

**Text:** 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

**Title:** Managing Giving with Integrity

**Truth:** To honor God, Paul selects men of integrity to oversee the offering.

**Date/Location:** May 31, 2026 at FBC (revised from 8/27/2006)

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## Introduction

Paul is talking about sending men who will administer the financial gift. The character of those men is at the core of what he is conveying. These men are of such character that they will ensure the integrity of the administration of the offering. They were going to complete the collection, or at least the arrangements of it, and then were going to carry it to the church in Jerusalem.

First, review what God has taught us so far in 2 Cor. 8 about giving:

1. Giving is a grace, a disposition created by the Holy Spirit.
2. Giving is normal in the Christian life for all Christians.
3. Giving is advantageous for Christians to give to receive blessing from God and to store up treasure in Heaven.
4. The Macedonians (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) provided an example of sacrificial giving in spite of their severe trials. This type of giving is not normal, but it is also not to be ignored as if it is never appropriate! It is a good example.
5. These believers were not pressured to give, but they pressured Paul into letting them give so they could help the needy.
6. They first dedicated themselves to Christ, then to his work, workers, and people. This is what Paul desired—2 Cor. 12:14—not their money.
7. With more money and less trials, the Corinthians could easily participate in the offering. Paul encouraged them to abound in the grace of giving, along with all the other graces they already had in abundance.
8. Such a call to giving served as a test of the sincerity of the Corinthian's love for the Lord and others. Paul wanted them to want to give, not to be forced into it.

9. Giving was also called for in light of the example of Christ's generous self-sacrifice and the personal advantage of the believers in Corinth, besides the fact that they said they were going to do it!
10. Giving is based on what God has already given us, not what we do not have.
11. Giving is also to come from a willing heart, not a coerced one.
12. It is on these bases (willingness and "as prospered," 1 Cor. 16:2) that God evaluates the gift.
13. The goal of the giving is to meet legitimate needs, not to enrich the receiver. "Equality" means "equitable" or "fair," with needs met, not "so all have the same amount."

## **I. Selecting Men of Integrity, v. 16-19, 22-23**

- A. Paul lists three men he is sending to the church, with credentials. The letter we are reading is their introduction and commendation letter. They will assist with collecting and transporting the finances.
- B. The men are Titus (v. 16-17), "the brother" (18-19), and "our brother" (22). Titus will presumably introduce the two unnamed men when they arrive at the church.
- C. One tradition identifies the second man as the well-known Luke. Others suggest it could be Barnabas, Aristarchus, or Apollos. Both are messengers of the churches, likely the Macedonian churches. Acts 20:4 gives us a clue that the men could be Sopater of Berea or Aristarchus or Secundus of Thessalonica. Certainty is not possible.
- D. I believe that the way Paul identifies Titus and not the other brothers suggests that Titus is the leader of the team, and that those brothers do not need identification, probably already being known to the church or at least known by reputation.
- E. These men are marked by several characteristics, which can be considered in three categories according to Murray Harris: personal, ecclesial, and Christological.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005, p. 595–56.

1. Earnest care for the Corinthian church members just like Paul felt (v. 16, 17, 22). Notice that God placed the **zeal or devotion** of care into Titus's heart. God gave manna to Israel and God gave zealous care into the heart of Titus. God is the source of all good, and this passage teaches us that He develops character traits in our hearts as well.

The work of God in Titus is so obvious and so wonderful that Paul thanks God for it (like the thanksgivings in 2:14, 9:15).

Titus is like Timothy, who was unlike a lot of other people who care mostly about themselves. Timothy and Titus were among the few in whom God has placed a unique kind of zeal toward other people (Phil. 2:20).

Titus was not primarily concerned with their money. Just like the Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, with their *things* following, so too Titus had given himself to the Lord and consequently cared more for the people than for their money. He wanted their spiritual health to be the best, regardless of their donations. That was likely opposite of many traveling teachers, who wanted financial support and influence, and did not really care deeply for the people to whom they spoke.

Paul sent Titus because he was of the same mind and heart as Paul and would represent him perfectly.

The three representatives did not undertake this mission with dread, but with joy and anticipation of success because of Paul's newly acquired confidence in the church. That is what diligence means in this context. But imagine, if you will, what this project entailed: many weeks if not months of travel, carrying a large sum of money, worrying about thieves and pirates, and probably many other difficulties and hazards about which we could only speculate. They were conscientious in guarding their duty toward the Corinthians and the Christians in Jerusalem. They were eagerly intent to help with the project. And it was a big privilege to be chosen to do this work.

Paul did not have to press Titus and the other men to conduct this task. They wanted to help on their own initiative. They were involved themselves, not just at Paul's behest.

2. Praise in the gospel throughout the churches. They had a sterling reputation. The idea of "praise in the gospel" is general enough that it could have to do with evangelism, preaching of the Word, or general gospel-centered life and ministry. In any case, the churches who knew this man were agreed that he was a top-notch representative for them and would ensure that the offering was overseen properly.
3. Chosen by the churches. Paul did not pick them himself—he had input or nomination from the churches. In effect, the churches chose these men. This reduced the possibility of a conflict of interest that could compromise the project. This helps to show that Paul was not self-dealing in the finances. It also shows these men are men of great character, eminently trustworthy, even if the Corinthians did not know them. They can trust them without reasonable doubt because sound Christian churches selected them to do the work.

Titus was not selected by the churches. Instead, he is a representative of the apostle Paul and so comes with apostolic authority and is the leader of the delegation. The two unnamed men are messengers of the churches (v. 23). The word *messengers* comes from the same Greek word as "apostle." We translate it as *messenger* to more accurately convey the idea so as not to confuse them with the apostles of Christ. Notice that these are "apostles of the churches" not "apostles of Christ."<sup>2</sup> They *represent* those churches.

The next two descriptions of Titus and the other men form the final part of the "recommendation letter" in which Paul introduces these men to the church. If anyone asks about these

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<sup>2</sup> There are three kinds of "apostles." First, there are those chosen by Christ (the 12, plus Paul). Then there are some of those closely associated with the 12+Paul as apostolic representatives, men like James, the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19), Barnabas, Apollos, Titus, Silas, and Timothy. The third group is the messengers of the churches.

men, you are to think of them not only as messengers of the churches (covered above), but also as:

4. Partner and fellow worker. Paul commissioned Titus as his special representative in a number of situations. One time, he left him on the island of Crete to do some church work (Titus 1:5). These words indicate that Titus is the right-hand man of Paul, working side-by-side with him.
5. Honoring to Christ. Their lives were a credit to Jesus; thus, they are the “glory of Christ.” They glorified Him in how they lived, their reputation, and their service. The offering they collected would also glorify the Lord as it caused the recipients to thank the Lord (9:12-13), but the focus here is on their character.

## **II. To Maintain the Utmost Integrity, v, 19-21**

- A. Why these men? In the most practical sense, they were going to travel with Paul. Not only would this provide strength in numbers, but it would ensure that the same amount of funds given would be received on the other end.
- B. To maintain the integrity of the project. Malicious charges seem to be a possibility. With fame came detractors and critics, and Paul had amassed more than his share of such people. If he made any misstep or something that *looked* like a misstep, especially after talking about money so much, people could get the wrong idea that He was in this for money, and not for their well-being. So, he has others come with Titus to complete the financial offering and make sure that the offering gets to its destination without being lost or any of it siphoned off. These men are a safeguard, an ancient version of the ECFA or a CPA audit. The simple version of this verification system is the eyes of multiple people of integrity.
- C. Integrity in the sight of the Lord. We know in our heads that God sees everything and knows everything, but we need to really live like we know it. He is the ultimate judge of what is right. Paul wanted the gifts to be managed this way so that the gift would be administered to the glory of the Lord (v. 19).

D. Integrity in the sight of men. We must be honest in the eyes of men, who also watch to see how we do things, whether with integrity and care or with a cloak of secrecy and suspiciously.

Furthermore, “right in the sight of the Lord” cannot be a cover-up or excuse for not making it honest in the sight of men. If reasonable, spiritual people are wondering or thinking that something fishy is happening with how the finances are handled, raising their eyebrows so to speak—whether it really has integrity or not, then it is time to seriously re-evaluate that practice.

