

Lessons on How to Encourage Christian Giving and Administer an Offering

Exegesis and Application of 2 Corinthians 8:10–24

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One of the most frequent and regular responsibilities of the modern parish pastor is to instruct, motivate and guide his people in Christian giving. But what is a high calling and a godly trust can often seem a mere necessary frustration. St. Paul's personal concern for his people and his inspired encouragement to them in the matter of giving are just what today's pastors need to hear and take to heart. The general principles he enunciates are a restatement of those found in other parts of Scripture. They will also be the underlying principles of our approach to money stewardship. The specific approach he takes to the administration of a large offering does not bind us in its details, but it demonstrates a basic spirituality we will by the power of the Spirit seek to imitate.

Part One: Understand that motivation is essential

2 Corinthians 8:10–12

¹⁰ καὶ γνώμην ἐν τούτῳ δίδωμι· τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν συμφέρει, οἵτινες οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν προενήρξασθε ἀπὸ πέρυσι· ¹¹ νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε, ὅπως καθάπερ ἡ προθυμία τοῦ θέλειν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐπιτελέσαι ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν· ¹² εἰ γὰρ ἡ προθυμία πρόκειται, καθὸ ἐὰν ἔχη εὐπρόσδεκτος, οὐ καθὸ οὐκ ἔχει.

¹⁰ And I am going to give you my thinking on this. For this is helpful to you who already last year began not only to take action but also to have the desire. ¹¹ Now carry your action to completion so that just as you eagerly had the desire, you bring it to completion on the basis of what you have. ¹² For if the desire is present, it is acceptable according to whatever one may have, not according to what he does not have.

Verse 10

In verses 1–9 Paul encouraged the Corinthians to participate in the offering for the poor in Jerusalem in three ways. He pointed to the example of the Macedonians (vv 1–6, 8). He reminded the Corinthians of the many spiritual gifts they had and invited them to add “this grace of giving” to the list (v 7). Then he recalled for them that they had become “rich” through the “poverty” of the Lord Jesus Christ (v 9). Now he is adding a fourth encouragement for their participation in the offering. Paul holds before them the desire they had for this special offering when they first heard about it. Participation now would not really be a new undertaking. It was simply following through on an intention they had had in the first place.

This new thought is closely connected (*καί*) with the three that came before. They proceed logically. First, the example of others, then their own general spiritual gifts, then the giving love of Christ and now specifically the motivation they already possess for this particular giving. The apostle says he is giving his opinion (*γνώμην*) on this matter, but it will be clear from verse 11 that his thinking is also an application of

Scripture to the Corinthians' particular situation. The matter on which (ἐν τούτῳ) he is offering his thoughts has no specific antecedent, but it is the general subject of the preceding and following verses, the Corinthians' participation in the offering.

Before Paul gives his advice, he gives the reason (γάρ) for offering it. Paul knows he is talking to Christian people who have the right motivation. The disposition of their hearts is a known quantity in his formula for administering their gift. He has already said this in so many words: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 9). Now he is reminding them how this grace had already worked in their hearts their initial response to the offering. Exactly when that time was, we cannot establish. The words ἀπὸ πέρυσο can mean "last year" or "a year ago." The Corinthians were already aware of the offering in the spring of 57 when Paul wrote his first letter to them (1 Cor 16:1). This letter came to them later the same year. But exactly when this grace first worked in their hearts is not important. Paul wants them to know that he knows the proper motivation for giving was present in them right from the start. And he is going to encourage them on that basis.

Instead of a simple relative pronoun the apostle uses οἵτινες, which indicates a certain quality about the Corinthians. They did not merely (οὐ μόνον) respond in a mechanical way (τὸ ποιῆσαι) in beginning their offering. But (ἀλλά) their first action was prompted by an inner motivation, a desire (τὸ θέλειν). We might have expected Paul's argument to run in the opposite direction: "You not only had the desire, but you already took action." After all, it is the action he is looking for now. But Paul's emphasis is on motive. Before he urges them to carry out the action they began earlier, he wants them to remember why they had the desire to give in the first place. This is the natural bridge between the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 9 and the completion of their action which he urges in verse 11.

This same bridge spans the gulf between Christian giving and every other kind of giving. "Apart from me," Jesus said, "you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). In Christian giving both the deed and the desire are produced by God. "For it is God who works in you to will and to act (καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν) according to his good purpose" (Php 2:13). Although Paul knew the Corinthians had the proper motivation in their hearts, he did not take it for granted when addressing them. In the previous verse (v 9) he sought to produce it, and now he tells his people that the advice he is giving them is on the basis of his knowledge of its presence. Nor may a pastor presuppose motivation in the hearts of those he urges to give. He produces it with words about Jesus' love and forgiveness, and he points to its presence as the basis for his encouragement to action.

