

## 2 Corinthians 8:13-24

**2Co 8:13** For *I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;* <sup>14</sup> but by an equality, *that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality.* <sup>15</sup> As it is written, "*He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*"

In [2 Corinthians 8:13-15](#), Paul is not dealing with what a person has, but he is dealing specifically with genuine needs that existed. Paul wanted those who had more than they actually needed to be willing to help those who had less than they needed. This kind of attitude is the mark of a genuine believer. [1 John 3:17](#) says,

**1Jn 3:17** But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

[1 Timothy 6:17-18](#) says something very similar,

**1Ti 6:17** Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

Certainly there was nothing wrong with the Corinthians having more than the Jerusalem believers, but it would have been wrong if they had not been willing to help. A fundamental principle of the New Testament is that as believers we are not isolated believers, but we are members of the body of Christ. The principle here is that the church has the responsibility to meet the basic needs of those who are not able to provide for themselves. The quote in v15 is in reference to when the Israelites gathered manna. For instance, [Exodus 16:16-18](#) says,

**Ex 16:16** This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.' " <sup>17</sup> Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

As a whole, America could probably be considered a country of hoarders and of having many goods beyond our needs. We are always living for the future, and yet there are numerous places in Scripture that encourage the believer to not necessarily be overly concerned about the future. Obviously, there is a balance and it would be inappropriate to misrepresent that balance. In the context of these verses, Paul's desire was for Christians outside of Jerusalem to help ease the burden that the believers in Jerusalem were facing. It was an issue of "equality" for Paul. He simply did not believe that it would be biblical for some Christians to live with great resources and other Christians to suffer because they have no resources. Please appreciate that in the Old Testament that this was a principle that the Jews lived by when they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. If too much manna was gathered by a family, then it was shared with those who had not been able to gather enough on that particular day. So the surplus of one family was used to balance out the shallow amount that another family may have had.

We know that in the beginning of the early church in [Acts 2:44-45](#) that the believers actually sold their possessions to help support those other believers who had nothing.

**Ac 2:44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.**

Some people actually call these verses Communism, but in reality they represent the outworking of genuine Christianity when a real need arises. In the context of our church, there are certain ministries and opportunities that God provides to us to help people with their ministries. In places like Romania, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe, many of the individuals there simply do not have the resources in their poverty to build and expand their churches. In most all of those countries the individuals do not have books or resources to even study God's Word, so ministry often times is limited to evangelism, but once someone gets saved, there is no one qualified to even teach them the basics of the Christian life. One of the ways that we have found to help many of these pastors is to have our notes translated for them into their language. If I am teaching a book of the New Testament to them, it may be the only commentary that they ever see on that book in their life. As your pastor, I feel compelled that it is part of the church's responsibility to help in those areas.

Now, in [2 Corinthians 8:16-24](#), Paul gives instruction relative to how the money gathered in the collection is to be handled. Whoever handles the money within the church has to be very trustworthy and moral. They must be living a clean life and have a strong Christian testimony. In v20, Paul said that they had given a "**lavish gift**" (NKJV). Other translations call it a "**liberal gift**" (NIV), a "**large contribution**" (AMP), a "**generous gift**" (ESV, NASB), or "**this abundance**" (KJV). When dealing with a large sum of money, you never know what might happen, so everything has to be above board to protect the name of Christ. I know an individual whose wife was the financial secretary for a church in our Association. I had worked with her husband for a good number of years. He had actually served as a deacon in that church. However, over a period of several years, they collaborated to steal nearly \$80,000 from the church - which they did. They used the money for building a pool, a deck for the pool, and numerous vacation and golf excursions. They were caught, but the church did not prosecute them. Shortly thereafter the lady contracted breast cancer and died very quickly. The husband died very prematurely shortly after his wife had died. In that interim between their deaths, one of their two children was killed in an automobile accident. Now, I do not know when and how God actually disciplines His children, and I never want to give him an occasion to do so.

What Paul did is that he chose Titus to head up a delegation of men to handle the offerings. It appears from v19 that the church actually was responsible for choosing the individual that worked with Paul and Titus. All of these were godly men who handled the money. In this passage these men cared for the church, they had a reputation for the gospel, they were recognized and chosen by the church, they were diligent in many things, they were partners of ministry, and they were to be loved by the church. Without going into an exposition of all of these verses, what needs to be gleaned from them is that those individuals who actually do handle the money within a congregation should be people who have a very zealous concern for the church, for its welfare, and for its reputation. Notice in v16 that the concern must come from God.

**<sup>2Co 8:16</sup> But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.**

Titus did not care for the church because of tradition, because his parents went to that church, or so he could be seen and recognized by the people. To the contrary, God had placed this “**same earnest care**” into the heart of Titus. Individuals who handle the money must know God intimately so that He can move on their heart when He needs to do so. Everyone who handles the finances in this church have genuinely demonstrated a deep love and care for the church and for the things of God. In many churches, men who are forceful and strong-willed leaders too often push through their projects just by their personality alone. However, the proper handling and stewardship of a church’s finances should always be administered by a plurality of godly men that the church completely trusts. They are to be wise, theologically sound, and spiritually mature individuals who are seeking the mind and heart of God for their church. There cannot be any compromise in this area.

