

"Willing Work"

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[0 : 00] Corinthians, we are in chapter 9. We've been working steadily through. You'll find 2 Corinthians chapter 9 on page 1782 in the Pew Bibles.

Normally, I like to have an intro to my sermons, some sort of catchy thing or story or saying that grabs your attention and helps prepare your heart for the passage.

In all honesty, I rocked my brain yesterday trying to figure out one that would fit this, and I could not find one. That's the Lord's will, and I would rather spend more of my time studying than just trying to find catchy sayings for you.

So, my intro for this sermon will be simply this. I stand up here to preach to you the Word of God, words that were inspired by the Spirit of God, the One who created the universe, the One who died on the cross to save sinners.

He has given this Word for you today, and I stand here to help you understand it. Please pay attention. This will bring life to you.

[1 : 22] So, let's jump right into the passage. 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 1 through 5. Now, concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you.

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.

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.

Lest, if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, Lord, we, and not to mention you, should be ashamed of this confident boasting.

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 : 37] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So, the main idea for this sermon is, where there is a will, there should also be a work.

Where there is a will, there is a work. We see that first the Corinthian church had a willingness to minister to the saints. Now, Paul encourages them to see that their work should be completed to match that out.

When we were studying in chapter 8, we actually got a little brief taste of this in one of the other sermons. When we studied in chapter 8, verses 10 and 11, and I give this advice, It is to your advantage not only to do what you began to do and were desiring to do a year ago, but now you must also complete the doing of it, that this is the key part there, the little trailer to what this sermon is all about, that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also must be a completion out of what you have.

I spoke in that sermon briefly that good intentions should always be mated with good actions, that it is not enough to want to do good things, but it is fitting and proper to finish out those good desires with good actions.

This sermon blows up that small note in the other sermon into a full discussion, that the good intentions that the Corinthians had should be matched by a good working.

[4 : 27] Their will should be matched with a work. And Paul even starts by pointing out that this is obvious, that this isn't some sort of new idea, that he has to make clever arguments to help them to see, like, oh, it's not enough for me to just want to do something good.

I actually have to do it for it to matter. It's obvious. He says, Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous or extra or unnecessary for me to write to you.

It's unnecessary because it's obvious that you just wanting to help doesn't make the same difference that you actually helping does. We all, like, we have the famous saying, like, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Like, people can wish good things for you all the time and still never accomplish any real help. So Paul is saying here, it's obvious that your willing desire that you had before now needs to be completed with a willing gift, with a willing work.

So that is our two points for today that we will be going through. Point number one, the willing, and point number two, the working. Let's consider the willing in point number one.

[5 : 57] We read in verse two, 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.

What Paul is saying here is that a year ago, the Corinthian church were the ones who started this collection for the saints in Jerusalem, this gathering of money to help relieve their suffering.

A year ago, the Corinthian church, they heard that the saints in Jerusalem were struggling, and they said, Paul, let's get together some money to go help them, because we care about them.

And so, Paul was like, yeah, that's a good idea. And then when he was traveling to the other churches, even the churches in Macedonia, he's like, Corinth, that church in the Achaia region, they want to help the saints.

They themselves came up with the idea of giving their money to care for others. And the Macedonians went, that's awesome. We should do that.

[7 : 12] And they were stirred up by the zeal of the saints at Corinth. So see, Paul is saying like, you had this willing heart.

Your heart was so willing that when other people heard of it, they were moved and motivated by your example. You inspired other people because you were passionate about this.

This is a good and right thing. You know, like caring for other people, caring for saints, is what believers should always be about.

So Paul commends them for this. He highlights their zeal, their good intentions. You know, this is the people of God we're talking about.

Of course, the Corinthians care about them. That's wonderful that they will these good things. We'll think more later that that will should be associated with them finishing the work.

[8 : 19] But let's just stop and recognize like, yeah, that's a sweet and good thing that these brothers and sisters were zealous, eager to sacrifice to help others.