Verse 11

Now that the fact of their motivation is clearly in the forefront, the apostle offers the content of this thinking (γνώμην) about the offering. "Now carry your action to completion." The force of his words is much more powerful than can be reproduced in good English idiom. Because the verb τελέω is often used without the prefix, the intensive force of ἐπιτελέω seems clear here. Add to that the imperative mood in the aorist and the emphatic adverb νυνί at the front of the sentence, and Paul's strong command comes through loud and clear. "Finish the work," the NIV translates tersely. The adverbial καί further intensifies the directive and along with δὲ relates the action of the verb to the initial motivation mentioned in verse 10.

Paul's command is law. It is spoken to Christians who because of the persistent influence of their sinful nature must be reminded that good motives need to be translated into good works. The sharp barb of the law implicit in this command is the same as that of St. James who wrote, "Faith, by itself, if it is not accompanied by action (ἔργα) is dead" (Jas 2:17). Yet the degree of application differs from that of James. The Corinthians' motives had resulted in some action (τὸ ποιῆσαι, v 10). Paul is not chiding a lack of faith here but is poking at the weakness and laziness in those who have faith. Sharp as it is, Paul's command is a pastoral application of the law, for he has just said, "I am not commanding you" (v 8), and "here is my advice" (v 10).

So Paul's command is an evangelical admonition. It is the kind of application which we call the third use of the law, its function in guiding the Christian in doing God's will. It is directed at the Christian who must daily struggle to do the good he desires and to avoid the evil he does not want to do (Formula of Concord, S.D., VI, especially 7, *Triglotta*, p 965). It is offered by a spiritual leader who has provided the gospel to his hearers and pointed to its results in their hearts. Its form is a positive command, not a dwelling on past (forgiven) sins. Whenever the law is applied, it, of course, also serves the Christian as a mirror and a curb. But while it cuts and kills the Old Man, it finds a ready and willing response in the New Man.

Not every congregation is the same. But Paul's use of the law in connection with Christian giving is instructive. We hear no long, chiding sermons or emotional appeals. Instead, from the beginning of this chapter his pointing finger has aimed at motivation: the Macedonians' example of it; the Corinthians' own example in other spiritual matters; Christ, the source of it; and now the Corinthians' possession of it in the particular matter of giving. When the law is preached, the Old Adam finds room for nothing but resistance and excuses. The New Man does what comes naturally to him. We are not told how the Corinthians responded to Paul's appeal. But we do not have to guess how God's people then and his people now respond to the law after they have received the gospel. The law now serves as a guide for their conduct.

St. Paul immediately demonstrates the encouraging tone of his command by giving its purpose (*ὄπωσ*). His thinking (*γνώμην*) is that there should be a correlation (*καθλαπερ...οὕτως*) between their wishing and doing. Their eagerness (*προθυμία*) was the same motivation the Bereans had for receiving Paul's message (Ac 17:11). It was to be matched by carrying their action to completion.

A new thought about motivation comes at the end of verse 11. When motivation is present, the action of Christian giving will be carried to completion "on the basis of what you have" (*ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν*). The grammarian Robertson notes (p 1073) that this is the only occurrence of *ἐκ* with the articularized infinitive in the New Testament. He suggests that the preposition accents the ability of the Christian growing "out of" possessing property. The Bauer/Arndt/Gingrich lexicon (BAG) offers that *ἐκ* here denotes the underlying rule or principle of the action of giving and translates, "on the basis of" (p 235). The two are not competing ideas. St. Paul's intent is made clear in the following verse. The motivation was to be carried out in action on the basis of what each person had, not forced by the expectations of others or limited by their own reluctance.

Verse 12

The explanation (*γάρ*) of this new thought about motivation follows. The principle enunciated here by the simple conditional (*εἰ*) applies to all Christian giving. The indicative of the verb (*πρόκειται*) in the protasis shows that Paul considers the proposition to be true in this case: "If the desire is present"—and that is true of you—"it is acceptable according to whatever one may have, not according to what he does not have." Both the noun and the verb have to be supplied in English to complete the thought of the apodosis. Since *τὸ θέλειν*—couched in the meaning of *προθυμία*—is the subject of the protasis, the subject to be supplied in the apodosis is *τὸ ποιῆσαι*, the action of giving the gift for the offering.

The key word in this principle of Christian giving is *εὐπρόσδεκτος*. It is the same word used in 2 Corinthians 6:2 of the time which is "favorable" for bringing God's grace to fruition (BAG, p 324). It points to acceptability by God. The Christian seeks to serve his fellowman and to glorify God by his good works. But only the quantity of the work can be humanly measured and judged. Acceptability of the good work before God depends first on the unseen presence of a God-pleasing motive. After that, acceptability before God depends on the quality of the gift in proportion to (*καθό*) the unknown ability (*ἐὰν ἔχη*) to give. When Jesus said, "Be dressed ready for service," he explained that "from everyone who has been given much, much will be

demanded” (Lk 12:35, 48). This explains Jesus’ commendation of the poor widow’s “small copper coins” (Lk 21:2, 3) and St. Paul’s urging of the rich “to be generous and willing to share” (1 Tm 6:18).

