

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

THE MINISTRY AND ITS FINANCIAL INTEGRITY, 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

B. The Men Who Handle the Collection, 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

1. **They care for the church—earnestly care (v.16-17).**
2. **They have a reputation for the gospel, a testimony for witnessing (v.18).**
3. **They are representatives chosen by the church in order to avoid charges of misconduct against the minister (v.19-21).**
4. **They are diligent in many things, but especially in collections (v.22).**
5. **They are partners of the minister (v.23).**
6. **They are to be loved by the church (v.24).**

Stewardship with Integrity Calls for Submission to Pastoral Leadership

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶“But thanks be to **God** who puts **the same earnestness** on your behalf **in the heart of Titus**.

¹⁷For **he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.**”

Paul here anticipated and answered another potential objection to the offering, namely, that the project was his alone. But it was not just Paul’s passion; **God** had put **the same earnestness** for the project **in the heart of Titus**.

Titus, who knew them so well and loved them so dearly (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:15), was also wholeheartedly committed to the relief effort for the Jerusalem saints. That God had so united the hearts of Paul and Titus further confirmed that the collection was His will. Nor could the anti-Paul faction accuse Titus of having a Jewish bias, since he was a Gentile.

2 Corinthians 7:13-15 (NASB)

¹³“For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

¹⁴ For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth.

¹⁵ His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.”

Lest any should think that Paul coerced Titus into being involved with the program, the apostle noted that **he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.** Paul did ask Titus to participate, and he **accepted** the apostle’s appeal. But so **earnest** was Titus’s support for the project that he went to Corinth **of his own accord.** His voluntary participation along with Paul was further evidence of the unanimity between the two.

Forceful, strong-willed leaders can often ram through their projects. But biblically sound stewardship programs **will be led by a plurality of godly men.** The church’s finances are to be overseen by wise, theologically sound, spiritually mature men who agree to seek the mind of God.

2. (2 Corinthians 8:18) Stewardship— Offerings: men who handle collections (ushers) have a reputation for the gospel, that is, for believing the gospel and for bearing witness to it.

2 Corinthians 8:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ “We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel has spread* through all the churches.”

The man mentioned in this verse is never named, and any attempt to identify him is futile and worthless conjecture.

Three significant things are said about him.

1. He was a “**brother**” in the Lord, a Christian brother to Paul and to other believers. This is essential for those who handle collections:

- ⇒ They must be men who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- ⇒ They must be acting like brothers, living in fellowship, harmony, and unity with other believers. There is no room for criticism, murmuring, or divisiveness.

Matthew 12:50 (NASB)

⁵⁰ “**For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**”

2. He had a strong testimony in the gospel. This means that he was a strong witness to the gospel. He not only lived for Christ, but he bore witness to the saving power of Christ—that Christ could and would change a person’s life: transforming him into a new creature, forgiving his sins and giving him eternal life.

3. His testimony was so strong that it was known throughout “**all the churches.**”

Thought 1. What a dynamic testimony for all those who handle collections!

How important...

- that they be true brothers in the Lord.
- that they have strong testimonies in the gospel.
- that their testimonies be so strong that people know that they follow the Lord.

Hebrews 11:2 (NASB)

²“For by it [**faith**] the men of old gained approval or [obtained a good report].”

Romans 16:19 (NASB)

¹⁹“For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.”

1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

Proverbs 22:1 (NASB)

¹“A *good* name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.”

Psalms 66:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“Come *and* hear, all who fear God, And I will tell of what He has done for my soul.”

Isaiah 43:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.”

Stewardship with Integrity Calls for Accountability

2 Corinthians 8:18-23 (NASB)

¹⁸“We have **sent along with** him the **brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches;**

¹⁹and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness,

²⁰taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

²¹for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in

the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

²² We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

²³ As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.”

Not only was Titus, whom the Corinthians knew well and highly respected, involved in the collection, but so also was an unnamed **brother whose fame in the things of the gospel** had **spread through all the churches**. Paul had **sent** him **along with** Titus to Corinth to help with the collection.

