

2 Corinthians 9

'Diplomacy and Deviousness'

Introduction ...

Last Sunday evening, we thought about how St Paul was trying to **motivate** the Christians in Corinth ... and in particular to motivate them to give generously of their financial resources to Christians in poverty elsewhere.

Our Key verse was **2 Corinthians 8:9**

**For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor
so that by his poverty you might become rich**

Tonight's reading was from the following chapter – and it appears that St Paul was not sure that he'd got the point across.

And so – he decides to use a bit of flattery ...

It is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the saints

(though notice that this is exactly what he is doing!)

for I know your eagerness – which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia ...

Is that flattery diplomatic or devious?

There can be a very fine line between the two but it can be very effective! I remember treading that fine line when I took over heading up one of the vet schools' Large Animal Hospitals. I wasn't happy with the cleanliness of Operating Theatres at the start of operations ... asking for one of the surgical lights to be moved and refocused would often bring dust down onto the surgical site.

So I got the staff together, explained that I wanted to understand everyone's role and could they write me a list of their responsibilities ... as you can guess – this is before the advent of full job descriptions.

It worked brilliantly – they were all so keen to demonstrate how important their role was ... and so it was much easier to keep them to what they'd written – including the operating theatre cleanliness – than if I'd started with my expectations.

Diplomatic or devious? Whichever – it was effective!

And the same is probably true of St Paul's words ... it seems that they were effective. In **Romans 15: 25, 26** Paul writes:

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints;

for Macedonia and Achaia (that's the location of Corinth)

have been pleased to share their resources with the poor

among the saints in Jerusalem.

PTO

Diplomacy, deviousness, the use of flattery ... how do we distinguish? Is it important to distinguish? When we appeal to the instincts of others that might not always be Christ-centred instincts – pride, self-importance – is that following the words of Jesus to be **‘as wise as serpents’** – or is it underhand trickery? Or dishonest manipulation instead of upfront motivation?

I don't think it's always easy to know – but maybe awareness of the possibilities will keep us alert – both when we might want to manipulate others or when someone might be trying to manipulate us.

Conclusion ...

To conclude ... an anonymous quote:

Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way

Only always safe and wholesome when it's God's way and we embrace it secure in God's love for us.

Amen.