

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Title: Enthusiasm and Follow-Through

Truth: God calls us to match enthusiasm with follow-through in our giving and all of our lives.

Date/Location: Sunday June 21, 2026 at FBC (rewrite of 9/3/2006)

I. Review of the Situation

Regarding the Macedonian and Corinthian giving, we can piece together the sequence of events:

1. The Corinthians (Achaia) were enthusiastically willing a year earlier to participate in a project to support the poor Christians in Jerusalem. This made it somewhat unnecessary that Paul write about it to them. But there was something lacking.
2. Paul had boasted about their enthusiasm to encourage the Macedonian churches—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea—to participate as well.
3. God’s grace became evident in the midst of their difficult trials because they followed through on the call to give and even urged Paul to let them participate. They gave not only a generous offering, but gave of themselves to the Lord.
4. But Corinth had not yet followed through and it was past time for them to do so.
5. Paul reports about the Macedonian giving in 2 Corinthians 8 as an encouragement to them to finish the project (8:11).
6. It was Corinthian zeal that had stirred up others. But now, if the Corinthians did not actually follow through on their initial enthusiasm, it would show that Paul’s boasting in other places was empty. That is embarrassing!
7. When the Macedonians came with Paul to Corinth to finish gathering the funds for their trip to Jerusalem, if the offering plate were empty it would cause the Corinthians to be ashamed as well.
8. Consequently, Paul sent the emissaries mentioned in 8:16-24 to make sure everything was prepared. This was not just a money-

grab trip, but to make sure that the above shame would not come upon anyone.

II. Principles We Learn from This Situation

A. God teaches us here that giving, although incumbent upon us as Christians, should be given as a generous gift. It should not, by contrast, be given as a “grudging obligation” or an “exaction” (ESV) or be “forced” (NET). The Greek lexicon BDAG defines it this way: *a gift that is grudgingly granted by avarice*. Avarice is even worse than greed. It is a desire to hoard and protect wealth rather than use it.

Now, Paul might be able to cajole the Corinthians to give despite them having a tight hold on money, but he hoped not to do that. Rather, **giving should be willing and voluntary**.

B. Another important principle that we can draw from this is the **critical need for follow-through**. Initial enthusiasm is not sufficient. It does not “count” as a substitute the real thing. We can get ourselves into a psychological state where we believe we are enthusiastic about something, we are really behind it, we acknowledge it is important, but then we do not actually *do* it.

In this case, the enthusiasm was about giving, but it was in danger of becoming merely theoretical. It was not practical until it actually happened.

Enthusiasm to give is different from the doing of it. In giving, saying you will give sometime is different than sitting down and writing the check or doing the bill pay or sending the Paypal or Venmo.

The same thing applies in all of life. You might feel an enthusiasm about getting going on a project and seeing the finished result (like cleaning out your car...or desk...or house). But you actually have to get up and get the job done for the enthusiasm to mean anything.

C. Consider follow-through with regard to the matter of salvation. You have heard the gospel. Its seed has been planted in your heart. But have you rejected it? Or do you have only an initial favorable response that does not actually amount to saving faith? Remember the parable of the sower who shares the gospel:

Matthew 13:5-6 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

Matthew 13:20-21 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

This recipient of the good news about Jesus hears the message, that Jesus is God's Son who came to earth and gave Himself as a sacrifice to pay for our sin-debt. He rose again from the dead and as such is demonstrated to be Lord and Messiah. He is coming again as King and Judge, but at the same time He offers forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life to anyone who repents and trusts in Him. That is the core of the Christian message that God shares with you.

An enthusiastic "I'm down with that" attitude is great, but if it is not coupled with a real change of mind, affection, and will...with a follow-through of true repentance and faith...then the enthusiasm amounts to hot air or "good thoughts" but nothing more. It is not then salvation that you have, but mere knowledge.

Conclusion

So I ask this simple question to help you obey what we have read here. Is there anything in your life where you have not followed through? Maybe it is in the very beginning of your walk with God that you have not really told the Lord you believe in Him and turn away from your sin. Maybe it is in the area of giving. You have a decent job and income, but you have not actually supported God's work. Here is another one: in principle you know you should be in God's word reading regularly. Are you doing it?

Do not be side-tracked by distractions and false teaching and life's busy-ness!