



Be Ready to Minister

The Macedonian believers' abundant sharing (ABS) habits were so astounding that God chose them to assist Paul. These remarkable people accompanied Paul when he collected ABS from the Corinthians, not only for safety in numbers, but also as a touchstone of truth and action. Let's spend some time in 2 Corinthians 9, verses 3-6, to understand certain logistics that Paul and the believers underwent.

(2 Cor 9:3-5 KJV) Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: {4} Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. {5} Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up be-



fore hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

Verse 3:

(2 Cor 9:3 KJV) Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

Word Study:

Yet [But] have [omit the word have] I sent [pempo – means 'to dispatch'] the brethren, lest [in order that] our boasting [kuchema – to

glory, rejoicing] of you [which is about you] should be in [made] vain [kenos – to no purpose] in this behalf [in this respect]; that, as [according as] I said, ye may be ready [paraskenazo – to furnish aside, be ready, be prepared]:

Paul sent others to Corinth to remind them of their responsibility to abundantly share. Paul was busy boasting about their giving, but he was concerned that the boasting could be in vain. What is interesting is that a need *did* exist for Paul to send the brethren to remind them. That means that there are situations in which this need does exist, of course, as well as does not exist. Church leaders need not be bashful to present reminders; they are responsible to determine the need to do so. Tremendous emphasis is being placed on prior preparation. Consider God's point of view. God wants your gifts to be prepared ahead of time. He's not bothered that you might need to be reminded;

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he *is* bothered if ABS gifts are not ‘furnished aside’ prior to the time of giving.

As a refresher, the Corinthian believers were known for their tremendous zeal to abundantly share.

(2 Cor 9:2 KJV)
For I know the forwardness of your mind [the Corinthians], for which I boast of you [the Corinthians] to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your [the Corinthians] zeal hath provoked very many.

Verse 3 Literal:

But I sent the brethren in order that our rejoicing, which is about you, should be made to no purpose in this respect. That, according as I said, you may furnish aside *your gifts of abundant sharing*.

Verse 4:

{4} Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say

not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

Word Study:

{4} Lest haply [Lest by any means] if they of Macedonia come with me [if Macedonians should come with me], and find you unprepared [aparaskounastos – unready], we (that we say not, ye) [that we may not say *you*] should be ashamed [should be put to shame (change order)] in this same confident boasting [NIT – not in the text].

Keeping in mind that this is God’s Word, God is extremely clear about how his people are viewed regarding preparation of abundant sharing. He did not want the Corinthians to appear unprepared, or in a position to mar Paul’s rejoicing (which was significant). He did not want Paul to look poorly either. Simply put, God didn’t want any shame to fall on Paul and the Macedonian believers. They were like a shield for the Corinthian believers – we, (that we say not, you).

Verse 4 Literal:

Lest by any means, if Macedonians should come with me, and find you unready, we [not you] should be put to shame in this confidence.

Verse 5:

{5} Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

Word Study:

{5} Therefore I thought it necessary [anagkaios – needful] to exhort [parakaleo – to call along side, to comfort] the brethren, that they would go before unto [pros – for] you, and make up before hand your bounty [eulogia – fine speaking, elegance of language, commendation], whereof ye had notice before [proepangello – foretell, previous announcement or promise], that the same might be ready, as *a matter of bounty* [eulogia – fine

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speaking, elegance of language, commendation], and [and is NIT] not as *of* covetousness [pleonexia – fraudulency, extortion, greediness].

I'd like to bring your attention to the word 'notice.' The Greek word proepangello is also used in Romans 1:2.

(Rom 1:2 KJV) (Which he had promised [proepangello] afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)

The Corinthians had promised that they would provide abundant sharing, and Paul is reminding them of that. Paul is not begging these believers to abundantly share. Abundant sharing must be done according to complete free will that is based on scripture, not based on constant reminders. These believers had promised so much so that Paul was well within his rights to approach them like this. Paul said that he thought it was necessary to remind them. This reminder, as I put it, is not preaching, badgering, chasing after or otherwise a compulsory act. It is actually Paul comforting the Corinthians. It's like he put his arms around them and spoke

tenderly to them, just like you would do when comforting a dear one.

I find the first usage of 'bounty' in this verse to be highly significant. While it could be rendered 'abundant sharing,' is actually refers to 'elegant speech.' Again, God places emphasis on caring for those who had promised their gifts, encouraging them to prepare them prior to collection time.

The Corinthians were told of the time of collection, which was in reference to their promise to give. There were no surprises, and the logistics were completely clarified.

Verse 5 Literal:

I esteemed [it] needful therefore, to comfort the brethren, that they should go before for you, and make up your bounty (abundant sharing) before hand, which previously you had promised that you would do, that the same might be ready, as commendation, and not extortion.

In conclusion, these three verses provide power to your free will. This concept is dynamically integrated into the

entirety of Abundant Sharing. A bottom line exists—if you can't freely abundantly share, you probably should not do it. While free will wasn't entirely the context of these 3 verses, this concept still existed. In my mind, one cannot give with great readiness of mind if he or she cannot do it freely. We are instructed to be ready to minister to the saints—that point is abundantly clear.

Rejoicing is at the forefront, not only for the leadership responsible to collect and administer abundant sharing, but also for those who give. Setting aside your gifts in preparation is a hallmark activity when abundantly sharing. Abundant sharing is never to be an afterthought; it is always to be a forethought.

We need always be found prepared to give. Therefore, readiness is multi-faceted: Forethought to give, forethought to prepare, and forethought to care for those who administer the gifts.

During these preparation and administration times, great comfort is to be afforded to the believers—based on their promises.

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Commendation by those who administer is to be plentiful. No type or flavor of extortion is to be present—abundant sharing is to be totally and utterly freewill.

Much Love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown