

Message #24

II Corinthians 8:16-9:5

One book in the Bible that really deals with the subject of money and how to wisely think about it and use it is the wisdom book of Proverbs. There are many principles given by God to us about money in that book.

In **Proverbs 22:1**, there is a critical statement that says: “A good name is to be more desired than great riches.” Notice a good name is not just more valuable than riches, but great riches. Having a good name of integrity before God and others is worth much more than having great wealth. Wise people understand that point.

Another key principle is that wise people will do what they can to help those who are poor. **Proverbs 19:17** says that “He who is gracious to the poor man lends to the LORD and He (God) will repay him for his good deed.” **Proverbs 28:27** says “He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.”

Now when Paul wrote this section of Scripture to the Corinthians, he was concerned about both things. He was concerned that he and his associates maintained a good name of integrity when it came to money and he also was concerned that the Corinthians would follow through on a commitment they had made a year earlier to help the poor struggling saints in Jerusalem. What Paul says in this section of Scripture is this:

IT IS CRITICAL TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY IN ALL FINANCIAL MATTERS AND FOLLOW THROUGH WITH FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS WE MAKE BEFORE GOD.

Now Paul was supported by many churches. We know the Philippian church supported Paul and so did the Corinthian church. So he had his own money to spend. There were apparently times in his life and ministry when he had quite a bit and there were other times when he had practically nothing.

However, the issue at stake when Paul wrote II Corinthians was that he was handling other people's money and there was a lot of money. John Calvin said there is nothing that so leaves a man open to unfavorable surmises “than the management of public money.”

Paul was collecting a huge offering from the Gentile churches to take back to the poor believers of Judea and he wanted to make sure that everything about this financial undertaking was all aboveboard. Satan would love to attack Paul's credibility. Paul wanted to keep his name clean when it came to ministry and money. He never wanted to have any type of scandal that could hurt his name or the name of Jesus Christ.

One of the things Paul did was he surrounded himself with faithful, trustworthy men who could handle financial things with integrity. There is much we may glean from this text about finances.

There are two main financial points that Paul wants to make:

FINANCIAL POINT #1 – Paul informs the Corinthians who he sent to collect the offering.
8:16-24

Now in this section there are three men that Paul specifically sent to Corinth to collect this money; one is named and two are not named. Paul is very intent on establishing that the three men he sent were godly, reputable men who were men of great integrity.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe told a story of something that happened to him one time. He said he noticed that there was a young man who was teaching in his church who was collecting an offering from his Sunday school class and then counting it and taking it to the office to turn in. Dr. Wiersbe said in a non-threatening way that by doing that the young man was putting himself in a dangerous position because he could be accused of dishonesty and there would be no witnesses who could prove he was honest. He said to the young man, “I trust you, but I don’t trust the people who may be watching you and looking for something to criticize.” Well instead of following his advice, the young man got mad and left the church (*Be Encouraged*, p. 91).

Perhaps if the young man would have studied this text, he would have realized that there was real wisdom in having more than one person involved in counting and handling money. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul did here. He put together a finance committee who could handle this massive offering because he wanted to maintain complete integrity in the ministry. Notice he says in **verse 20** that he is taking great precaution so that no one could in any way discredit him or the ministry.

If you read the life story of Billy Sunday, one of the things that surfaces is a criticism about the way he handled money. He put on huge crusades and collected huge sums of money and he handled it himself. He had three sons and his sons did not love the Lord or the work of God. In fact, as one historian put it, they plunged into the very sins that Billy Sunday preached against. One of the things that Billy Sunday allegedly did with some of the offerings he collected was to pay hush money to certain people to keep the sins of his sons quiet. He was criticized for that. Paul would have never done any such thing.

In fact, Paul distances himself from the money. He does not collect the offering and he does not handle the offerings. He sends three faithful, reliable men to handle the money of God’s people. In this text we get a description of three men Paul sends to Corinth to be involved in the collection and calculation of the offering:

Financial Committee Man #1 - Paul sent Titus to Corinth to collect the offering. **8:16-17**

In this section there are three facts we learn about Titus:

(Fact #1) - God had put the same earnestness for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus. **8:16**

God put the same Pauline desire for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus. Completing this project was the will of God and God had placed a burden in the heart of Titus to get it done. In fact the word “earnestness” (σπουδην) means that God had given Titus an earnest, diligent zeal in his heart to do this work for God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 415). Titus cared about the Corinthians and he cared about this financial project and he wanted to get it done and God has put it in his heart to do it.

(Fact #2) - Titus not only was willing to travel to Corinth because Paul wanted him to do this, but he went of his own accord. **8:17**

Paul did not have to try and convince or recruit Titus to be involved in this ministry, he wanted to do it. Now keep in mind this would mean the hassle of traveling through some tough and dangerous territory. Titus had a zeal to do it to get this job done for God. Sometimes when it comes to people being involved in the financial ministry of the church, you almost have to beg them. Titus was not that way; he wanted to do this work for God.

