his point concerning his words of verses 6-8, but particularly verse 6. Here we find a quote from Psalm 112:9. Psalm 112 reviews the blessed status of a righteous man, and thus the words there show the cause and effect of his righteousness. In this portion of the psalm, it notes that "He has dispersed abroad." The idea is that of a farmer sowing seeds. He carefully scatters his seed, tending to where each falls in order to bring about a harvest.

When a righteous man gives, it is with a sense of care and purpose, not in a willy-nilly manner. But this doesn't just mean to people or places that will in turn directly bless him. Rather he has even "given to the poor." His open hand of seed is careful to ensure that those who could never repay him are the recipients of his kind heart. This follows through with verse 7 which said that, each should give as he "purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

Such a man will reap a great harvest, not necessarily in more money, but in an eternal and blessed state. As the psalmist says, "His righteousness endures forever." The only way this could come about is by having been blessed with eternal life. The fruit of sowing in this life is that of an eternal harvest. Such is the blessed state of a righteous man.

It should be noted though that deeds of righteousness are not in and of themselves meriting of heaven. Only a person who is in Christ will have those deeds counted towards his eternal state. The greatest giver on earth cannot buy heaven through his charity. Only through Christ can eternal life be attained.

Life application: God is aware of every seed you have sown and He will reward you for those that were done in faith. Don't worry if no one sees your good deeds here on earth. God in heaven does and He is pleased with them.

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
2 Corinthians 9:10

In accord with verses 6-9, Paul now pronounces a hopeful blessing upon the promised seed which the Corinthians intend to sow. As they give, Paul desires that they will also receive a harvest in return. "Now may He" is obviously speaking of the Lord who is the Source of all things. It is "He who supplies seed to the sower."

The word for "supplies" here is *epichorégeó* and it used for the first time in Scripture. Charles Ellicott notes its unusual history -

"Originally it expressed the act of one who undertook to defray the expenses of the chorus of a Greek theatre. As this was an act of somewhat stately generosity, the verb got a wider range, and was applied to any such act, and was so transferred in like manner by the Apostle, probably, as far as we can trace, for the first time, to the divine bounty."

Paul, leaning on his understanding of the Greek cultures and traditions, uses this word in a new sense as he ascribes the supplying he speaks of directly to the Creator, from whom all things originally stem. He will use the word two more times in his epistles and Peter will pick it up from him and use it twice as well.

The phrase "seed to the sower" finds its roots in Isaiah. There he wrote -

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,

But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:10, 11

In addition to such seed, it is the Lord who provides "bread for food." The seed grows, it is harvested and then it is turned into bread to feed man. Paul asks that such a blessing of prosperity from a seed, even to a full stomach, come upon the Corinthians with the petition that the Lord "supply and multiply the seed you have *sown*." They have pronounced that they would give a gift and Paul writes as if the gift has already been collected. In turn for their (promised) faithfulness, his words beg for a return blessing upon them.

However, the final words show that the return is not just a return of the same type which was sown. They are to invest money, but Paul asks that the Lord will "increase the fruits of your righteousness." The words come from the Greek translation of Hosea 10:12 and indicate spiritual blessings. It is the fruits of the righteousness and not necessarily the fruits of the seed that will be increased. Paul then is referring as much to heavenly rewards as he is referring to an earthly return on their investment.

It would be inappropriate to think that by giving money that a sudden shower of money would come flooding back down on them. Rather, the rewards may come in this life, or they may come at the time of our meeting with Christ at the judgment seat. But either way, they will come. The Lord will reward all faithful sowing.

Life application: When you give, do so with an open hand and without attaching conditions upon the gift. If you give in hopes of receiving back, then you have

given with the wrong intention. Be content to share what you have. The Lord will reward you in His own way and in His own time.