

“But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don’t want to be wrong in my boasting about you. We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren’t ready after all I had told them!” 2 Corinthians 9:3-4 NLT

## lectio // 2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Ah, the boast and scold method! Nice, well done Paul. Corinth churches were believed to be fairly wealthy because of the commerce that came through the port from all over the world. They were THE spot for dyed cloth and became famous for it. This business was very lucrative. Paul had to get on the churches in Corinth because at one point, even the poorest of city churches were out-giving them. So Paul writes to appeal to their highest AND competitive nature, “I really don’t need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving.” Using words like “eager” and “enthusiasm” reminded them of their desire to be generous, but also to put pressure on them. Here, we read that Paul is “sending” some brothers. Now, I don’t think this was a mafia-style sending, to rough up the pastors until they gave. However, it was a very strong hint that time was up and they should get their act together. He used a different kind of motivation with phrases like “wrong in my boasting” and words like “embarrassment.” Whew, Paul, Mr. high on accountability! They did eventually give and all was well, but you see the seriousness of responsible generosity. Giving is very much a part of the mark’s of discipleship. And, it is a good indicator of maturity as well. It’s not about the amounts, it’s about the consistency. It is a joy to give. It’s not a joy to have to be reminded, hounded, and have the “brothers” show up to hold us to our word!

## oratio

Dad,

You know that I had to learn to be generous. It did, does not come naturally. Selfishness and self determination runs deep in my DNA. Then add some unhealthy doses of cynicism and mistrust and I stop thinking give and start hoarding again. You have blessed me (us) far more than I ever dreamed or expected. And, not just finances - in every way. You have cared for and watched over us so well. How can I be anything but generous? Thank you.

## contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root