And that's what we should be too. As believers, we should be a people that are always looking, always willing to help others.

That it's not a matter of fairness that I only help when it's my obligation to do so. But I'm on the lookout for ways that I can make other people's lives better.

That when we come to each other and we're talking about our week and we hear that we have problems, our heart should be quick to say, what could I do to help them through that situation? That is a right and fitting thing for believers to do. I should be able to brag to other churches that these saints at Christ Baptist Church, they're so willing to help whenever there's a need.

[9 : 32] If they have the ability to do something about it, they're eager to find a way. And that should be something that should be an example to others and stir other people up.

Consider also to, have you ever, like, wished that someone was there to help you when you were needy? Did you ever think to yourself, man, if I could just, like, if someone could reach out and do this little thing, it would make my life so much easier.

Well, that's got to start somewhere. And maybe it can start with you being that for someone else.

And maybe that's going to be an example that will inspire other believers to do the same.

And before you know it, when you're in need, the other saints will be coming to you. So be an example. You know, it actually reminded me of an old song, you know.

No message could have been any clearer. If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change.

[10 : 54] Michael Jackson, Man in the Mirror. Like, doing good starts with you. You know, don't wait to hear reports about how good other churches are doing and then be like, man, we should get on board with that.

Be excited to be the church that is an example to other people to spur them on. You know, don't wait, but start willing and loving and longing to do good to each other whenever you have

opportunity to.

That's point one, the willing. Point two, the working. But we know that that good heart needs to be paired with good actions.

You know, James will talk to the church and say, it's good that you care about the things of the Bible.

It's good that you claim to be a Christian, but you need to work that out. It's not enough to just say it in your head or with your mouth, but there needs to be labors that match your status as a believer.

[12:10] He says, you know, if someone comes to you and they're hungry and they don't have enough clothes to get through the cold winter, and they tell you about the struggle and you say, I'll pray for you.

What good is that? It's not that prayer is useless, but James is trying to show there that like good intentions aren't enough.

Like if it's in your power to give a starving brother food, then do it. You know, like works need to go with our good heart.

It is a fitting pair to have working with the willing. Like Bonnie and Clyde, they go together.

Like PB and Jay, the best combination. Like Justin and Hannah, some things just make sense. We want willing to go together with working.

[13:11] And this is, this is what Paul's getting at. It's extra to write these things to the church because they should already know that it makes sense for them to love the church in this way.

He's not twisting their arm. He's just trying to encourage them in the plain good things. You know, it's like if someone came to me and they're like, hey man, I'm getting married.

Do you have any advice for me? And I said, love your wife. You know, they're not going to go, I never thought of that. Great idea.

And yet, we still need reminders sometimes. Even if it's obvious, sometimes we need to hear, like, I'm glad that you love good things.

I'm glad that you care about other people. I'm glad that you look at suffering and it moves your heart. But you should also go and do something about it.

[14:21] Even if that's obvious to say, I'm still going to give you that reminder from time to time because it's good for you. Like a husband getting the reminder, love your wife.

And don't forget that there's been rockiness in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians. They were tempted to abandon Paul because they thought Paul was being selfish and not coming to them. So Paul had explained earlier in the letter, I love you guys.

He proved his love through many careful arguments that we worked through and now he wants to make sure just because we had a little bit of a rocky patch, don't forget the good that you were going to do.

I know it's obvious but I don't want these issues we had to keep you from doing this good to these saints so I'm also sending this reminder to you.

[15:26] Paul is doing everything he can to make sure that the Corinthians do as good as possible and look as good as possible.

He wants them to look good. I mean he says it this way, lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we, not to mention you, should be ashamed of this confident boasting.

I mean imagine Paul, he goes to these other churches and he's like the Corinthians are so zealous to help the saints in Jerusalem and these other churches they're cut to the heart, they're like that should be me.

and then they come to the Corinthians and the Corinthians haven't done anything to help. That would be embarrassing. Like imagine if someone brags about how kind you are and then they bring their friend who they were bragging about to you and you start making fun of them.