Paul is actually backtracking here. He is defending his intentions in citing the Macedonians’ example of giving “beyond their ability” (v 3). It is proper for a pastor to hold up the quantity of others’ giving as an encouragement for his own people’s giving. But the pastor’s purpose in doing so is not to set a legalistic minimum or a goal for his people to shoot at. Reference to the quantity of others’ giving can be—as it was with Paul—an invitation to consider what quality of heart must lie behind the quantity of their gift. Paul made this clear when he first spoke of the Macedonians’ example. “They gave themselves first to the Lord,” he wrote, “and then to us in keeping with God’s will” (v 5). He is making it clear again by saying that the Corinthians’ giving will not be judged by God in comparison with the Macedonians’, but in comparison with their own ability to give. One might well question the practice of holding up the example of gifts, large or small, unless pointing to the motivating faith behind them is the purpose. But noting the good example of generous givers is a legitimate way to invite fellow Christians to marvel at what God’s love can do in the hearts of people. It was that quality of faith which the people recognized in the exemplary gifts of King David’s leaders and officials for the temple. They “rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord” (1 Chr 29:9).

The apostle repeats himself here in the form of a principle so that his intentions will not be misunderstood. God accepts our gift “according to whatever one may have.” The *ἐάν* makes the relative *ὅ* (*καθό* = *κατά* + *ὅ*) indefinite (“whatever”) and the subjunctive indicates that this indefinite amount may vary from case to case. Not men, but only God can judge what is indefinite and unknown to man. Only by him is the acceptability of each gift decided.

This concludes Paul’s first lesson in encouraging and guiding Christian giving. The pastor who is responsible for encouraging his people’s gifts will remember that motivation is essential. Although he knows his people are properly motivated, he always mentions it when he speaks about giving. He provides motivation by talking about Jesus’ love and forgiveness and repeatedly tells his people that he is addressing them about giving on that basis. In that context the law is spoken in the imperative. Christians will understand that the use of the law is not to stimulate giving but to put down the Old Man, who seeks to prevent good motives from resulting in good works. Even then an evangelical approach requires the frequent reminder that the acceptability of the gift before God does not depend on the amount of the gift in comparison with what others give.

Examples of exemplary giving will be received as an indication of the love which exists in the hearts of others and an encouragement to give from the same motivation. When such motivation is present, God finds a gift pleasing to him when he compares its size with the ability of each individual to offer it. When holding up examples of giving, pastors will encourage others to pattern their giving according to the measure of faith exhibited, not the outward size. No one’s gift should be judged “according to what he does not have.” Our Lord himself often spoke of the value of small gifts which came from a rightly motivated heart (Mk 9:41; Lk 11:41; 21:3, 4).

Part Two: Let God measure fairness

2 Corinthians 8:13–15

¹³ οὐ γὰρ ἵνα ἄλλοις ἀνεσις, ὑμῖν θλίψις, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἰσότητος· ¹⁴ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ τὸ ὑμῶν περίσσευμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, ἵνα καὶ τὸ ἐκείνων περίσσευμα γένηται εἰς τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα, ὅπως γένηται ἰσότης, ¹⁵ καθὼς γέγραπται,

Ὁ τὸ πολὺ οὐκ ἐπλεόνασεν,

καὶ ὁ τὸ ὀλίγον οὐκ ἤλαττόνησεν.

¹³ For it is not so that others get relief and you hardship, but it is based on a principle of equality. ¹⁴ Right now what you have extra is a supply for what they need, that also their extra may become a supply for what you need, so that there may be equality. ¹⁵ That is why it is written, “The one who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and the one who gathered little had no shortage.”

Verse 13

Closely connected with the way God accepts our gifts as individuals is his way of insuring fairness among Christian congregations. Paul explains (γάρ) in verses 13–15 that just as God is fair in judging our gift in proportion to our means, so he is fair in asking congregations with better means to help other congregations with lesser means. He has already established that God does not honor a gift only on its size among the members of one congregation. Now he is arguing for God’s fairness in asking more from those congregations which have more than others.

We do not know whether Paul was addressing a complaint which had come from the Corinthians or whether he was merely anticipating a common grumbling objection to giving money outside the local congregation. A pastor seldom walks into a budget meeting without hearing, “We have enough bills to pay here at home. Why should we consider giving more to this or that project out there?” How a pastor anticipates and meets such complaining will affect the attitude his people have about giving for missions and charitable and educational endeavors in the church at large. Again the apostle’s approach in these verses is instructive.