The inclusion of this highly regarded individual signaled Paul’s intention to handle matters with absolute honesty and integrity. It further deflected any possible criticism that he might misuse the money.

Some have speculated that the unnamed **brother** was **Tychicus**, others that he was **Trophimus** or **Luke**. But since his name is not given, such speculation is futile. The Corinthians would certainly recognize him, if for no other reason than that he would arrive with **Titus**.

The implication of Paul’s words, however, is that they already knew him as a distinguished preacher of the gospel. Paul did not choose him to help with the collection because of his business acumen, but because of his spiritual maturity, unimpeachable character, and reputation for integrity. The involvement of another godly leader with the collection further enhanced the project’s credibility. It was also in keeping with the New Testament pattern of entrusting money to the spiritual leadership of the church (cf. [Acts 4:37](#)).

[Acts 4:36-37 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁶ “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

[2 Corinthians 8:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹ “And **not only this, but he** has **also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work**, which is **being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself**, and **to show our readiness**.”

Not only had Paul and Titus chosen the unnamed brother to help oversee the collection, **but he** had **also been appointed by the churches to travel with** them **in that gracious work**. He was not just another of the apostle’s protégés who would be under his thumb. His appointment by the **churches** protected Paul and Titus from any false accusation that they were in collusion to mishandle the money. The reason for the apostle’s concern was not that he and Titus could not be trusted, but rather that Paul’s

enemies at Corinth could not be trusted. They could not be allowed to make an accusation that would further confuse the already unsettled Corinthians.

The collection was **being administered by** Paul and his companions **for the glory of the Lord Himself**. They wanted to be absolutely certain that no reproach fell on the name of Christ. The unnamed preacher would act as an objective, outside auditor, ensuring that no valid criticism about the handling of the money could be made. They also wanted **to show** their **readiness** to help the poor, something Paul had always been eager to do (cf. [Galatians 2:10](#)).

[Galatians 2:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰ “*They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.*”

[2 Corinthians 8:20 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰ “*Taking **precaution so that no one** will **discredit** us **in** our **administration of this generous gift.***”

So, anticipating his enemies’ attacks on his credibility, Paul took the **precaution** of involving the godly preacher who would accompany Titus **so that no one** would **discredit** him **in** his **administration of** the Corinthians’ **generous gift**. It was a wise safeguard, since his enemies at Corinth had accused him of being in the ministry for money. Defending his rights and privileges as an apostle, Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 9:3-15](#),

[1 Corinthians 9:3-15 \(NASB\)](#)

³ “*My defense to those who examine me is this:*

⁴ *Do we not have a right to eat and drink?*

⁵ *Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*

⁶ *Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?*

⁷ *Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?*

⁸ *I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?*

⁹ *For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?*

¹⁰ *Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.*

¹¹ *If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?*

¹² *If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.*

¹³ *Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have*

their share from the altar?

¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

¹⁵ But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”

Though Paul had every right to receive support from the Corinthians, he did not take it. He wanted to avoid lending credence to the false accusation that he was in the ministry for the money.

Later in [2 Corinthians](#) he wrote,

[2 Corinthians 11:7-9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ “Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?

⁸ I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you;

⁹ and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.”

[2 Corinthians 12:14-18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ “Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for *their* parents, but parents for *their* children.

¹⁵ I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit.

¹⁷ *Certainly* I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?

¹⁸ I urged Titus *to go*, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit *and walk in the same steps*?”

Paul’s caution was all the more justified because he expected the Corinthians’ gift to be a large one. *Hadrotēs* (generous gift), which appears only here in the New Testament, refers to an abundance. It would have been a tempting target had Paul really been the embezzler his enemies falsely accused him of being.

[2 Corinthians 8:18-23 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ “For we have **regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**”

Paul had **regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord** (cf. the discussion of **v. 19**), **but also in the sight of men**. Some might wonder why Paul should care what men thought, as long as he acted appropriately **in the sight of the Lord**.