You know? I think about like I preach to you every week up here and I instruct you about how you should be loving and caring and how you should serve one another.

[16:54] Imagine if every time you came to me asking for help I just blew you off. Like that would be the same sort of thing if the Macedonians came to the Corinthians and their willing desire wasn't matched by a working it out.

You know? So finish the work because it would be a shame to disappoint those who you inspired.

Like we've all heard the saying don't meet your heroes because you have one like you're inspired by them you have one view of them in your mind and then you meet them and they're not that great

in person.

What a sad world. like I want actual real heroes. You know? Imagine if you met Jesus after a life of striving to be Christ-like to be sacrificial to be kind and then you met him for real and he was a ruthless selfish person.

That would be crazy. That would be such an utter disappointment. yet it will never be so. Jesus is the hero that will perfectly fulfill even beyond your wildest expectations of him.

Paul in Ephesians 4 is praying you know to him who is able to do even more abundantly than all that we say or ask.

[18 : 30] That God is far better than even our best imaginings of him. So finish the work because people have been inspired by you and it would be embarrassing not to.

And I love the love of Paul here. He wants to make sure that they don't fall into this embarrassing circumstance. He's like I'm sending people your way not to chastise you but because I don't want you to look bad.

I love you and I want you to look good and I want the work that you started to be finished in such a way that you can be proud of it.

It's like if you're having a surprise party, one of the smart things to do is always have someone with the birthday person and have them shoot a text like okay we're on our way, we're coming in.

Because the worst thing to do is put together a surprise party and then the guy walks in and no one's ready for the surprise. They're all sitting there and chatting. You ruin it.

[19 : 38] So too Paul's like I'm sending these brothers to you to make sure that you're ready because I don't want you to be embarrassed. I love you. I care about you.

And so Paul also continues to encourage them to match the work and the willingness because they were the ones who started it all in the first place.

You know imagine like a kid who begs his parents over and over I want to go to the beach. I want to go to the beach. I want to go to the beach. beach. And then they start to get ready to go to the beach and then the kid is busy doing anything other than getting ready to go to the beach.

And we find it so frustrating because it doesn't make sense to start something to be the one who initiates it and then to be the one who's making it drag behind.

So too the Corinthians had started this and makes sense to finish it. If the good desire for something starts in your heart do the fitting thing and finish it out.

[20 : 54] You know Paul wants it not to be something that he has to drag out of them but something that they do joyfully and willingly like we read in Exodus how the people of God didn't have to be told all right everyone give 5% or give 3 pounds of gold or whatnot that Moses was just able to say we need this gold whoever wants to give it come forth.

That's what we say when we collect the offerings. I'm not going to go around and say tell me how much you make and give this amount based on that.

I'm not a tax collector. We say give to the church because you love the church. Because it's your joy. Because you're willing to support it.

Paul wants it to be a matter of generosity not obligation. We should work willingly. You know those situations where you have a task and you're like are there any volunteers?

And no one volunteers so then you're like alright I guess I have to pick people. Paul doesn't want to have to pick people. He wants the joy and the boasting and the love of people willingly giving.

[22 : 24] You know. So the willing is matched by a generous working out. A joyful working out.

So I have a few things for you to take away from that to work hard to make each other look good.

You know there's a part of our sinful flesh that loves to see people fall flat on their face.

You know like I told them you know and then when they mess up I told you so. You know I was right they were wrong.

That makes me look good doesn't it? There's a part of our heart that thinks like that. You know it's not my responsibility if they want to be dumb you know I've said it before myself play stupid games win stupid prizes you know but that's not what love says.

That's not how love operates. Paul could have just been like I'm not going to try to help these Corinthians. They started this they should finish it they don't need me to tell them that.

[23 : 40] It's obvious. No. He says I love these people and I'm going to go out of my way to help them be as successful as possible.

That means even if someone knows has already been told something it's a kind thing to shoot them a reminder if you think they're going to forget.