It is reassuring for a congregation just to know that their spiritual leader has taken into consideration their needs at home before asking for their gifts for outside purposes. Paul assures the Corinthians of that right at the beginning of his discussion of fairness. He omits the subject, which is still the whole matter of the offering for the people of Jerusalem, and begins with the negative (οὐ). The purpose (ἵνα) of the offering is not that others will get relief (ἄνεσις) at the expense of hardship (θλίψις) for the Corinthians. Paul’s word for relief means the relaxation or lightening of a burden (cf. 2 Th 1:7). Here it refers to the burden of poverty and famine which the Christians in Jerusalem were carrying. Paul argues that the offering is not an unfair attempt by God to shift a burden from one group of Christians to another. The offering was to bring equality (ἰσότης). It was to be the sharing (κοινωνία) the Macedonians sought (v 4). The Corinthians were to bear some of the burden of the poverty of the Jerusalem Christians, and the Jerusalem Christians were to receive some of the gifts the Corinthians had from God. A shifting of burdens would have been unfair. A balancing of burdens was Christian fellowship in practice (Ga 6:2). And Paul had thought of that before asking the Corinthians to participate in the offering.

Verse 14

Fairness, equality (ἰσότης) and sharing (κοινωνία) presuppose reciprocity. The Corinthians can trust that the fairness Paul took into account before asking for the offering will hold true during and after the offering. “Right now what you have extra is a supply for what they need, that also their extra may become a supply for what you need, so that there may be equality” (v 14). What specifically Paul had in mind by the “extra” (περίσσευμα) the saints of Jerusalem would share with the Corinthians is not clear. Did he mean their patient suffering from which the Corinthians could learn? Did he mean that the Christians in Jerusalem had already shared the gospel with their Greek friends (Ro 15:27)? The two linked purpose (ἵνα... ὅπως) clauses, however, seem to point to some future sharing by the Jerusalem Christians with the Corinthians which will be precipitated by the offering. Is Paul thinking ahead to the time when economic conditions will be reversed, and the Corinthians will benefit in kind with material gifts from Jerusalem? Or does he have in mind the outpouring of spiritual benefits that would result from their offering? He mentions these in 9:12–15, where he uses the verb form (περισσεύουσα) of the word he uses here for “extra” to describe the blessings. The Jerusalem Christians

will thank God for their gifts, praise him for the obedience that accompanies the Corinthians' confession of the gospel, and their prayers and their hearts will go out to them personally.

Perhaps Paul left the matter purposely vague for the sake of establishing the principle of reciprocity in the hearts of his people. The matter of fairness, equality, sharing and reciprocity are all at the center of our concept of synod too. Our common confession of the gospel of Christ is what leads us to give generously for missions, charities and educational purposes without questioning the fairness of God in presenting needs or worrying that others' burdens will be eased at our expense. A pastor may certainly urge the principle of equality and reciprocity without always specifically promising his congregation when and what they will get in return. Finally, when the motive in the heart is worked by our common faith in Christ, there is also the trust that God will provide. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Ro 8:32). Fellowship in the congregation and among congregations is this trust in practice. God will provide for them through us, and through them for us in all things, material and spiritual.

Verse 15

Although it is the pastor who assures his congregation of the balance achieved by reciprocity among Christians, it is God who stands behind and effects such equality. St. Paul quotes an example from Exodus 16:18: "The one who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and the one who gathered little had no shortage." Paul does not cite a statement of principle of God's fairness. After all, the Corinthians were not questioning God's basic justice and fairness. They had simply allowed themselves to doubt the application of that fairness to the particular matter of giving. Instead, the apostle reminds them of an instance in which God's fairness was applied to the daily provision of his people.

The Old Testament story of the gathering of the manna in the wilderness helps us understand once more the main point of verses 13–15. At first thought the story about manna doesn't seem to match the situation in Corinth. There was no geographical separation of different groups of God's children in Exodus as there was with Corinth and Jerusalem. In the wilderness it was not a matter of one group which had more giving to another group which had less. There was not even an anticipation of reciprocity among the Children of Israel. The point is simply God's love and fairness in being concerned about and in providing equally for all his children. Rich and poor alike can trust God to take care of them (Pr 22:12). That is the kind of trust in divine fairness to which the apostle was inviting the Corinthian people (cf. also 9:8–11). That is the trust to which every pastor may invite his congregation in connection with their offerings.