(Fact #3) - Titus was a partner and fellow worker of Paul. **8:23**

The Greek in **verse 23** emphatically stresses that Titus was very close to Paul, personally. The word “partner” means that Titus had close communion and fellowship in partaking and sharing in the life and ministry of Paul (*Ibid.*, p. 251).

When you are in ministry, you need close, faithful, loyal men who stand with you and will defend you and help you get the job done for God. You need men who will tackle things for God and Titus was one such man.

Financial Committee Man #2 - Paul sent another famous brother with Titus to Corinth to collect the offering. **8:18-21**

There have been many guesses as to whom this man was. There is an early historical document that claims it was Luke, but we don't know for sure. What we do learn are four impressive facts about him whoever he was:

(Fact #1) - He is identified as “the brother.” **8:18a**

He was not just a brother in Christ, he was specifically identified as “the brother.” This was a very special man of God.

(Fact #2) - He was famous for his grasp of the Gospel. **8:18b**

This man had a famous reputation for grasping the grace Gospel. In fact, he was praised for his amazing grasp of the Gospel of God.

(Fact #3) - His fame had spread to all the churches. **8:18c**

Many churches knew of this brother. God had spread his name throughout the Gentile world. When a man becomes famous for his grasp of grace and for his love for God and His Word, God is the One who has done it.

(Fact #4) - He had been appointed by the churches to travel with Paul in the offering matter. **8:19a**

This is important to see that the people had a say in who went with Paul in this financial undertaking. It wasn't Paul who just handpicked this man; the churches trusted him and appointed him.

In fact, the word "appointed" (χειροτονηθεις) means the churches appointed him by a show of their hands (*Ibid.*, p. 481). So they voted on the selection of this man. Now Paul explains why this was done in **verse 20**, so that no one could bring a discredit to the ministry.

No one could say Paul surrounded himself with a bunch of good old boys to get some huge offering and then sail off to spend it on a luxury island. These were great men of integrity.

The special offering was being administered by Paul and his team for the glory of the Lord Himself and this protected all of them.

Financial Committee Man #3 - Paul sent another tested and trusted brother with Titus to Corinth to collect the offering. **8:22**

There are four key facts we learn about this man:

(Fact #1) - This man was "the brother" of Paul. **8:22a**

Whoever this was, he was a very special brother to Paul and his team.

(Fact #2) - This man was tested in many ways. **8:22b**

The word "test" means that this man had proved to be faithful and successful through many trials. He had proved himself fit for this work, having remained faithful while undergoing many tests (*Ibid.*, p. 120).

(Fact #3) - This man was found diligent in many things. **8:22c**

This word means that this man worked efficiently and speedily to get any job done that was given to him. (*Ibid.*, p.415). If you gave this man a job to do for the church, it got done and you didn't have to hear a bunch of excuses as to why it was taking so long.

(Fact #4) - This man had great confidence in the Corinthians. **8:22d**

This man had even more of a drive to get this project done because he knew the Corinthians and believed in them that they would in fact get this job done for God.

These men were sent messengers of the churches for the glory of Jesus Christ to collect this special offering (**verse 23**).

Paul wanted them treated right when they got to Corinth. He wanted those churches to openly show them love and the reason for his boasting about the generosity of the Corinthians.

Sometimes people who work behind the scenes in finances and other areas are not well known. In this case, two were not even named. But God knows. He knows who trustworthy people are and He keeps records. In eternity, we will learn who these two were.

FINANCIAL POINT #2 – Paul informs the Corinthians why he sent them to collect the offering. **9:1-5**

Now Paul has already said, I am sending these guys to protect the integrity of this matter and Paul says it is really unnecessary to write a huge discourse about the offering we are collecting for the poor saints of Jerusalem, because Paul knew of their readiness to participate and in fact he had boasted about that to the Macedonians.

It had been the zeal of the Corinthians that stirred up the Macedonians and the other churches of Achaia get involved in this offering (**verse 2**).

Paul says in **verse 3**, the reason I have sent my three agents to you is so that by the time I get there my boasting will not be empty. Paul says in **verse 4** that there will be some Macedonians traveling with me when I come and just imagine how shameful it would be for them to get there and discover that you aren't even interested in the project.

So he said in **verse 5**, I thought it was necessary to send these three men on before us to arrange what you promised so that there might be the bountiful gift which has not been affected by covetousness.

What I understand that to mean is that so you don't blow the promised money on something you want for yourself, when you promised to give it to the poor saints of Jerusalem.

Two points are clear from this text:

- 1) We need to have the utmost integrity when it comes to handling the money of God's people.
- 2) We need to follow through on projects we start for the glory of God.