You know if someone is not budgeting their time rightly and they're likely to fall behind on a task don't think well that's their mistake for being too lazy think can I help them still be successful can I be gracious and kind to them work hard to make each other look good because you love them you know application to get it done like look for ways to be helpful and do them like it's simple like make the checklist don't just make it but make it and check it off you know at work I do sticky notes when things come up like oh I need to get to that and then the sticky notes will grow and eventually there's so many sticky notes that I need sticky notes to keep track of my sticky notes you know I think to myself oh man these sticky notes aren't helping me remember what I need to do I need another system no what I need to do is start doing the tasks and checking off the boxes get it done like really like one foot in front of the other find ways to do good and do it like today is the day don't wait for tomorrow don't wait for a month from now start doing it and you'll be amazed by the wonders that it produces when believers put faith into practice and start doing good application three work joyfully like you are working for the Lord you are in many circumstances ministering to the saints you're helping the people of God who are in need like that's not something you should be walking around like

I guess imagine if every time I preach to you I was like this well I don't really want to do this but you are paying me so now concerning the ministering of the saints it is like would that make you feel loved would that glorify God no work as a matter of generosity like the church is not meant to be like your job you see people at work and they're there for the paycheck it's Monday and they're not happy I don't want to I don't want that to be the case here I want unbelievers!

[27 : 12] to come in here and see and be amazed at how people could work so joyfully and how people could love so much that they're happy to sacrifice and they go wow what sort of God is this that brings people this joy but why does all of this matter is it just that you know I want us to be a happy go lucky people you know like I'm looking for my little kumbaya commune there's deeper purposes here notice what he says in verse one and I was touching on this already he says concerning the ministering up to the saints the work he's talking about is a work of love for the people of

God Jesus Christ has called believers out of the world out of families and nations out of different social classes out of different hobbies and preferences and has made you into one people he says there is now neither Jew nor Greek male nor female rich nor poor slave nor free but everyone is one in Jesus he has made you into one people that means what benefits you benefits you what is a victory for one person is a victory for another so serving each other is a great way to win you know it would be like in a war if you didn't care if pieces of your nation got bombed like you're one nation when one part's bombed the other suffers too because you're one country you win and you lose together like when

Pearl Harbor attacked America didn't just say well that's Hawaii you know they kind of deserve it they have it made over there and I'm jealous no they said an attack on them is an attack on us and so we're going to war what benefits one believer benefits another because Jesus has made us one he's made us a body do you say when you stub your toe whatever it's just my foot oh like you're mad you're personally offended that that coffee table would jump into your way because it's part of your body love your brothers and sisters and he has died to make us holy you were dead in your sins and trespasses you were a sinner apart from the grace of God the only thing that could possibly satisfy the wrath of

God against you was for his son to take it all on the cross and he said that price is not too much to pay for loving you and making you holy so he sent his son to die on your behalf that's the only reason that you're a Christian is because God was willing!

and working for your good if God just said hey I want these people to repent I want these people to be saved but refuse to send Jesus you would go to hell but God's will was good and his work was great and so he sent Jesus to die for you to make you holy so revel in that and will and work good for each other let us will and work good for the saints and a closing thought if any of you here do not know the Lord it's not too late you are currently outside of this loving family and not a member of it the wrath of God exists against you and yet

[31 : 56] God is so relentlessly concerned for your good that he has spared no expense that you might repent and come to him today is the day of salvation take hold of Christ cry out to him and

ask for him to save you and you will be saved because God is love he is good and he works salvation for those who call upon his name if you want to know more about that please come and talk to me afterwards so let us will and work for the good of the saints let's close in prayer Lord God heavenly gracious and merciful Father we thank you for your kindness who are we that you should be mindful of us and yet you have made us higher than the angels you have shed your own blood that we might go free help us to not just a people be a people who thinks well but also a people who works well we cannot do this ourselves so we need your spirit to soften our hearts and lead us in the way everlasting we pray all these things in the name of Jesus amen please rise for our closing song through