God's assurance of fairness is another evidence of his grace, which leads believers to sacrificial giving. Sacrificial giving, of course, is not exactly the same as "giving until it hurts." Generous giving may indeed cause real physical hardships, but giving that hurts the heart is not Christian giving. Christ has already offered for every believer all the hurtful giving in his sacrifice to God (He 10:12, 18). The only sacrifices left for New Testament believers are those which arise from a heart of thankfulness and trust (Ro 12:1–3; 1 Pe 2:5; Re 1:5, 6). Sacrificial giving, then, is the thankoffering of a believer's whole life to God. It includes every gift, large and small, which the Christian brings in faith, prompted by Christ's sin-offering and with the trust that God will make provision even for those who give the most generously (He 13:16).

Part Three: Concentrate on the spiritual aspects of administration

2 Corinthians 8:16–21

¹⁶ Χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ τῷ δόντι τὴν αὐτὴν σπουδὴν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ Τίτου, ¹⁷ ὅτι τὴν μὲν παράκλησιν ἐδέξατο, σπουδαιότερος δὲ ὑπάρχων αὐθαίρετος ἐξῆλθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς. ¹⁸ συνεπέψαμεν δὲ μετ' αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀδελφὸν οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, ¹⁹ οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν συνέκδημος ἡμῶν σὺν τῇ χάριτι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ

ὕφ' ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν [αὐτοῦ] τοῦ κυρίου δόξαν καὶ προθυμίαν ἡμῶν, ²⁰ στελλόμενοι τοῦτο, μή τις ἡμᾶς μωμῆσθαι ἐν τῇ ἀδρότητι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ ὑφ' ἡμῶν. ²¹ προνοοῦμεν γὰρ καλὰ οὐ μόνον ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπων.

¹⁶ *I thank God who put into the heart of Titus that same devotion for you.* ¹⁷ *For he not only accepted our encouragement, but even more devotedly of his own choice he is leaving to come to you.* ¹⁸ *With him we are sending along that brother who receives praise for his gospel work throughout all the churches.* ¹⁹ *And not only that, but the churches elected him to travel with us as we administer this gift to give glory to the Lord himself and to demonstrate our eagerness.* ²⁰ *We are trying to avoid having anyone blame us in regard to this large offering we are administering.* ²¹ *For we are giving thought in advance to what is right not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.*

Verse 16

The subject remains the same. It is still the offering of the Corinthians for the saints at Jerusalem. But the thought shifts from the motives and actions of the Corinthians in giving the gift to the motives and activity of Paul in administering the gift. The δὲ signals the casual shift.

Notice that the primary administrator of this great offering begins by acknowledging the real director of the project. Paul's thanks and gratitude (χάρις) go to God (τῷ θεῷ). God did not print the offering envelopes, organize the stewardship committee or appear visibly in every-home visits. But he put into the hearts (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ) of Titus and Paul the same (τὴν αὐτήν) devotion (σπουδήν) on behalf of their people (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν). Because Paul does not specify who is doing the thanking, the Corinthians can join in the gratitude to God for providing administrators who have their spiritual interests at heart. The gathering of the offering will not be conducted with a cold, businesslike pragmatism. Paul's and Titus' "devotion" (BAG, p 771) was a "concern" (NIV) for the spiritual growth of their congregation, not a personal eagerness to have a program under their administration succeed.

The spiritual good that results from any offering depends to a great extent on the motivation and attitude of the ones who administer the offering. Somehow every pastor must convey to his people in words and actions what Paul is saying about himself and Titus here. Paul states it succinctly in 12:14: "What I want is not your possessions but you." Those are the words of a *Seelsorger*, one who is really devoted to his people.

Paul could have worded his remarks about Titus' eagerness differently. Humanly speaking, it is likely that Titus' personal concern for the Corinthians developed as a result of his positive experiences during his stay with them (7:13–15). Paul's own concern for them was certainly related to his personal ministry among them (Ac 18). Yet the pastoral Paul chooses to point to God as the real source of good spiritual motives in the hearts of those who administer material offerings. The thanks go to him.

Verse 17

The basis (ὅτι) for Paul's evaluation of Titus' devotion follows: "For he not only accepted our encouragement, but even more devotedly of his own choice he is leaving to come to you." There are two (μὲν...δέ) reasons why Paul chose Titus. It was true that Titus accepted Paul's urging to go to Corinth. The aorist (ἐδέξατο) indicates that there was no long period of deciding on Titus' part and no arm-twisting necessary on Paul's part. But there was something else that made Titus an ideal emissary of the apostle. To describe it Paul uses the same word (σπουδή) he used earlier for Titus' personal concern and places it at the beginning of his clause. The comparative form of the adjective can be considered an elative ("intensive like the English 'very,' " Robertson, p 278) superlative: "very devotedly." Titus is coming by his own choice.

