

2 Corinthians 8 pt. 2 v.16-24 READ THRU

Context - Instructing the Corinthian church on collecting an offering for the church in Jerusalem to help aid them in their time of need - the giving church.

Giving is a parable for God's grace towards us! In the doing we learn to part with things that in our minds hold the most value over us. In our giving we learn what it means to divest ourselves of our own riches to share in Christ's experience - that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. This is the cost of grace.

This morning: The pastoral and apostolic heart.

V.16-17 - The pastoral heart - Paul gives thanks to God for the work he is doing in Titus.

It is clear to Paul, having labored with him, and watched him, that God is working in Titus.

We find in the Pastoral Epistles - seven or eight years in the future, that Paul charges Titus to raise up other pastors on the island of Crete.

[Tit 1:5 NKJV] 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

What a task! Titus becomes a pastor of pastors.

Characteristics of Titus, the caring pastor-

Titus possesses an earnest (same root as diligent) care for the churches and for others this comes directly from God.

The genuine pastoral spirit, that of care for God's people, comes from God alone and is not a contrivance of man.

While many have sought to fabricate that spirit, or stir it up by their own will -- this defining mark of a pastoral care comes from God alone and goes straight to the heart - the kardia - that most inward and necessary organ for life.

The deep care that Titus possesses for the Corinthians is secured in his heart by God. When this care lives in the heart of the pastor he carries it with him wherever he may go and is not left to find it along the way. It is an internal and enduring characteristic and is not dependent on favorable circumstances.

Too many have abandoned the pastoral heart of care in favor anything and everything else. Or, they never had it in the first place - only a desire to be a hireling, taking advantage of God's people for their own benefit.

That is not so with Titus - he cares earnestly.

Able to receive, he accepts Paul's exhortation - he wasn't ALWAYS the teacher, all the time. He was able to receive. Guys/girls that can't receive are insufferable - well actually!? Pastors are listeners as well as teachers. He could receive from His mentor/pastor - Paul. (Not EVERYBODY!!! That is called being a people pleaser - men will try to sway us). Not only did he listen but he accepted the exhortation to go to the Corinthians.

*Note - the relationship between Paul and Titus was personal - not distant - Paul called Titus, "...a true son in our common faith..." (Titus 1:4) The relationship matters - not just a teacher, pupil relationship - or a radio station, or podcast, the relational interactions matter.

Diligence - lit. more forward - Titus leaned into his ministry. He exceeded the requirements of his charge - went above and beyond the call of duty. He was active, zealous, earnest - he was diligent.

Willingness - Titus went back to Corinth of his own accord not out of compulsion. Why? He is doing what his Lord did. In all of these attributes He is reflecting the image of Christ. (REF. contrast of Apollos - quite unwilling - 1 COR 16:12)

Genuine care, accepting the challenge of ministry, diligence, and willingness - these are marks of the pastoral heart - given by God, BECAUSE God dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, and this is His nature.

We wouldn't say that the Holy Spirit inspires us to being uncaring, cold, stubborn, unable to receive, wishy-washy, flaky, non-committal, or apathetic. Certainly not!

V.18-21 - you can't go it alone!

We have sent with him - we can't go it alone. Companionship is necessary. There is wisdom here by the Macedonian churches and Paul to send a trusted companion with Titus - since they are traveling with a gift, an offering, so there's some accountability.

There could be no accusation of robbery or embezzlement with companionship.

Also, on a spiritual level - we can't go it alone! Did Jesus go it alone? Two by two (Luke 10) - Creation principle - Adam & Eve (GEN 2)

We see this evidenced in nature - it is the one separated from the herd that gets eaten!

The penguins in the antarctic - they have to huddle together. When it gets -50F and the Antarctic night can last for 6 months.

This flies in the face of the sentiment - I don't need to go to church...we need fellowship with one another if we hope to stay warm, and to its fullest extreme, if we hope to survive the cold dark night. Also, where you acquire

your fellowship matters - what part does light have with darkness? (2 COR 6:14)

So Titus gets a companion, a friend for the road.

Who is this companion? The Brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.

Guzik: Some of the candidates have been Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and a variety of others, but no one really knows. We can confidently say that it doesn't really matter, otherwise, God would have made it clear.

