



MONDAY 18 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:1-2

Plug In...

This term we enter back into the next half of 2 Corinthians. At this point Paul speaks about “the service to the Lord’s people”. This phrase references funds the Corinthians promised to raise a year ago. The funds will support the Christians in Jerusalem who are in severe famine (*cf.* Act 11:28).

Paul’s currently with the Macedonian church and tells them that the Corinthians have signed up to the support collection for the Christians struggling in Jerusalem. This news about the Corinthians fuelled the Macedonians’ excitement. [NB: ‘Achaia’ is the regional area of Corinth.]

Chew It Over...

The Spirit’s work is infectious. God’s Spirit motivates the Corinthians to generosity and the story of it revved-up others. This is not bare motivation, for a gift of the Spirit is encouragement (Romans 12:8). Paul ends this letter with “be encouraged” (2 Corinthians 13:11). God is at work changing us from ungenerous to generous, immature to mature, weak to strong, selfish to unselfish. That’s

what He did for the Corinthians; that is what He does for us. We need to tell these stories, share these stories of God at work. IT is part of how God's revs us up to action. How can you boast about the work of God you're seeing in the lives of others? Brag about God. Can we be more like Paul: telling one another the stories about God at work? Does this mean we will have to dial back some of the footy conversations so they don't dominate? House Rules conversations? Decide to create more conversational room for the God at work stories as you meet with Christian brothers and sisters.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to open our eyes to all the fruit of His work amongst His church. May God use His Spirit to infectiously stir others to action and enthusiasm.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 19 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:3-5

Plug In...

The Corinthians pledged their support to help the Christians undergoing famine in Jerusalem over a year ago. Titus updates Paul that the Corinthians' enthusiasm to help has cooled. An awkward situation could occur. Remember, Paul over the last year had basically said to the Macedonian Christians "hey isn't this exciting how God's moved the Corinthians to be generous to help other Christians doing it hard in Jerusalem". Imagine now Paul turning up with the Macedonians to find the Corinthians have backed off their original commitment. To avoid their potential embarrassment, Paul sent some people ahead to encourage the Corinthians back to their original enthusiasm.

Chew It Over...

What about Paul's tactics and words *could* be taken as manipulative? Are there other details in Paul's approach (9:1-5) that make us aware Paul is being persuasive rather than manipulative? How does voluntary and generous giving mimic the gospel?

Prayer Suggestion

Before God acknowledge how our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. Confess where we have promised but haven't come through with our commitments. Thank God for providing people around us who help persuade and point us back to God's word – thus motivating us to come follow-through. Thank Jesus for the forgiveness of every failure, and the Spirit for generating less future failures as we head towards heaven.



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-9 & Psalm 112

Plug In...

Paul does what God does in the OT. He motivates us with reward (e.g. Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Blessing and abundance for the person who gives generously. Paul quotes a Psalm that says so. This promise of a massive return on your investment God uses to help free us up from giving under compulsion. Key to note is v.9. God has already blessed His people abundantly. It is so abundant that it overflows to others in the form of good works (in this case generous giving).

Chew It Over...

The portrait of the blessed person with wealth and safety in Psalm 112 is looking at the end result of God's reward. This is important to grasp for this truth can be misunderstood as an immediate cause and effect. The timing of the reward is not indicated, but the psalm suggests that it is delayed. The person is called to act in a context where there are poor around, where there are enemies around. The context is not a world of abundance, but a world of scarcity and opposition. The person can only be generous in this context because they fear the LORD (Psalm 112:1) and their faith trusts God will reward in the end.

Paul argues that the beginning of that reward of Psalm 112 comes in the form of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:5) – applying the righteousness of Jesus and producing it more and more in our lives. This means a life of faith will issue in comprehensive blessing in

the future. Meditating on this; grasping this enables you to overflow with generosity now – you already understand how much you've been given (and are guaranteed to be given it all!). In static terms, the reward is a great motivation. However, the gratitude for the gift of Jesus should be even more of motivation, one where you become a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for deep trust in the provision of God. Both what has been provided through Christ, and the promise of all to come. May God free us from fear of lack that we overflow with grace support others as we are called upon.



The Lakes

THURSDAY 21 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:10-11

Plug In...

Psalm 112, which Paul quotes, spoke generically of a person who is righteous (explained as fearing the LORD and delighting in His commands, Psalm 112:1). In the psalm, this generic person understands to have God is to have everything. The person can therefore delight in all the commands, especially the ones that involve blessing and sharing generously with others. The ability to follow through comes from seeing God as more valuable than other stuff.

Notice in 2 Corinthians 9:10, after quoting this psalm, Paul depicts God as the person who is the generous person of the psalm. The one who provides the need a poor person has to get going again (*cf.* Psalm 112:9).

The point Paul makes is that the Corinthians (who original said they were ready to give but have cooled off) need to be re-acquainted with the character of God and what He has done for them. The re-acquaintance is what will bring them back to a generous disposition.

Chew It Over...

Paul bases ethics on what God has done in Christ. That is what He is doing here with the collection. He looks to what the gospel gives and is all about and finds the ethical decision the Corinthians need to make.

Is there a decision you have to make where hitting what is 'right' proves hard to nail? Consider re-evaluating the problem through the character of God shown through the Cross. The well-trotted out cliché "WWJD?" is helpful: *What would Jesus do?*

Prayer Suggestion

May God enlarge the harvest of our righteousness. May Jesus re-order us by his Spirit that we might seek a harvest of righteousness before the comforts of material blessing and physical safety.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 22 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:12-14

Plug In...

When the Corinthians give to alleviate the needs of fellow Christians it does something more than the pragmatic. It generates expressions of praise to God. The logic we saw in the previous verses showed that as people appreciated the grace God had given them, they overflowed to give graciously to others. These verses show that God's initial grace should have a domino effect and a rebound effect. Domino – when one group overflows and gives to another, that generates gratitude to God thereby reigniting their willingness to overflow to others (9:1-11). Rebound – the group who receive grace from you praise God for you in their prayers (9:12-14). God's grace amazingly weaves through people on and out to other people and then back again all to His glory and for the sustaining and helping of His people.

Chew It Over...

Identify where you have been helped by another in living the Christian life – whether they've encouraged you with physical needs, or supported you in ministry work. Have you been praising God for the surpassing grace He's given them which graciously overflowed to you? Be reminded today that God's Spirit forms a network of people dispensing graciously to others because of their grasp on God's grace. Be active in the network.

Prayer Suggestion

To whom shall you praise God for today? To whom does your heart go out for in prayer before God?



The Lakes

WEEKEND 23-24 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:15

Plug In...

Paul has been rallying people to get in touch with the grace they've experienced from God. So that they are motivated to collect a gift which helps the less fortunate Christians in Jerusalem. Although Paul is rallying at this point, He has such confidence of the outcome that he speaks a word of praise as though the outcome has already been achieved!

Chew It Over...

We should never be pessimistic about calling people back to living a life aligned to the gospel. Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul rebukes, challenges, and urges the Corinthians to get back on track. Yet Paul never does this as mere persuasion. Paul is confident that this is the time of the new covenant where God's Spirit enters and changes people. Do you have a new covenant optimism even as you seem some blemishes around our church, The Lakes? It is easy to be negative about the church. However, the church is a bunch of sinners who are now saved and injected with the Spirit causing real change and reformation (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Prayer Suggestion

Keep praying for the Spirit's power that reforms the hearts of all of us at The Lakes. Pray that we will all keep transforming into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.