Why so much attention to the qualities of Titus which reflect on his faith, especially since the Corinthians were well acquainted with him? Paul is simply demonstrating that in the choosing of administrative workers he is requiring the same thing of himself that he looks for in the Corinthians' giving of their gifts. The infant church chose men "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Ac 6:3) to administer the daily distribution of food. Paul extends to the Gentile congregations the same good administrative practice of choosing spiritual men to work with money matters in the church. It is not enough that pastors and congregations choose men capable in money matters to work with the fiscal affairs of the church. The quality of devotion inspired by faith must be present first in those who administer giving, just as in the giver there must first be motivation.

Verse 18

Faith is a matter of the heart. But the motivation it produces can be observed in the actions that result. That Paul examined the performance record of workers he chose is clear from what he writes in verse 18. With the epistolary aorist (*συνεπέμψαμεν*) Paul says he is sending another man with Titus to help with the offering. The second man has a good track record. He receives praise (*ἔπαινος*) from all the churches for his gospel work.

Some scholars feel that this second worker is St. Luke. They make this assertion on the basis of St. Luke's use of "we" and "they" in describing Paul's missionary journeys. It does seem that Luke might have parted company with Paul at this time. The other argument for Luke is Paul's use of the words *ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*. The suggestion is that this refers to Luke's writing of his Gospel account, and that this is the reason for his praise throughout the churches. If Paul is referring to Luke's Gospel account, this seems an unusually brief way of alluding to it. *Ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ* more likely refers to the sphere in which this worker received his praise, that is, in the sphere of his work for the gospel. Thus the identity of this worker remains unknown.

What Paul means by all (*πασῶν*) the churches is also unclear. Does he mean all those in Greece? Is he including Macedonia? Did all the churches of Asia Minor know this man? We can only guess. What is clear is Paul's way of administering this offering. He wanted workers whose reputations were worthy of praise. Gathering a large offering was a sensitive undertaking then. It still is. Attitudes formed by congregation members from the way in which their church administers money gifts often carry over in their attitudes toward other good works (2 Cor 9:8). Administration of the offering of God's people is never an impersonal coordination of effort. It requires men of faith whose motivation has been demonstrated by their performance.

Verse 19

The description of this second worker continues. "And not only that, but the churches elected him to travel with us as we administer this gift..." Paul's approval of this worker's dependability was based not only (*οὐ μόνον*) on good things Paul had heard about him. The churches had formally designated this man to work with Paul and Titus on the offering. The verb (*χειροτονηθείς*) literally means to stretch out the hand and thus to vote by raising the hand, but the more specific meaning of electing may have given way in New Testament use to the more general concept of appointing or designating. What is clear, however, is that the will and approval of the churches was behind this worker's commission. As administrator of the offering, the Apostle Paul was happy to have working with him a man who not only had a good reputation for his past work, but one who was chosen by those whom he would serve.

Throughout these verses Paul continues to set forth his manner of administration. Almost as an aside in verse 19 he shows the goal he has in mind in the overall administration of the offering. This second worker was to be a traveling companion (*συνέκδημος*) of Paul and Titus. In a rather loose construction St. Paul adds the connection in which this man will accompany them: *σὺν τῇ χάριτι*. A number of manuscripts substitute *ἐν* for *σὺν*, but that seems to be a substitution offered to make better sense. *Σύν* appears to be an unnecessary duplication of the prefix in the noun *συνέκδημος*, yet that may be the reason Paul chose it. *Σύν* is most often used

with the dative of accompaniment of a person. Here it is the gracious gift (τῇ χάριτι) this worker is to accompany.

The following clause limits and defines the gift which this worker is accompanying. The attributive passive participle (διακονουμένη) refers directly to this (ταύτη) gift. This same gracious gift is the one which Paul and Titus (ἡμῶν) are administering with a clear purpose (πρός) in mind. Paul mentions two goals of his administration which are closely tied together with the same article (τήν), God's glory and his own eager willingness (προθυμίαν). It is instructive that Paul as an administrator cannot keep God out of the picture. The direction of the gathering of the offering never boils down to mere mechanics. Jesus is the motivator (τὴν χάριν τοῦ...Χριστοῦ, v 9). God accepts the gift on the basis of the motivation (εὐπρόσδεκτος, v 12). God is thanked for putting concern for people into the hearts of workers (χάρις τῷ θεῷ, v 16). And glorifying the Lord himself (αὐτοῦ κυρίου δόξαν, v 19) is the intent of every administrative detail, right down to the choosing of secondary accompanying workers.

When a pastor focuses only on the pressing financial needs and the monotony of practical management of money matters in his church, the administration of his people's offerings will become a burden to him. But we must remember also that Paul's administration of this offering took place over a period, not just of days or months, but of years. Still, in the final phases of the offering and in dealing with a somewhat reluctant congregation, the apostle keeps his spiritual perspective. His godly motives and spiritual ideals are breathed into every sentence he writes. He has not lost his enthusiasm (προθυμία) because he has not lost sight of the source of his enthusiasm. The two were closely tied together for Paul. He writes, "We administer this gift to give glory to the Lord himself and to demonstrate our eagerness." When such a spiritual approach to administration positively infects the attitude and speech of the pastor, the people he serves are also lifted up to bring their offerings willingly for the glory of the Lord himself.