He was no man pleaser (cf. [1 Corinthians 9:22](#); [Galatians 1:10](#); [1 Thess. 2:4](#)).

[1 Corinthians 9:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

[Galatians 1:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

[1 Thessalonians 2:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.”

But neither was he unconcerned about what men thought; after all, they were the ones he was trying to reach with the gospel. He could not allow his enemies to make any false accusations that might discredit and bring suspicion on him before the watching world and hinder his preaching of the gospel (cf. [Proverbs 3:4](#); [Romans 12:17](#); [Romans 14:16](#); [1 Corinthians 9:22](#); [1 Corinthians 10:32-33](#)).

[Proverbs 3:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.”

[Romans 12:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”

[Romans 14:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.”

[1 Corinthians 9:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

[1 Corinthians 10:32-33 \(NASB\)](#)

³²“Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

³³just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.”

[2 Corinthians 8:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“We have **sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things**, but now even more diligent because **of his great confidence in you**.”

Further underscoring his concern to handle the collection with integrity, Paul **sent with** Titus and the unnamed preacher another unnamed **brother**. Once again, it is futile to speculate about his identity; like the famous preacher mentioned above, the Corinthians knew and respected him. Though he is not named, he is highly commended; Paul described him as one **whom we have often tested** (from *dokimazō*; to approve after testing) **and found diligent in many things**. His diligence or zeal was enhanced **because of his great confidence in** the Corinthians. He had heard of their repentance and renewed loyalty to Paul, which made him all the more eager to be involved.

2 Corinthians 8:23 (NASB)

²³ As for **Titus**, *he is my partner and fellow worker among* you; as for our **brethren, they are messengers of the churches**, a glory to Christ.”

Then Paul summarized the members of what amounted to his financial committee, reemphasizing their noble, unimpeachable character. **Titus** was not only Paul’s **partner** (*koinōnos*) in ministry, but also a **fellow worker** (*sunergos*; cf. [Romans 16:3, 9, 21](#); [Philippians 2:25](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [Philemon 1, 24](#)) **among** the Corinthians.

Romans 16:3 (NASB)

³ “Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 16:9 (NASB)

⁹ “Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and **Stachys** my beloved.”

Romans 16:21 (NASB)

²¹ “**Timothy** my fellow worker greets you, and *so do* **Lucius** and **Jason** and **Sosipater**, my kinsmen.”

Philippians 2:25 (NASB)

²⁵ “But I thought it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.”

Colossians 4:11 (NASB)

¹¹ “And *also* Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.”

Philemon 1:1 (NASB)

¹ “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To **Philemon** our beloved *brother and fellow worker*.”

Philemon 1:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “As do **Mark**, **Aristarchus**, **Demas**, **Luke**, my fellow workers.

And **as for** the two unnamed **brethren, they** were **messengers** (lit., “apostles”) **of the churches**. That phrase, occurring only here in the New Testament, designates them as officially authorized representatives of the churches. They were not apostles of Christ, as were the Twelve and Paul. They were not eyewitnesses of the risen Lord, chosen and commissioned by Him, either directly ([Mark 3:13-19](#); [Acts 9:15](#)) or through those whom He had previously commissioned ([Acts 1:21-22](#)).

Mark 3:13-19 (NASB)

¹³“And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.

¹⁴And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach,

¹⁵and to have authority to cast out the demons.

¹⁶And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter),

¹⁷and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”);

¹⁸and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot;

¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.”

Acts 9:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”

Acts 1:21-22 (NASB)

²¹“Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—

²²beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

2 Corinthians 8:23 (NASB)

²³As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, **a glory to Christ.**”

These two faithful brothers were sent by the churches to help with the collection. Showing the high caliber of men to which the early church entrusted money, Paul called the three **a glory to Christ**. There could be no higher commendation, and those who lived to bring **glory to Christ** would not bring shame to His name and His church.