I can imagine someone portraying himself to be “spiritual” and saying that it really does not matter what man thinks. “I am doing it right before the Lord, and that is all that matters.” This text begs to differ with that philosophy. You can take the extra steps to make it look right before people too—Paul did that.

Too many times, people have used “spirituality” to cover up ill doing. Others have made excuses about it taking a lot of time and getting behind on doing reports or not doing budgets or reports at all. Nothing amiss may be happening...but no one else could know that without the data.

The point is that no reasonable accusation should be able to be leveled that money is being handled improperly. Paul sent three people – plenty of witnesses in case such a charge ever did arise.

### **III. With a Two-fold Goal, v. 19**

A. To the glory of the Lord. This is the main concern. If God is honored, then the most important thing is in place. He helped the gift to be administered to the glory of the Lord—it was done right, and to help His people. The “Lord Himself” indicates that it was not done to the glory of men. Donations in the secular world are often made in such a way as to glorify men. This happens all the time—the so-and-so endowed chair of engineering, or the so-and-so building of public policy. Someone gives money to a cause, but also to get a famous name. In the church, our giving is not for the glory of men, but for God!

B. To show our eagerness to help. For those of you reading the KJV and NKJV, please take note. Your version says, “and to show your

ready mind.” We can see how that would fit in with the context. But more recent analysis of the many Greek manuscripts we possess has shown quite conclusively that the original text is not “your” but “our” so that the idea is the offering shows Paul and company’s desire to help.

For Paul to show his own eagerness may seem somewhat self-serving, but we should understand it differently. This project is important to Paul because he was a persecutor of the church in Jerusalem. He would also soon face false accusations that he was against the Jews, against the Law, and against the temple (Acts 21:28).<sup>3</sup> These charges were likely already around in the Jewish community. For him to organize and participate in the sending of a large offering could be helpful to show the Christians and Jewish people there that he was on their side, not against them.

#### **IV. And a Call for the Corinthians to Respond, v. 24**

Paul is not as concerned about the gift as he is about the spiritual health of the Corinthians in terms of their love and whether his boasting about them will prove true. The expected response: show Titus and the representatives of the churches that their love is real and that Paul’s boasting was not a lot of hot air.

- A. Demonstrate your love. Remember verse 8, where Paul was assessing the sincerity of their love in comparison to others? They had manifested this grace according to verse 7 toward the apostle Paul and his team, and now their giving would prove that they had a practical love for Paul and others, not just a say-so love.
- B. Demonstrate that our boasting about you was well founded. Paul had told the Macedonian churches about the Corinthians’ zeal to participate in the offering. This probably stirred them up to give, but if what Paul said turned out to be false, it would be a huge embarrassment not only for Paul, but also for the Corinthians.

I do not believe Paul used the Corinthians as leverage to manipulate the Macedonians to give, and then in turn to use the

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<sup>3</sup> Similar feelings are unfortunately still present in some Jewish thought regarding Christianity. And this is not without reason, for there are self-proclaimed Christians who have exhibited attitudes that are similar to if not indistinguishable from antisemitism.

Macedonians' generous giving as leverage to manipulate the Corinthians. Instead, he relied upon the truthfulness of the Corinthians' early zeal to encourage generosity in others, and to remind the Corinthians of their intentions.

## **Conclusion**

Paul arranged the circumstances so that the donated money was managed with integrity with the goal of honoring God. The central feature of his arrangement was to have three men of high reputation, two selected by the church, to oversee the offering so that he did not have to do so.

We can apply the truth of our message in this way: churches need to ensure that they have in place arrangements to manage money with integrity. This way, givers can see that the church leadership is not wasting or embezzling money.

On an individual level, we need to handle money with integrity as well—in our family, with our children, with our heirs or as executors of an estate, in our job.

Finally, let us ask God to help us to be people like these three representatives: people of character, who diligently care for others, who could be recommended by our church for an important task, whose praise is in the gospel, and who honor Jesus Christ.

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