Verse 20

Good administration is important. And Paul's exposition of his methods is drawing him away from regular grammatical patterns. Robertson notes verse 18–21 as an example of Paul's exalted sentence style interrupted only by an anacoluthon. The circumstantial participle (στελλόμενοι) at the beginning of verse 20 has no clear grammatical antecedent and no main verb to lean on. Yet the thought of Paul is clear. He and Titus are the subject, and the activity of avoiding depends on their administering the offering expressed by the passive participle (διακονομένη) in the previous verse. Στελλόμενοι means to take precautions or to avoid, possibly implying the nautical idea of furling or shortening the sails of the ship when coming to shore.

What Paul and his co-workers want to avoid is offending anyone by the way in which they handle the offering. The thing (τοῦτο) they want to take precautions against is expressed by the negative purpose clause which follows. Paul did not want (μή) anyone (τις) to blame (μωμήσῃται) him in regard to (ἐν) this large offering. There could have been any number of specific fears Paul had in this regard. He might have been accused of trying to buy the support of the Jerusalem congregation for his mission endeavors. Or his detractors at Corinth might simply have accused him of pocketing or siphoning off a part of the collection for his own work. But these are only guesses. Paul's concern might well have been simply that of every pastor: that he not get himself too closely involved with the actual handling of the money. Offense is taken easily when the Old Adam is looking for any possible reason to discredit the ministry and excuse himself for not giving generously. The Christian administrator's personal spiritual concern for his people and his desire to glorify God will lead him to avoid any impression that he is eager to hold the bag.

Verse 21

All the things St. Paul mentions about administration to this point did not just happen to come to mind as he was writing. In verse 21 he indicates that he and Titus are giving thought in advance (προνοοῦμεν) to what they are doing. This is the reason (γάρ) for all the preparations he has mentioned to this point. The present indicative of the verb shows that the careful forethought and planning was still going on.

Careful planning and forethought are the concluding remarks Paul offers on the spiritual aspects of administration. If Christian giving is to be an exercise and growing experience for God's people, careful thought by the administrators is essential. It means not being in a hurry. You want to demonstrate your personal concern for your people. You want to choose workers with spiritual qualities to assist you. You want to give glory to God and avoid any possible offense. Planning results in what is good and right (καλά). When Paul says he wants it to be right not only (οὐ μόνον) in the eyes of the Lord, he is not placing God's evaluation of his administration on a lower level than man's. The Lord's opinion comes first for the giver (8:5) and first for the one who directs the giving (8:19). But (ἀλλά) God also takes pleasure when his people are rightly directed in their giving.

When planning takes into consideration the spiritual emphases St. Paul demonstrated in working with the Corinthians, God himself will produce good results according to his will. People will be moved by his love, give according to their means, trust God's fairness, honor the workers who represent Christ and find no reason to assign blame. As a pastor gives forethought to his sermons, to his counseling and teaching of God's people, so he will carefully plan the ways in which he directs them in their good works of stewardship.

Part Four: Trust God's people to respond

2 Corinthians 8:22–24

²² συνεπέμψαμεν δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν ὃν ἐδοκιμάσαμεν ἐν πολλοῖς πολλάκις σπουδαῖον ὄντα, νυνὶ δὲ πολὺ σπουδαιότερον πεποιθήσει πολλῇ τῇ εἰς ὑμᾶς. ²³ εἴτε ὑπὲρ Τίτου, κοινωνὸς ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός· εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν, ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, δόξα Χριστοῦ. ²⁴ τὴν οὖν ἔνδειξιν τῆς ἀγάπης ὑμῶν καὶ ἡμῶν καυχῆσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐνδεικνύμενοι εἰς πρόσωπον τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

²² *And we are sending with them our brother whom we have observed and judged on many occasions always to be dedicated, but now even so much more devoted because of his great confidence in you.* ²³ *As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are emissaries of the churches, a glory for Christ.* ²⁴ *Therefore demonstrate to them before the churches proof of your love and our reason for boasting about you.*

Verse 22

A third worker is being sent along. He will accompany Titus and the second worker. The identity of this man is also impossible to establish, but he is a brother (ἀδελφόν) in faith. Three men are being sent, not to pressure or overpower the Corinthian congregation, but to relieve Paul of all possibility of being blamed and to give sufficient support to Christians who were struggling with their participation in the offering. The two workers accompanying Titus are not named, either because they were already well known to the Corinthians as a result of their work in Macedonia, or because they were not known and Titus would introduce them by name when he arrived.