This man is known by God. We may never have our names printed, we may never be known by men in our work, but we are known by God. Ultimately the famous one is Jesus Christ! We defer to His glory!

He was chosen by the churches. There is a history of the churches choosing "men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" - REF Acts 6.

His reputation and praise was found in the gospel - what is our praise found in? Our personalities? Our own self-ascribed worth? Our resources? Or, the gospel - the good news of Jesus Christ's redeeming work - reconciling mankind with God?

His reputation held across multiple churches. He wasn't one thing one place, and a different animal some place else but consistent.

He was trustworthy and dependable - able to serve and be responsible for this lavish gift.

To our detriment we can cling too tightly to the notion that:

[Mat 25:21 NIV] 21 ...You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!

What I mean by that is we can get hyper focused on the small things, and when we're called to the bigger things sometimes in our stubbornness we refuse to budge. We find our comfortable place among the few things and we camp there. BUT, we pray for growth. Not to always be babes in the faith. Oh, that we could be trusted with the many even as we are with the few.

[Heb 5:12 NIV] 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

[Heb 6:1 NIV] 1 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity...

There is a growing up that takes place that was evidenced in the life of this man who was chosen by the churches to travel along with Titus and this offering for the church in Jerusalem. They trusted him, he had proven

himself, he had matured to a point where his service expanded outside of the walls of his own fellowship and into the broader world.

More than the money - these men's service stands apart as a blessing to the churches.

The gift and the service glorified Jesus.

Can one be blamed in offering a gift? What if it's lavish? Yes, there will be haters. That's why Paul and the churches are careful to appoint trustworthy, diligent, caring men over this matter.

While money is not the most important thing - we sure act like it! And many have fallen because they were unable to resist the allure of somebody else's money.

The Macedonian churches provided honorable things - visible to all, God and men. Everything was above board and transparent.

V.22 Another brother, the trifacta!

Someone from Paul's crew - a third un-named bro!

This is really great - many brothers serving God together. And we see here that God is teaching us about His own nature and how we are to reflect His nature.

[Ecc 4:9-12 NKJV] 9 Two [are] better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him [who is] alone when he falls, For [he has] no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm [alone]? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

They find their third cord. Anybody else we know like to operate in a unified threefold cord?

This third man was proved, was tested - his trustworthiness and stability had been proved.

The greek carries with it the tone of recognizing as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy. (thayer's)

As we are tested, we prove our authenticity - whether or not we are the real deal.

Time tests us all in diligence, in faithfulness, in our care for the saints.

He was diligent in many things, not just one thing, not just the small things - many things.

AND grew more diligent because of Paul's confidence in the Corinthians. He was perhaps spurred on by Paul's boasting on the Corinthians - not

wanting to be found flaky, undependable, having come up short in faithfulness and diligence.

This third brother exercised increased diligence on behalf of the Corinthians and for their sakes. Sometimes we have to step our game up! We do so for the benefit of others, not out of a sense of self-promotion.

V.23 - 24 Commendation of Titus and his companions.

Titus and these brothers were actually carrying this letter and the offering from the Macedonian churches back through Corinth on their way to Jerusalem with these instructions.

Who would inquire? Church goers.

Do you know everybody here? Why not?

The other dudes (two other brethren?) Who are these guys besides unnamed companions of Titus?

They are messengers (apostolos) of the churches - they are sent out ones from the churches.

Apostles in the less strict sense - lower case A v. upper case A.

Lower case A, apostles, we still have these today - church planters, missionaries, evangelists, people doing outreach. They are messengers

sent out on behalf of the Church - these are the salt and light reaching to a dark world.

AND they are the glory of Christ! They are His brilliance - which is the characteristic of all persons who share in Christ's heavenly glory.

While they are un-named in our text, except for Titus, they are the glory of Christ - living breathing, serving representations of Christ's glory on earth. Shiny, wondrous to behold, majestic...no not the person - but the Spirit that lives within them - the glory of Christ.

That is our call. And what an encouragement for those who are called by God and given that apostolic, pastoral heart to serve the church - though they may be unknown - they are the glory of Christ.

Finally - how are the Corinthians to relate to such people? To the Corinthians and for our own time: prove yourself, prove your love, prove us right.