In reading this passage of Scripture about Titus and his assistant, it becomes apparent that Titus was prepared for the work into which God had called him. One key reason why many Christians do very little for Christ is simply because they are not prepared to do anything. In fact, being prepared is not even in their thinking. Unfortunately, an individual’s lack of preparation can spiritually harden their heart because they are not alert to God’s leading in their life or to the opportunities that God may place before them. In my mind, I would think that God has something for each of us to do that is very important, but unfortunately many people simply are not prepared and those opportunities that God provides are lost. There may be several reasons for this. Someone may be in financial bondage and in great debt so that they do not have the freedom to do what God may want them to do. Some may simply be ignorant of important Bible truths because they have neglected their personal study of the Word of God. In the culture in which we live, it is apparent that many individuals have flooded their schedules with so many commitments that they simply do not have time for something God may want them to do. Obviously some may have a damaged testimony because of sinful habits and sinful living. Many professing believers have become comfortable in rationalizing why they never attend a local church regularly and faithfully. Some have not taken care of themselves physically and so their poor health drains off opportunities. Many people are just apathetic and unconcerned about serving Christ. Obviously, Titus was none of the above because he had prepared his life so that God could use him.

Anybody who will ever be used by God has to have that as a central purpose in their life. It should be obvious that God only uses people of integrity. They are people who have a strong adherence to a code of moral values. They are honest people who can be trusted. We live in a country that has a very serious integrity crisis, and unfortunately that crisis has made its way into many local churches. Our country no longer seems to have a moral conscience and certainly has lost all resemblance of moral purity. Married couples struggle to keep their vows, choosing to divorce one another instead of endorsing biblical principles of forgiveness, restoration, humility, and loving one another until death. A person’s word today has almost become worthless and simply lays the foundation for anarchy in a moral vacuum. We slaughter babies by the thousands each day in what should be considered the safest and most secure place in the world for the child - the mother’s womb. We have placed unborn children on the butcher block of convenience and lustful living. Over 2 million babies are aborted every year in America. Then to make it all worse, unstable Christians do not have the courage to make up their minds to be totally sold out to Christ. They are double minded and unstable. Carnal Christians are trying to serve two masters, but miserably failing. In [Matthew 6:24](#), Jesus said these strong words,

**Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**

I would say it this way - integrity should be the guide of the Christian life. Joseph and Daniel clearly come to mind. For those who are parents, integrity has a preserving influence not only in our own life, but in the life of our families. Integrity walks hand-in-hand with righteousness. Integrity will provide a spiritual shield against false accusations of wickedness. [1 Peter 3:16-17](#) says,

**1Pe 3:16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. <sup>17</sup> For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

When it comes to money, many people find themselves cheating or being dishonest because they feel that they will not get what eventually will not satisfy them. They sacrifice personal integrity for wealth. If you do that, you will lose. You will lose both your integrity and God's blessings on your life. Integrity is what produces stability and success in a believer's life. [Proverbs 12:3](#) says,

**Pr 12:3 A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved.**

If as a believer you both have and maintain your integrity, you cannot be moved. You are anchored in Christ. Anyone who ever has any genuine spiritual success in their life does not compromise their integrity for any reason. Make no mistake about it, everyone reaps what they sow. It is an inevitable truth in the Word of God that cannot be overlooked. The person with integrity is faithful in all areas of life, especially in the small and insignificant matters which are given by God to prepare them for greater responsibility. [Luke 16:10-11](#) says,

**Lk 16:10 He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much. <sup>11</sup> Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?**

You may wonder why I am teaching so much on integrity when I should be teaching on stewardship. Well the answer is that people who have no integrity are never good stewards of what God has given to them – never! If an individual is unfaithful with their earthly responsibilities and their spiritual responsibilities, then they will be untrustworthy and unfit to handle riches and responsibilities in God's kingdom. The individual who does not let their integrity slip in small matters will find that they will not fail in the crucial decisions of their life. Believers with integrity are not swayed by outward pressures, trials, temptations, and adverse circumstances. In the Old Testament there are the examples of Joseph, Job, and Daniel. Without integrity, a believer simply opens their life to evil influences and corruption. When this happens that individual's usefulness in God's kingdom is generally nonexistent.

Integrity provides a believer with a clear conscience which enables and equips them to minister to other people. Integrity actually creates opportunities for ministering to others. [2 Corinthians 4:1-2](#) says,

**2Co 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

Confidence comes from the fact that a believer is not plagued by guilt from past offenses that have never been resolved. Integrity helps the believer to simply lay aside those hindrances and weights that hinder them from effectively serving Christ and doing his will. [Hebrews 12:1](#) says,

**Heb 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

If we are going to be people of integrity and truthfulness, then we must understand the biblical keys to obtaining integrity. The first is that Jesus Christ is the author of truth, so the more that we yield our life to Him, the more we will understand integrity and truth and demonstrate it in our life. [1 Corinthians 2:16](#) says that “**we have the mind of Christ**”. We have His mind so that we can think God’s thoughts and understand His ways. The second key is that the source of integrity is found in the Word of God, so the more that we study and meditate on the Word of God, the more we will know the mind of Christ. The third key is that the Holy Spirit is our guide, so the more that we learn how to hear His voice in the Word of God, the greater will be our guidance.