As he did with Titus and the second worker, Paul stresses the spiritual qualifications of this worker. First, there is the fact that he has been observed and judged on many occasions (ἐν πολλοῖς), or in many ways,

and always found to be dedicated (*σπουδαῖον ὄντα*). The word used for this man's evaluation is *δοκιμάζω*, which means that there was a testing process at the end of which the subject was approved. We don't know if this worker was one who worked with Paul in his general gospel ministry or whether he worked only with the Macedonians in connection with the offering. The *ἐν πολλοῖς* would suggest that he had experience in many aspects of the ministry.

A new element here is the great confidence (*πεποιθήσει πολλῆ*) this third worker has in the Corinthians. Just the mention of this quality in the third brother shows that Paul is not sending a third worker in an effort at overkill. The Corinthians had weathered a number of problems in their congregation. Now they were having trouble carrying out their initial resolve in a very important offering. Paul's positive evangelical approach is to send men to them who have confidence in them to respond to the motivation God has placed in their hearts. He is not jacking them up or pushing them along. He is not tightening the screws. He is sending a man who has confidence in the gospel's ability to produce fruits. In Paul's estimation, this attitude on the part of the third worker makes him a much more dedicated (*πολύ σπουδαιότεραν*) worker than his past record alone would indicate.

Having confidence that God's people will respond is an important attitude on the part of one who gives encouragement and guidance in Christian giving. It is evangelical because it forgives and forgets the sins and shortcomings a congregation may have had in the past. It reflects an optimism about the power of the gospel to work in the hearts of people. It is not a psychological ploy which yells, "I know you can do it!" or a false flattery which tries to bind people to live up to one's expectations. It is having the confidence that God can work in others the same trust he has worked in you: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Php 4:13). Paul himself has already expressed such confidence in the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:15) and will again (9:1,2).

Verse 23

Trusting God's people includes the confidence that they will receive his representatives with respect. Paul has this confidence as he commends Titus and the other two workers to the Corinthians. With a brief elliptical construction Paul entrusts his three co-workers to the congregation at Corinth. The KJV adds the missing thought to the *εἴτε...εἴτε* construction by supplying, "If (anyone inquires) about Titus...or if our brethren (are inquired about)..." The implicit confidence Paul displays by calling Titus a partner (*κοινωνός*) and fellow-worker (*συνεργός*) is that the Corinthians will honor him accordingly. The title *ἀπόστολοι* given to the other two is not to be thought of in the special New Testament sense of an apostle such as Paul was, but in the general sense of a representative or emissary of the churches. Since these men are sent out by the churches, they will be honored as ones who give glory to Christ (*δόξα Χριστοῦ*).

Verse 24

Good administration by spiritual workers will be instrumental in producing far-reaching results. Paul is ready to draw such a conclusion (*οὖν*) in verse 24 even before he witnesses the outcome of the collection. His repetition of the thought of providing evidence in both the verb (*ἐνδεικνύμενοι*) and the object (*τὴν ἐνδείξιν*) is a Hebraism which drives his point home. The Corinthians possessed motivation and Paul trusts that motivation to produce results. But there remains for them to "demonstrate the demonstration" and "prove the proof" of their love (*τῆς ἀγάπης*). Yet it is significant that the apostle does not use the imperative. Instead, he uses a present participle. This sentence is clearly not an anacoluthon or a dependent clause, for it begins with *οὖν*. This is why a few manuscripts supply the imperative form *ἐνδείξασθε* for the participle. But in the tone of Paul's writing

here, even though the thought is strong, the imperative is soft: “You certainly will be giving proof of your love therefore...”

Paul concludes with law and gospel. The law is present in the repetition demanding evidence of their love. It reverts to the earlier demand that they bring their efforts to completion (*ἐπιτελέσατε*, v 11). But again it is the third use of the law in the context of the confidence Paul has expressed in them before. He again stresses the trust he has in them now by referring to his boasting about them (*καυχήσεως ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*). This confidence and trust expressed by their spiritual leader is gospel in that it reminds them of the motivation in their hearts and the source of it.

The far-reaching results which come from the Corinthians’ demonstration of their love are spiritual results. The apostle has spoken of the practical benefits that will flow from their gifts, and he will speak again in chapter 9 of the material good the offering brings. But his overriding concern is what happens in their hearts. When the Corinthians respond with their gifts, all the other churches will notice. The demonstration of their love will be right in front of (*εἰς πρόσωπον*) the other churches (*τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*). The other churches, too, will be strengthened in their conviction that love produces works and that the confidence of their spiritual leaders in them is not misplaced.

Every evangelical administrator of Christian giving can carry on his work in the confidence that God will lead his people to respond. Think of what blessings our congregations will share with each other as each of our pastors leads his people to generous giving with that kind of confidence!